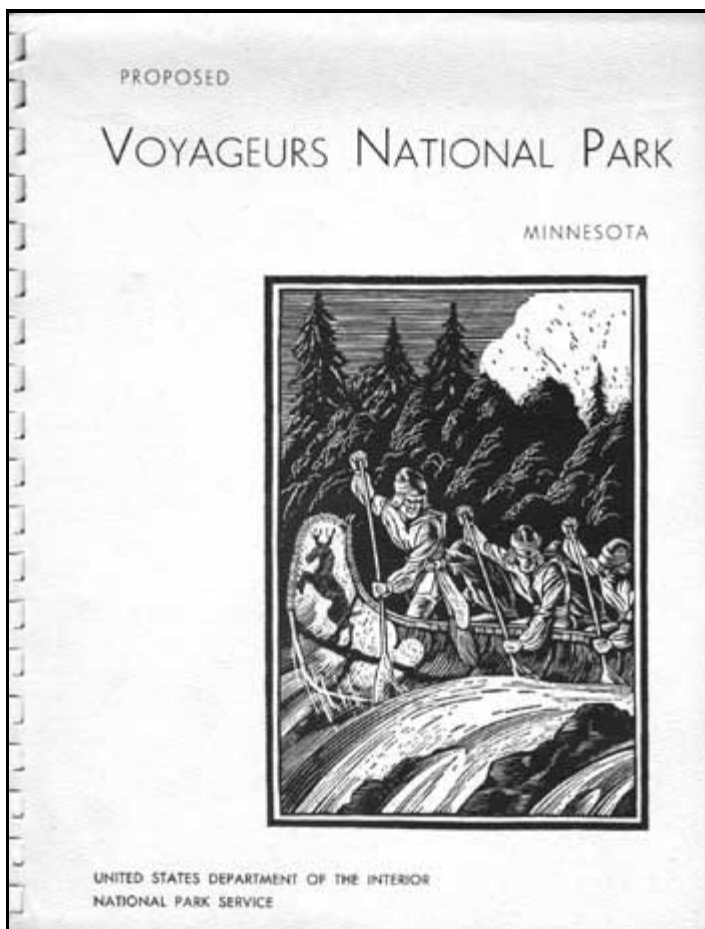


NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Proposed Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota



PROPOSED VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK Minnesota

July 1964

Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Midwest Region
Omaha, Nebraska

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From sketch by C. Bertch in *The Voyageur*, by Grace Lee Nute. Courtesy Minnesota Historical Society.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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FOREWORD

From the pages of the past "peals the laughter of a gay-hearted irrepressible race; over night waters floats the plaintive song of canoeman, swelled periodically in the chorus by the voices of his lusty mates; portage path and campfire, foaming rapids and placid fir-fringed lake, shallow winding stream and broad expanse of inland sea,..."--the habitat of the voyageur emerges.

"His canoe has long since vanished from the northern waters; his red cap is seen no more, a bright spot against the blue...his sprightly French conversation, punctuated with inimitable gesture, his exaggerated courtesy, his incurable romanticism, his songs, and his superstitions are gone." (Grace Lee Nute, The Voyageur)

In American and Canadian history this unique breed of men played a significant role. The fur trade was for generations the chief industry of the continent. Without the voyageur the industry could hardly have flourished and attained the importance it assumed.

The fur-trading era came to a tragic close. In its wake followed other eras--logging, mining, farming--each extracting its toll of resources and each writing its history upon the land. Now emerges a new era--a frontier of recreation--one that extracts from the land a sense of its beauty, a joy of being in its presence, of reliving its past.

The voyageur is gone, but there remains an air of his presence in the land and waters he traversed. There is a growing surge of desire to commemorate the memory of his being, the heritage he left, by preserving the setting upon which his drama was enacted. In places the setting is altered, in others it is essentially the same. The opportunity to preserve much of this scene is rapidly passing. To exploit this opportunity is the appeal of this report.





A red woolen cap, a short shirt, the breech cloth of the Indians, thighs left bare above long deer skin leggings and moccasins, a gaudy sash and beaded bag, the inevitable pipe, and in winter a blue capote. So dressed the voyageur as he appeared gliding over the lakes and streams, toiling over portages, cracking a whip over his dog team, fiddling in log forts, and singing wherever he was.

Created in 1849, the Department of the Interior--America's Department of Natural Resources--is concerned with the management, conservation, and development of the Nation's water,

wildlife, mineral, forest, and park and recreational resources. It also has major responsibilities for Indian and territorial affairs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department works to assure that nonrenewable resources are developed and used wisely, that park and recreational resources are conserved, and that renewable resources make their full contribution to the progress, prosperity, and security of the United States--now and in the future.

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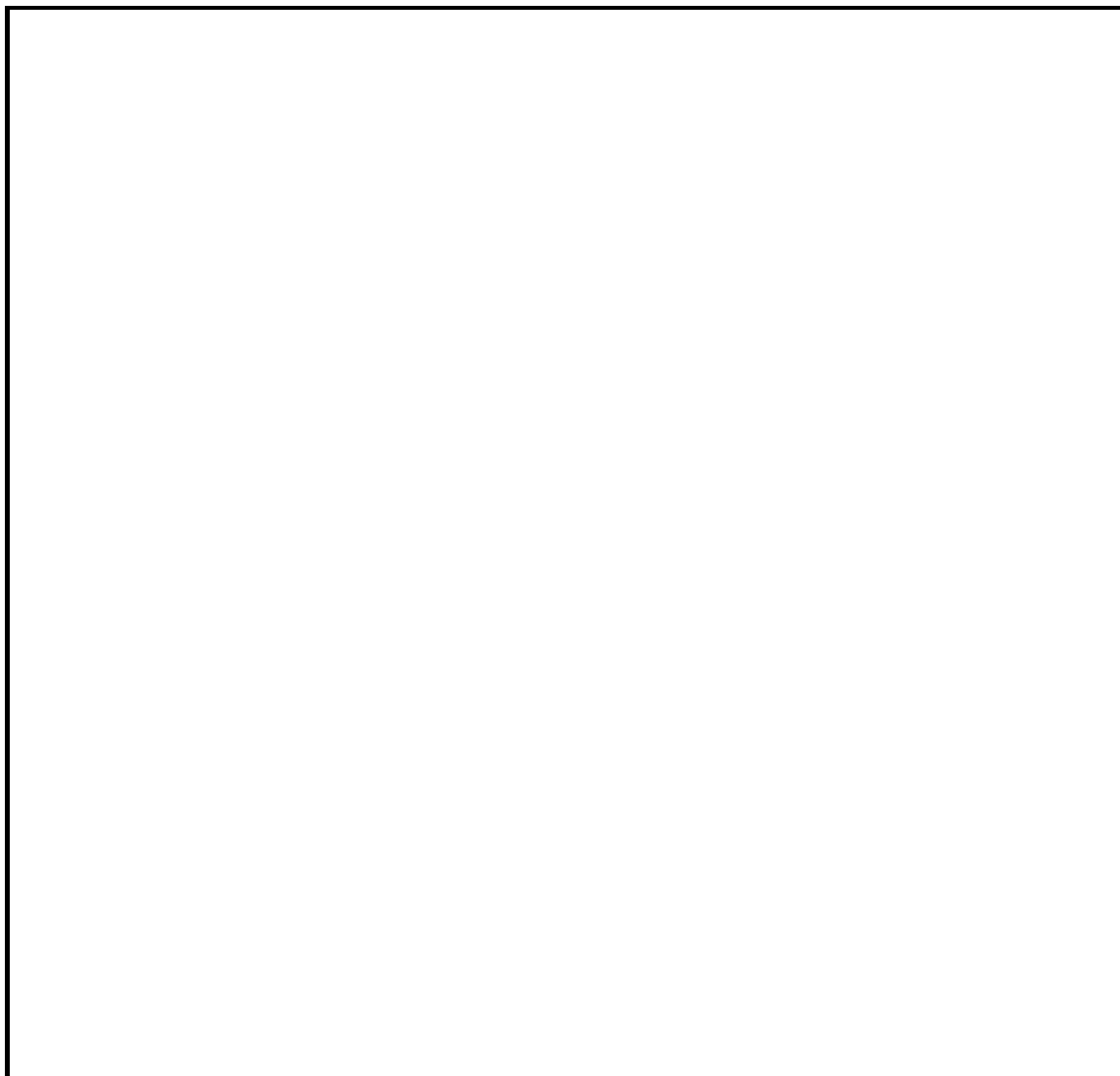
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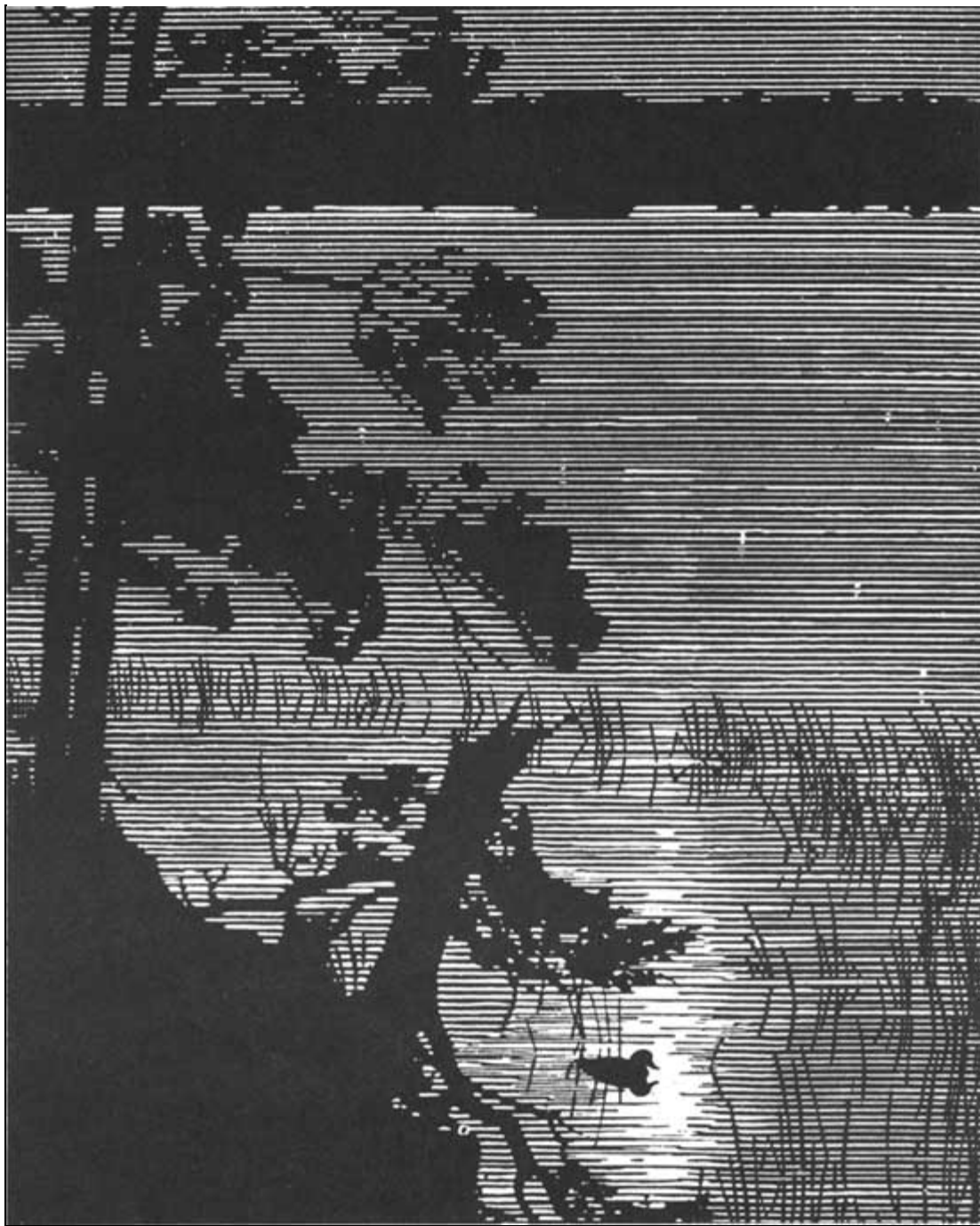


INTRODUCTION

Along the forested northern border of Minnesota stretches glaciated lake country, including what is recognized as the finest canoe waters in America. For 300 miles west from Pigeon Point on Lake Superior to the Northwest Angle lies part of the famous Voyageurs Route from Montreal in Quebec to the hinterlands of the far Northwest 3,000 miles away. Here is not only an important segment of North America's first transcontinental highway, but the only significant part falling within the United States.

Two hundred miles of this route are administered by the U.S. Forest Service as the Boundary Waters Canoe Area of the Superior National Forest on the Minnesota side of the border, and by Quetico Provincial Park of Ontario on the Canadian side, the two adjacent areas giving the region its name, the Quetico-Superior. Through Provincial and United States regulations the wilderness character of this part of the border is being preserved.





"Freedom surrounds us. We are finding more than peace here. This is an authentic and profound release from modern intricacies."

From Canoe Country by Florence Page Jaques,
Illustration by Francis Lee Jaques
Courtesy the University of Minnesota Press

This report is concerned with that part of the Voyageurs Highway lying immediately to the west of the Quetico-Superior area and east of International Falls. The preservation of this superlative area, so vital a part of the border lake country and its historic past, must be considered and planned for before the opportunity is lost. Here is a great opportunity and challenge to further the protective pattern for the Voyageurs Route and preserve for the public a region of great scenic, natural, and historic significance to the nation, and, at the same time, complement and strengthen what has already been done, and, through such

additional recognition, perhaps stimulate further protection on the Canadian side of the border.

The interest of the National Park Service in this Minnesota border country was stimulated from several different directions with a background extending over a number of years. In 1956, the Minnesota Department of Conservation requested the Park Service to make a study of the Northwest Angle area. Subsequently the Department joined the National Park Service in making a statewide recreation survey, at which time special attention was given to the border lake country. More recently, the State specifically asked the Service to study the area east of International Falls to determine its potential for preservation within the National Park System. Field studies were made during the summer of 1962 jointly with representatives of the State and the U.S. Forest Service. Discussions were also held with some local people, including representatives of the Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company, a major landowner.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Proposed Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota



SUMMARY

The famous Voyageurs Route, which stretched 3,000 miles across the continent from Montreal to Lake Athabasca, was for many years the lifeline of early Canada. When the beaver became scarce in the east, attention was focused on the wilderness west of Lake Superior. It was then that the 300-mile section of the route which passed along the present International Boundary in northern Minnesota became a most important link in this trans-continental trunkline of commerce and exploration.

It is a portion of this section with which this report deals. It comprises an enchanting passageway consisting of a superb system of interconnecting lakes, bogs and streams in an area of land and water possessing outstanding recreation opportunities and high natural and aesthetic qualities--green forests, a variety of wildlife, interesting geology, and great scenic appeal.





"Wilderness sounds would be here, bird songs in the mornings and at dusk. The aspen leaves would whisper and the pines as well."

From Listening Point by Sigurd F. Olson

This country was made famous by the personality and perseverance of the voyageurs, canoeists extraordinary, who peeled back the map of the continent as they moved back and forth in this wilderness, taking in trade goods and bringing out beaver pelts which were in great demand across the Atlantic.

The fur trade associated with the Voyageurs Route for 150 years before the mid-19th century

played an important part in the westward expansion and cultural development of both Canada and America. All this could not have been possible without the services of the voyageurs, the human engines that transported the items of commerce over water and portage. Their personality and exploits clearly have become symbolic of this lake country's past, and the area's history is tied together around the theme of the incomparable voyageur. Even the International Boundary along this stretch, as established by treaty, is based on the main route followed by these giants of the fur trade.

The drama of the voyageurs and even the Indians before them was enacted upon a land patterned by the action of the great continental glaciers. These masses of ice robbed this land of its fertile mantle and gave it to the midlands to the south, but in so doing, they revealed in the lake country a heritage of its geologic past. They exposed the most ancient of the earth's rocks, even the very roots of former mountains that had a billion years previously been peneplained to a rolling upland. The glaciers, too, sculptured the hard surface of this ancient shield of land, carving out the present drainage.

Forests of pine, spruce, balsam and deciduous trees now cover the area. A variety of plantlife carpets the forest floor and delicate flowers bloom in profusion. Numerous animals and birds--moose, beaver, the mysterious loon, to name a few--can be observed here. The area has long been famous as one of the finest fishing areas of the north.

This northern glaciated country--a part of the great Canadian Shield--combined with its scenic appeal, varied animal and plantlife, and its heritage of human history, is of national significance and worthy of preservation. Therefore, the National Park Service recommends the establishment of a "Voyageurs National Park," to include a significant area of land and water along a 40-mile segment of the International Boundary between Namakan Lake and Black Bay of Rainy Lake.



An opportunity to travel the route of the voyageurs

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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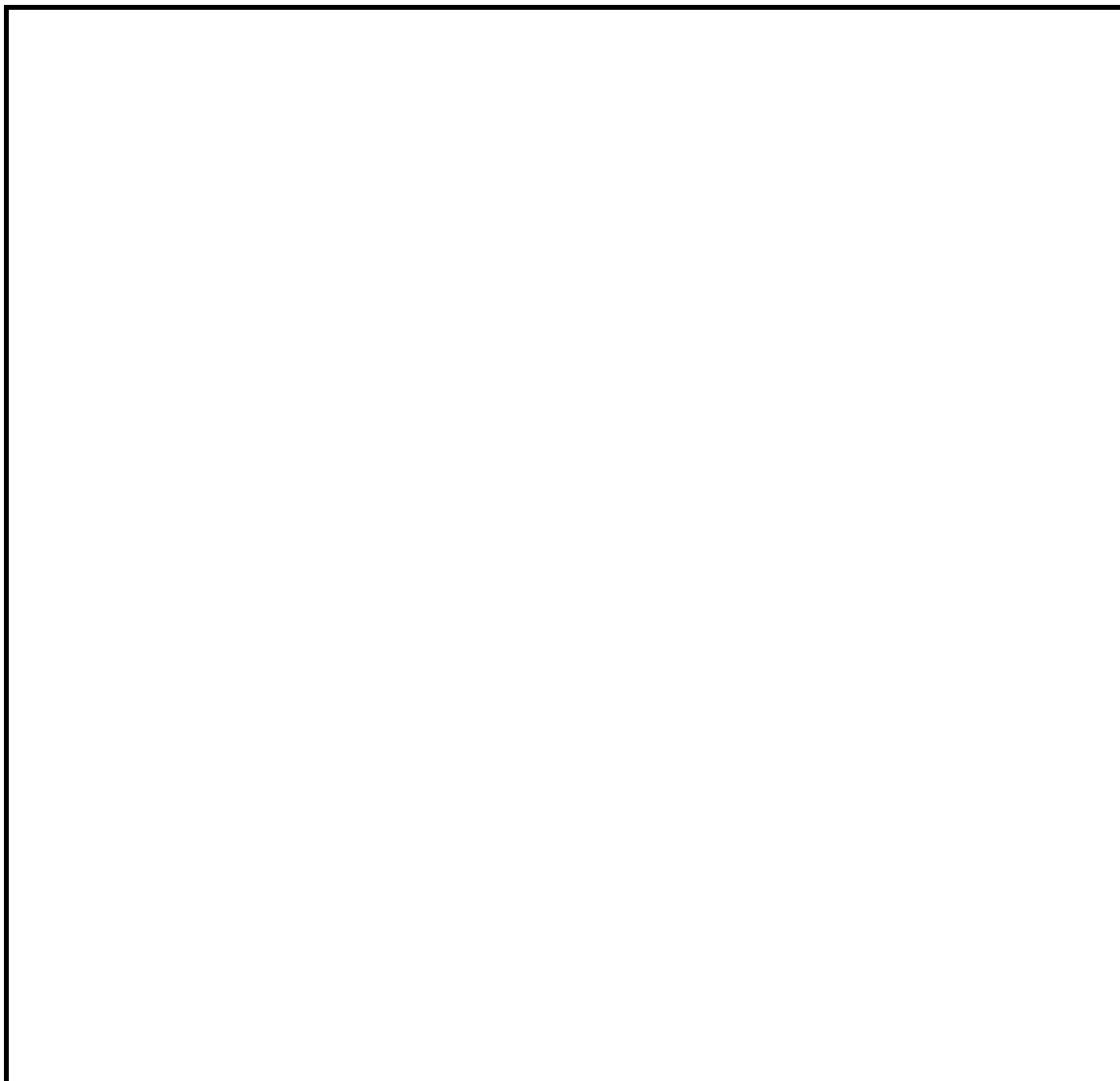


THE AREA

Scenic Features and Setting

Today this land of the voyageurs looks much as it did upon discovery and during the heyday of the fur trade. The natural scene is one of extensive forest, rocky shorelines, and islands covered primarily with beautiful stands of evergreen trees which extend to the water's edge. Flat bog country, excellent habitat for certain types of animal and birdlife, occasional sand beaches, and rugged cliffs add variety to the primitive scene.

These inland waterways--ranging from narrows of less than 100 feet in width to large lakes several miles across--are characteristically irregular in shape, dotted with islands, and accented by frequent rocky points and promontories. Three lakes--Namakan, Kabetogama, and Rainy--dominate the landscape. Rainy is the largest, covering 350 square miles.





Land of the voyageurs

The major scenic and natural, body of land is Kabetogama Peninsula, a heavily forested area consisting of about 75,000 acres. Most of this area is relatively undeveloped and is reached principally by water. Lovely, shimmering lakes accessible only by foot or canoe are found on the Peninsula. The north shore, which borders on Rainy Lake, is sharply irregular with many charming bays, coves, and offshore islands. The south shore bordering on Kabetogama Lake, while not as sharply defined, also has many picturesque offshore islands. Smooth glaciated rocks ideal for camping and picnicking lie at the water's edge along both shores of the peninsula. This is a land and water area of high quality, great variety and charm. In this magnificent scenic and historical setting are opportunities for a type of wilderness and recreation experience found nowhere else in the National Park System.

The area is accessible by highway, rail and air. Spur roads from U.S. Highway 53 provide access to Rainy Lake from Ranier to Island View and to Kabetogama Lake at Ash River Trail and Kabetogama. Three railroads serve the International Falls area--the Duluth, Winnipeg and Pacific; the Northern Pacific; and the Canadian National. International Falls is served by commercial flights and charter service is also available.



Charming intimate small lakes are found on Kabetogama Peninsula



Tree covered rocky islands add variety to the scene



Geology

There are two distinct and significant geologic stories which have played dominant roles in creating the landscape as seen today. The first of these is found in the extensive exposures of rocks which represent perhaps the oldest landmass in the world. Part of the Superior Upland portion of the great Canadian Shield, this area has passed through all earth-building eras, yet only the most ancient rocks prevail--those of the Precambrian. Included in this complex of hard metamorphic rocks are altered lava flows and interbedded rocks of sedimentary origin, intrusive dikes of various types, and parts of massive granite intrusions, all of which are so strongly deformed that geologists have often been baffled by their arrangement

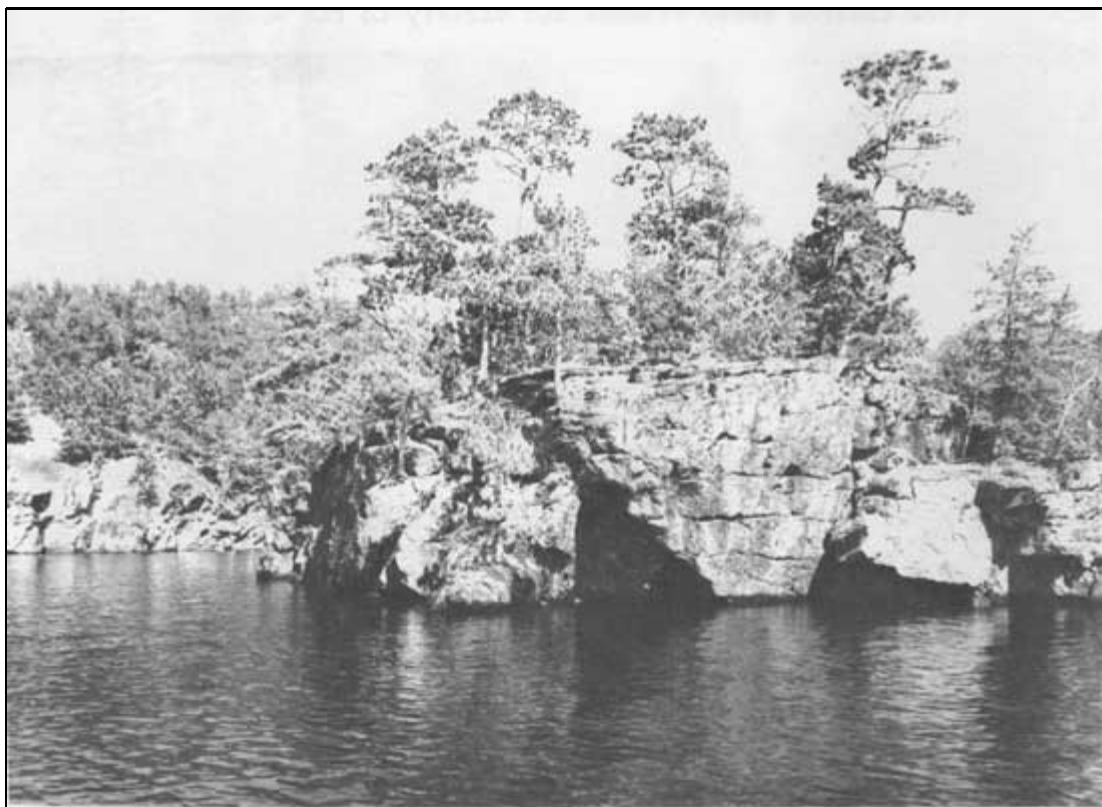
Sedimentary rocks, altered to schist, slate, and other metamorphic forms, indicate that ancient seas spread back and forth over this area as many as two billion years ago, leaving thick layers of sediment. In this southwestern extension of the Canadian Shield are found some of the oldest of these Precambrian sediments. These contorted metamorphosed sediments and igneous intrusions represent the roots of an ancient highland that was eroded to a peneplain millions of years before Paleozoic times. Cambrian seas advanced upon the shores of this ancient continental landmass, but during all successive geologic periods, this land stood above the waters which time and again covered most of North America, maintaining its elevation despite the erosion of a half-billion years or more.

The second interesting story of the area's geology has to do with the erosive action of the continental glaciers. A most vivid impression of the effects of the glaciers upon the earth surfaces over which they moved is strikingly evident in this lake country. At least four times, great masses of ice ground their way southward through and beyond this area from source regions hundreds of miles to the north. They buried this region under an immense icecap which was probably a mile thick. These ice age continental glaciers and their imprint on the landscape of southern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan are well known in the form of great gravel deposits, moraine ridges, eskers, and similar land forms. This border-lake region, however, has few such features for the glaciers deposited most of their residue farther south. The tremendous weight of the icecap forced it down upon the bedrock and like a giant abrasive tool, planed away rock obstructions and gouged out the basins that are now occupied by lakes.

Long grooves of considerable size, rocks rounded and smoothed by the glaciers, and the presence of erratic boulders are prime examples of how these slowly moving ice masses affected the land. The irregular shoreline of Kabetogama and Rainy Lake is considered to be the result of differential plucking of rocks by ice, the bays and lowlands being areas where softer or fractured rocks were encountered. The headlands and "reefs" of the lakes are generally composed of the more resistant metamorphic rocks and massive granite intrusions.



Glacier patterned landscape--waterways of the voyageurs



Plantlife

The glaciers left a barren land and even today there are exposures of rock ledge relatively free of plantlife. Most of the surface, however, has long since become thinly mantled with soil from which has sprung an amazing variety of plant forms. In the early 19th century, the area was covered by a great coniferous forest interspersed with deciduous trees. Despite extensive logging, groves of Norway, jack, and white pine still border the shorelines because of a wise policy of protection by both State and private landowners. In the low boggy areas grow dense stands of black spruce and often cedar and ash, while in higher terrain are found such trees as aspen, birch, balsam, white spruce, oak, and maple.



Bunchberry



Pitcher Plant

A variety of mosses, ferns, and lichens cover the rocks as well as the forest floor. Wild rice grows tall in shallow bays and streams and cranberry bogs are not uncommon. Among the shrubs are hazel, dwarf birch, mountain maple, alder, and sumac, while in low places grow the usual heathers, Labrador tea, dwarf kalmia, and leatherleaf. Flowers bloom in profusion from May until October, beginning with the trailing arbutus and ending with the large-leaved aster. Twin flower, dwarf dogwood, clintonia, fringed gentian, polygala, pitcher plant and many others are seen during summer months.

This wide range of forest plants is of great interest during the growing season; and in fall, because of its diversity, contributes a riot of color against a background of startling blue water.



Bog Country: Cranberry Bay of Rainy Lake above; west end of Kabetogama Lake below



Fish and Wildlife

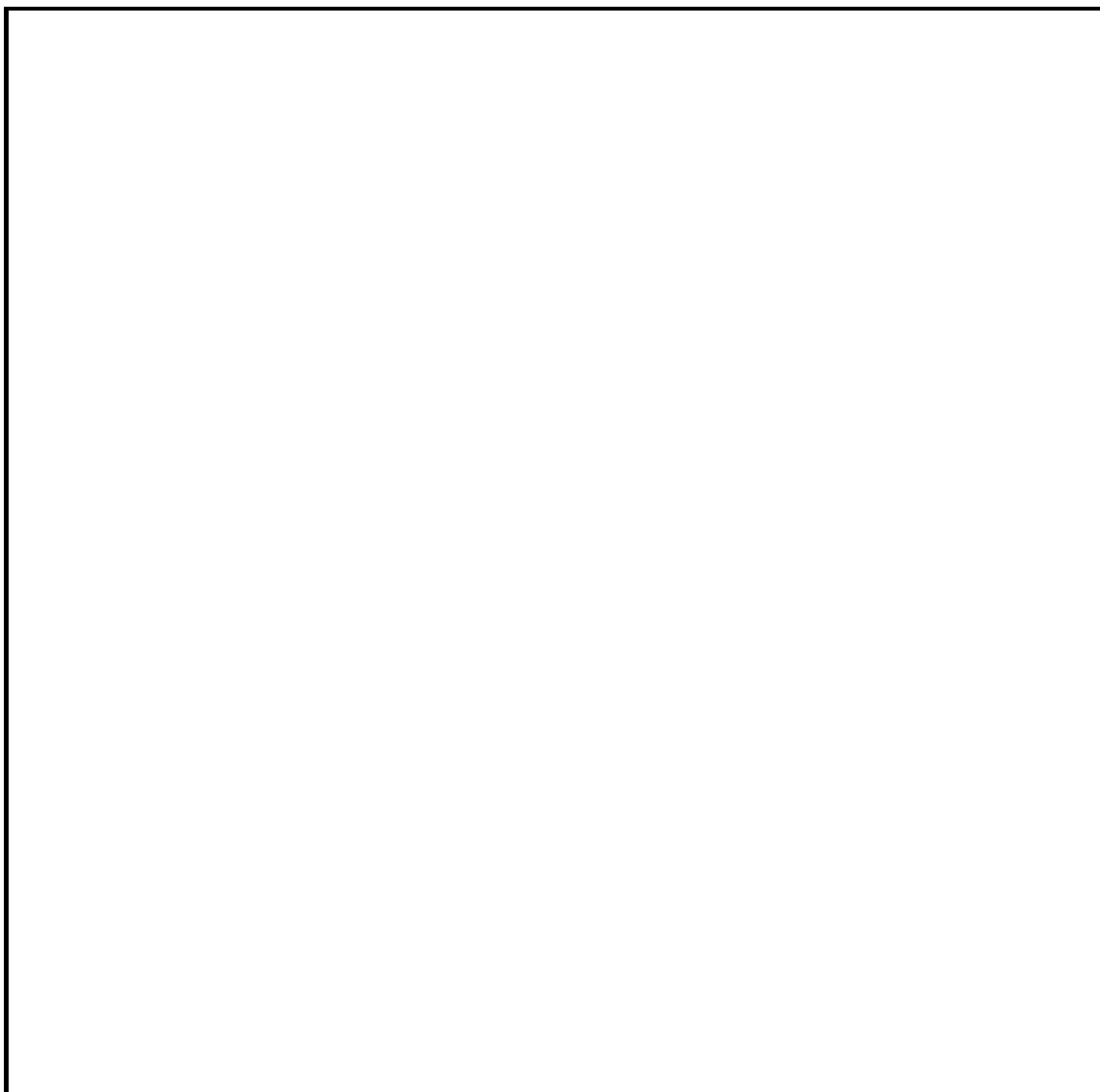
Wildlife in the area is typical of the northern coniferous forest. While caribou and wolverine, once common in this area, are gone, many of the original species remain. Moose, deer, black bear, and timber wolves are still plentiful for this is their natural range. Beaver are common, particularly on the peninsula where aspen and birch supply their needs. Among other species are the snowshoe hare, porcupine, chipmunk, muskrat, fox, red squirrel, mink, weasel, skunk,

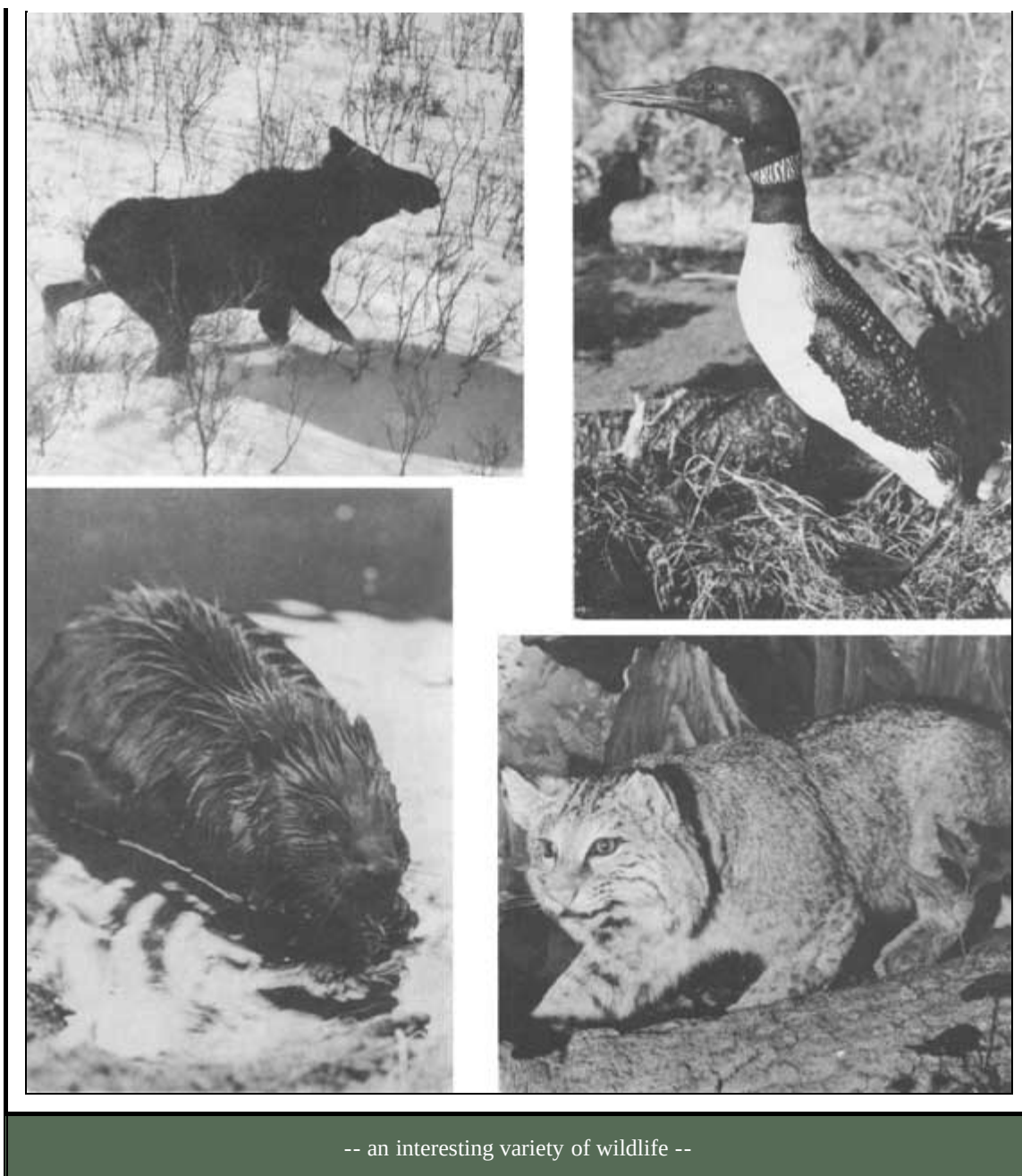
otter, fisher, coyote, bobcat, and Canada lynx.

Birds frequently seen are the purple martin, raven, Canada jay, blue-jay, chickadee, crow, downy and hairy woodpecker, pileated woodpecker, ruffed grouse, blue heron, and various hawks and owls. Of special interest are the Arctic three-toed woodpeckers, the vireos, the crossbills and various warblers. A variety of waterfowl use the many bays and lagoons as feeding and nesting grounds--the most common being mallard, black duck, ringnecked duck, golden eye, merganser, and the common loon, the State bird of Minnesota.

To hear the haunting laughter of the loon echoing from shore to shore at dusk is a great thrill, for this sound possibly more than any other typifies the northern lake country. Other rewarding experiences are seeing bald eagles in majestic flight, watching ospreys diving into the waters to catch fish, and listening to the drumming of partridges during the mating season, the songs of the winter wren, hermit thrush, and the white-throated sparrow.

The area has long been famous for its fishing for walleye and northern pike, trout, and bass. Other fish found are crappies, sturgeon, tullibee, whitefish, sauger, perch and sucker. Muskellunge are confined to Boot Jack Lake on the Kabetogama Peninsula. Black Bay of Rainy Lake is a favorite spring fishing area for walleye. This beautiful shallow bay is fed by the bog-lined Rat Root River, dotted with dozens of small islands and encircled by an irregular shoreline. Each species of fish has its own particular type of water, and the visitor can enjoy exploring many other areas that might be as delightful and productive.





History

The Voyageurs Route, located along the International Boundary between the United States and the Dominion of Canada, is a natural waterway which leads from Lake Superior to western Canada and the northwestern United States. "This canoe route was used for war, trade, or hunting, each section of it by its own group of Indian tribes, centuries before they guided the white men over it."¹ The French were the earliest white men to visit this region. Before them the Sioux Indians had lived here. The Chippewa moved in shortly after the French appeared, and drove out the Sioux. The French traded with both, but by 1763, when the British expelled the French, "...it was clear that the Chippewa...were the forest dwellers who would do business with the new white conquerors."²

¹Eric W. Morse, Canoe Route of the Voyageurs (Reprint by the Royal Canadian Geographical Society), p. 8.

Grace Lee Nute, Rainy River Country (St. Paul: The Minnesota Historical Society, 1950, p. 2.

The Lake Superior region was visited by white men for the first time in 1660. These men were Pierre Esprit Radisson and Sieur des Groseilliers, in their futile search for the "Northwest Passage". Sieur de Lhut (DuLuth) explored the north shore of Lake Superior in 1679, establishing a fort at the site of the present Fort William, Canada. Jacques de Noyon explored portions of the later canoe route, or Voyageurs Route, in 1688.

In 1731, Pierre Gaultier, Sieur de La Vérendrye, his sons and a nephew, Christophe La Jemeraye, began their extensive exploration of the wilderness beyond Grand Portage. La Vérendrye wrote in his journal in 1729, that the country between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg, "...is the country of moose and marten while beaver is so plentiful that the savages place little value on it and only collect the large skins which they send to the English."³

³Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1962), p. 91.

In 1731, La Jemeraye established a post on Rainy Lake which he named St. Pierre. From then until the end of the fur-trade era, one or more posts continued to operate at this site which appears to have been the most strategic location on the Voyageurs Route west of Grand Portage. The post here usually was the main depot under whose direction wintering houses and subsidiary establishments on neighboring lakes and streams were operated.

In 1732, La Vérendrye built Fort St. Charles on the western shore of Lake of the Woods. Using Fort St. Charles as the base of his operations, he extended his fur-trading activities westward and northwestward, building trading posts at strategic points in the region.



Canoe proceeding along rocky cliffs

From a painting by Frances Ann Hopkins
Courtesy of the Naturalist, Natural History Society of Minnesota

The extension of the fur trade from Montreal to Lake Superior, thence to the Lake of the Woods and Lake Winnipeg regions placed the French in competition with the British Hudson's Bay Company, organized in 1670. The English, from their posts on Hudson's Bay,

were pushing southward. Before the conquest of Canada by the English in 1763, the French under the Vérendryes had obtained firm control of the fur trade by establishing posts at strategic points to the south and later to the north of the region from Lake Winnipeg to Lake Superior.

To transport their furs and merchandise to and from the Northwest, the French developed three "water highways" between Lake Superior and Rainy Lake. A southern route started at Fond du Lac, led up the St. Louis River to Vermilion Lake, and down Vermilion River to Little Vermilion Lake (now Crane Lake). A middle route was over the Grand Portage to Pigeon River then westward over the present boundary waters to Lac la Croix, and on to Rainy Lake. A northern route was by way of the Kaministiquia River, which passed from the mouth of that stream near where Fort William stands, to Lac de Mille Lacs, by portage to Pickerel Lake, through Sturgeon Lake, down the Maligne River, and into Lac la Croix, where it joined the middle route. In addition to La Vérendrye's posts on Rainy Lake and Lake of the Woods along the canoe route, the French established posts at Basswood Lake on the middle route and at Little Vermilion Lake at the western terminus of the southern route.

Prof. Harold A. Innis states of the Voyageurs Route:

...The opening of this route ensured for the French an established control over the rich fur-bearing territory of the Northwest, and enabled them to compete with the English in Hudson Bay...A road had been opened to the heart of the rich fur country as a check to competition from Hudson Bay and a relief from the difficulties of the south.⁴

⁴Innis, p. 99.

The cession of Canada to England in 1763 introduced a new era of fur trade in the region. As further summarized by Prof. Innis:

The technique of the fur trade built up by the French remained practically intact...Bases for the production of agricultural supplies in the interior had been established and the voyageur with his knowledge of the rivers and of navigation remained. During the period of disturbance [French and Indian War, 1755-1763] supplies of beaver had accumulated and the Indian had been left without European goods. Under these conditions recovery of the fur trade was rapid.⁵

⁵Innis, p. 168-169.

To implement its operations, the North West Company established a network of posts throughout the region. On Rainy Lake, it built another principal post where the men from Athabasca, over a thousand miles to the northwest, could travel and return in one season. At this post, a special set of canoemen from Grand Portage met the Athabasca men, received their packs, and gave them their annual supplies. Along the border lakes and the Voyageurs Route were a number of subsidiary posts at Little Vermilion Lake, Manitou Rapids and Ash House, depending on the principal posts at Grand Portage and Rainy Lake.

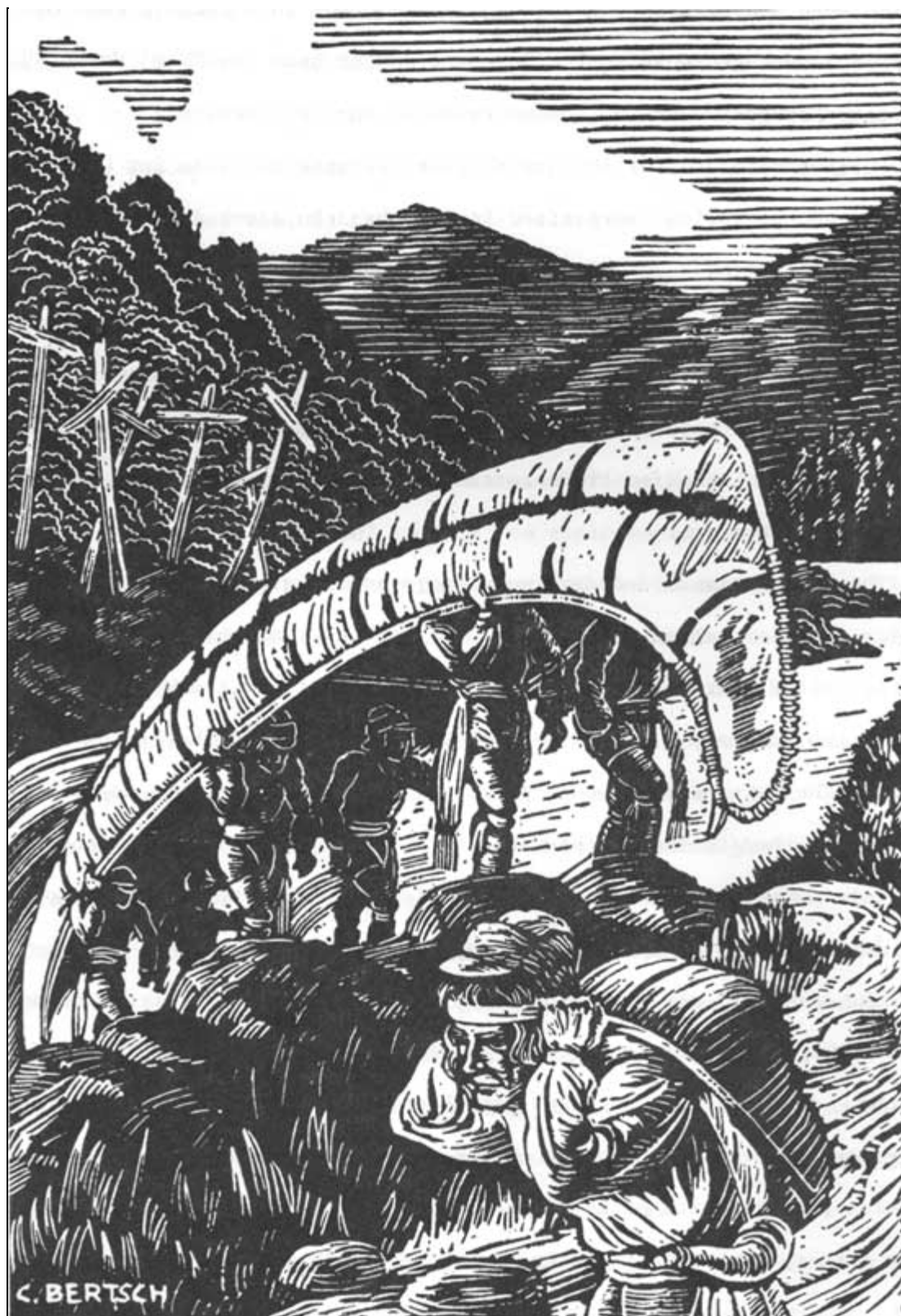
The consolidation of interests in the fur trade which resulted from the formation of the North West Company permitted further expansion of the business. Following its organization, the company, in search of new fur-bearing regions to exploit, accomplished notable feats of exploration. There was Peter Pond, a Connecticut Yankee who, in the late 1770's and early 1780's, was one of the fur traders to explore the Athabasca and open that rich fur region.

Acting under instructions from the Company, Alexander Mackenzie made his epic journey to the Pacific in 1793 and became the first white man to cross the continent north of Mexico. From 1797 to 1807, David Thompson, also in the employ of the Company, carried on extensive operations east of the Rockies as far south as the Missouri. Later, from 1807 to 1812, he explored in the Columbia River country. Each of these and other famous men of the border including the Vérendryes traversed the Grand Portage to Fort St. Charles route on their way to further discoveries. Thus, this route became a trunkline of discovery as well as an artery of trade. It was tapped by lesser routes feeding it from various directions. It was a highway of trade and exploration.

The vast wealth in the fur trade gained by the North West Company soon encouraged rivals to enter the region along the border. In 1793, the Hudson's Bay Company, which had long been quiescent on the shores of Hudson Bay, began to establish posts on Rainy Lake and Rainy River. Between 1798 and 1804, the chief rival of the North West Company was a new group, generally known as the XY Company, which had the powerful backing of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, the former North West Company employee mentioned above. In 1804, the new company was absorbed by the more powerful North West Company.

As competition between the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies became more and more active, open warfare broke out between the two rivals. Finally, exhausted from the struggle, the North West Company merged with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. As the result of the union, York Factory on Hudson's Bay replaced Montreal as the fur capital, and the York Factory-Fort Garry (Winnipeg) passage replaced the long and costly haul the "Nor' Westers" made from Montreal over the Voyageurs Route to the Interior.





"It's when I come on the portage, I take my canoe on my back, set it on my head topsy-turvy; it's my cabin too for the night."

From the Voyageur's Song, "My Birch-Bark Canoe"

Following the War of 1812, a third rival--the American Fur Company--had entered the region. Organized in 1808 by John Jacob Aster, this company became the principal competitor of the Hudson's Bay Company and established posts at Grand Portage, Grand

Marais, Vermilion Lake, Moose Lake, Basswood Lake, Rainy Lake, Rainy River, Roseau Lake, and Lake of the Woods. So keen was the competition that in 1833, the Hudson's Bay Company bought off their American rivals. The fur trade continued to be important in the region until the mid-19th century.

The International Boundary was long a controversial subject, the Quetico-Superior region being claimed at various times by France, England, and the United States. It was not until 1842 that, by the Webster-Ashburton Treaty, the boundary line was definitely established as the Pigeon River route. The fur trade played a principal role in the various negotiations determining the [United States-Canadian] boundary. The International Boundary from Lake Superior to Lake of the Woods is defined in the Treaty simply as "the 'customary waterway' of the voyageurs."⁶

⁶Morse, op. cit., p. 41.

The fur trade was an influence in shaping the destiny of Canada and part of the United States. It was an era that affected the culture of both nations. And all this could not have been possible without the services of the voyageurs--that hardy breed of men who, "...toiled over rough, mosquito-infested portages with packs of trade goods and furs, and paddled their canoes, forty strokes a minute or faster, sixty to eighty miles a day, from dawn to dusk, over lakes now lashed to a fury by storms, or again shimmering and still in the hot sun. Expertly, they guided their craft down treacherous rivers and through boiling rapids. In the winter they spent the short days at wilderness posts, doing their chores, often snowshoeing through white forests and over icebound lakes to trade with the Indians. They labored uncomplainingly, always obedient to their employers,"⁷ always gay and ready for a song.

⁷J. Arnold Bolz, Portage into the Past (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1960), p. 23.

The overall history of the portion of the Voyageurs Route located within the proposed park area, in a sense, is the history of the entire route from Lake Superior to Northwest Angle. As each part of the total 3,000-mile "Voyageurs Highway" from Lachine near Montreal to Fort Chipewyan on Lake Athabasca is different in various ways, so it is with the history of this particular section which is probably the most important link in the Voyageurs Route. Located as it was at the western terminus of the three separate routes originating on the shores of Lake Superior, and along the main thoroughfare where, beyond Rainy Lake, various branch routes fed the main artery, this stretch was the funnel between east and west. All traffic moving both east and west passed this way--the trade goods to the west, even to the Pacific, the furs to the east, the great explorers to the west; even the missionaries, and the boundary adjusters passed this way.

By the mid-19th century, the fur trade was on its way out. Steamboats, canals, and railroads spelled doom to the voyageurs and their birchbark canoes. New industries came--logging, commercial fishing, and farming--but none left its mark on the area and the Nation as did the era of the voyageurs.





International Falls, Minnesota, right, is separated from Fort Francis, Canada, by Rainy River. Rainy Lake to the horizon beyond. Smoke rises from the Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company mill.



Recreation facilities on the shoreline of Rainy Lake near International Falls.

Landownership and Present Development

Ownership throughout the area studied is somewhat complex, as illustrated by the accompanying landownership map. Approximately 63 percent of the 75,000 acres of land on the Kabetogama Peninsula is owned by the Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company; 13 percent by other private owners; 14 percent by the State; 7 percent by the U.S. Forest Service; and 3 percent by the counties.

The area has two basic industries--commercial logging with primary emphasis on pulpwood production, and recreation which emphasizes water-oriented activities such as fishing, boating, hunting and their related services.

Logging is the economic base upon which much of the immediate region's income depends. Trees used for pulp account for most of the logging with lumber production playing a relatively minor part. Logging roads have opened much of Kabetogama Peninsula for this use and more are planned. The Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company has a policy of not cutting along their shoreline property for a distance back 200 to 600 feet from the water's edge and has made a genuine effort to maintain the fine wooded character of the lakefront. The State of Minnesota does not permit cutting along the shoreline on its land, and the Shipstead-Nolan Act, passed in the early 1930's, protects shoreline on Federal land.

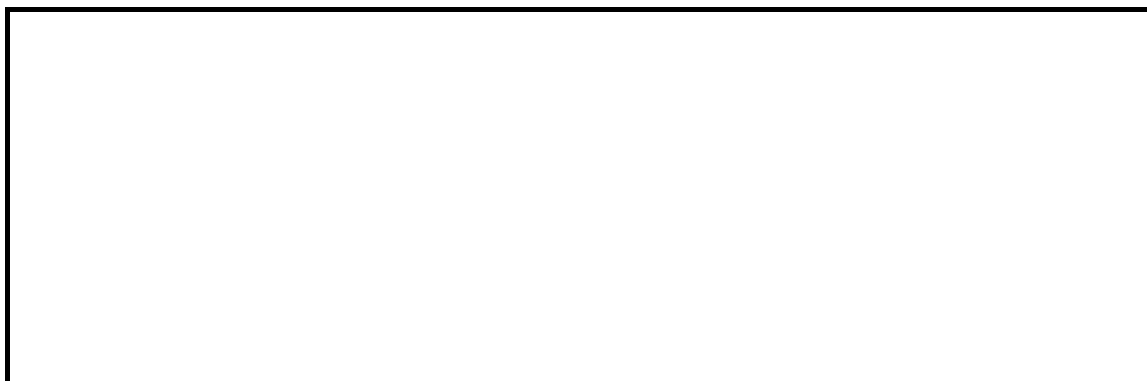
The recreation business is becoming more important to this general area and has tremendous potential. Businesses are associated primarily with fishing; hunting; boat rental, launching, and operating facilities; summer home development; and food service. Most of these developments are concentrated at three locations: (1) Along the Southwest shoreline of Kabetogama Lake, including the village of Kabetogama; (2) Ash River Trail at the head of Sullivan Bay; and (3) International Falls and vicinity. Other vacation developments, primarily summer homes and cabins, are few in number, widely scattered and accessible only by water. At present, fishing is the primary recreation use in this area. Commercial fishing, especially on Rainy Lake, competes to a degree with sport fishing. There are many opportunities for swimming, and the water is not especially cold during summer months.

Relationship to the Superior National Forest

Just east of the proposed national park, between it and the famous Boundary Waters Canoe Area, is a section of the Superior National Forest which includes Crane Lake, Sand Point Lake, a substantial part of Namakan Lake and numerous other lakes and streams. This area, which contains outstanding scenic and historical values, is also an integral part of the Voyageurs Highway and the entire environmental complex of the park proposal.

Here the three inland routes of the fur traders joined and then extended westward as one route to the Rainy River and beyond. At Crane Lake, just below the Vermilion River gorge and near its mouth, once stood a trading post built by one of LaVérendrye's men in 1736. This was the western terminus of the St. Louis River route from Lake Superior.

Due to its location the Crane Lake area will be a natural point of entrance to both the proposed national park and the Boundary Waters Canoe Area. Because of this close relationship, it is urged that the Department of Agriculture and the Department of the Interior cooperate in the development of comparable land management programs and policies for recreational development and use including the preservation and interpretation of historic sites and other features of interest.





Outstanding scenery - Namakan Narrows between Sand Point and Namakan Lakes



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Proposed Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota



THE OPPORTUNITY

The glaciated lake country of the north central United States represents an unusual and important recreation asset to the Nation. For many years it has attracted vacationists in untold numbers and where within reach of large population centers, there is heavy day and weekend use. Private enterprise--canoe outfitting establishments, resorts, summer cabins, and camps for boys and girls--is largely responsible for this growing use. The State and some of the counties and municipalities have also set aside a number of parks featuring lakes and their surrounding forests.

Of great significance was the establishment of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area in the Superior National Forest and the adjacent Quetico Provincial Park in Canada just across the border. This outstanding wilderness country characterized by smaller waters, rivers, rapids, and gorges is largely limited by portages to canoes only.

A Voyageurs National Park would provide visitors the opportunity to participate in many other enjoyable activities. While canoes may be best suited to the narrow channels and the inland lakes, motorboats, launches, and even scheduled tour boats would be acceptable means of transportation and travel elsewhere.

Here along the Minnesota-Canadian border is an opportunity not only to preserve another magnificent portion of lake country, complementing what has already been done, but also to interpret the area's colorful human history and its unique scientific values.





A pleasing natural setting

Significance

The proposed Voyageurs National Park possesses a wide variety of significant values, but the one that will attract most visitors is its superlative scenery. The results of mountain building, erosion, and glaciation, plus an unusually beautiful forest and ground cover, it has no counterpart in the National Park System. Furthermore, no other section of the United States has such surface exposures of early Precambrian rocks. Here is the only remaining glaciated country of this character in the United States that is still relatively unchanged by man.

The atmosphere of the romantic and colorful days of the fur trade, the International Boundary Saga, and the spirit of the voyageur still prevail. History here is an intangible feeling and association, but no other part of the famous Voyageur's Highway was more influential than this one in the exploration and development of the United States and Canada.

The combination of its human history, the ancient rock exposures of the Canadian Shield, its superb wilderness scenery, the variety of plant and animal life, makes this area one of national significance and worthy of addition to the National Park System.





A magnificent scenic setting

Suitability

Fundamentally, this area is highly suited to preservation for public enjoyment. Most of it is free from manmade intrusions; the forests appear basically in a natural condition and the lakes are as beautiful as any between Rainy and Lake Superior. There is a good balance between unspoiled scenic beauty, scientific interest, and association with the history of the voyageurs.

This area lends itself uniquely to the interpretation and enjoyment of its physical as well as its historic features. In fact, these two aspects are so closely related that it is impossible to consider them separately. This is the type of country that made the voyageurs and their exploits possible. Without these waterways leading to the west, the stands of birch from which canoes were made, the beaver that both traders and explorers sought, the story of the opening up of the northwest would have been entirely different.

The proposed area is large enough to include the essential land and water needed for logical administration, development and protection, and for effective interpretation and use. In this proposal are opportunities for many other activities which do not conflict with basic preservation objectives.

The visitor can easily reach this interesting waterway by car, train or plane. Once at the shore of the lakes, he can quickly penetrate into the peaceful serenity of the interior by either motorboat or canoe. The boat will replace the car as the primary means of transportation throughout the park as no roads are intended or needed within this area.





Kabetogama Peninsula in the background to the north is but a short boat trip away from the resorts at Kabetogama Village.



Within easy hiking distance from the shore of Kabetogama Peninsula are small lakes where one may enjoy the peaceful wilderness atmosphere.

Feasibility

A number of feasibility considerations are involved in the establishment of the proposed Voyageurs National Park. Foremost among these is the complex landownership as shown on the accompanying landownership map.

Over 75 percent of the land on Kabetogama Peninsula is owned by the Minnesota and Ontario Paper Company and the State of Minnesota. The Mando Paper Company has been cutting timber on the peninsula for the past ten years and plans to increase its pulpwood operations in the future on a permanent sustained yield basis. The Company has been asked to consider exchanging its holdings for State land of comparable timber value elsewhere. The State has indicated willingness to consider this land exchange for the purpose of establishing the national park. Scattered tracts of Federal lands now administered by the U.S. Forest Service within the proposed park area may be transferred to the National Park Service without cost.

The establishment of a Voyageurs National Park would assure the preservation of this significant and scenic area for public use and enjoyment and would supplement Minnesota's broad program to provide for the varied recreation and conservation needs of the State. It is anticipated that the economic benefits to the State and local communities would be much greater than any tax loss which would result from land being removed from the tax rolls. The inspiration and enjoyment gained by park visitors from all over the country are benefits which cannot reasonably be measured in terms of economics.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Proposed Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota

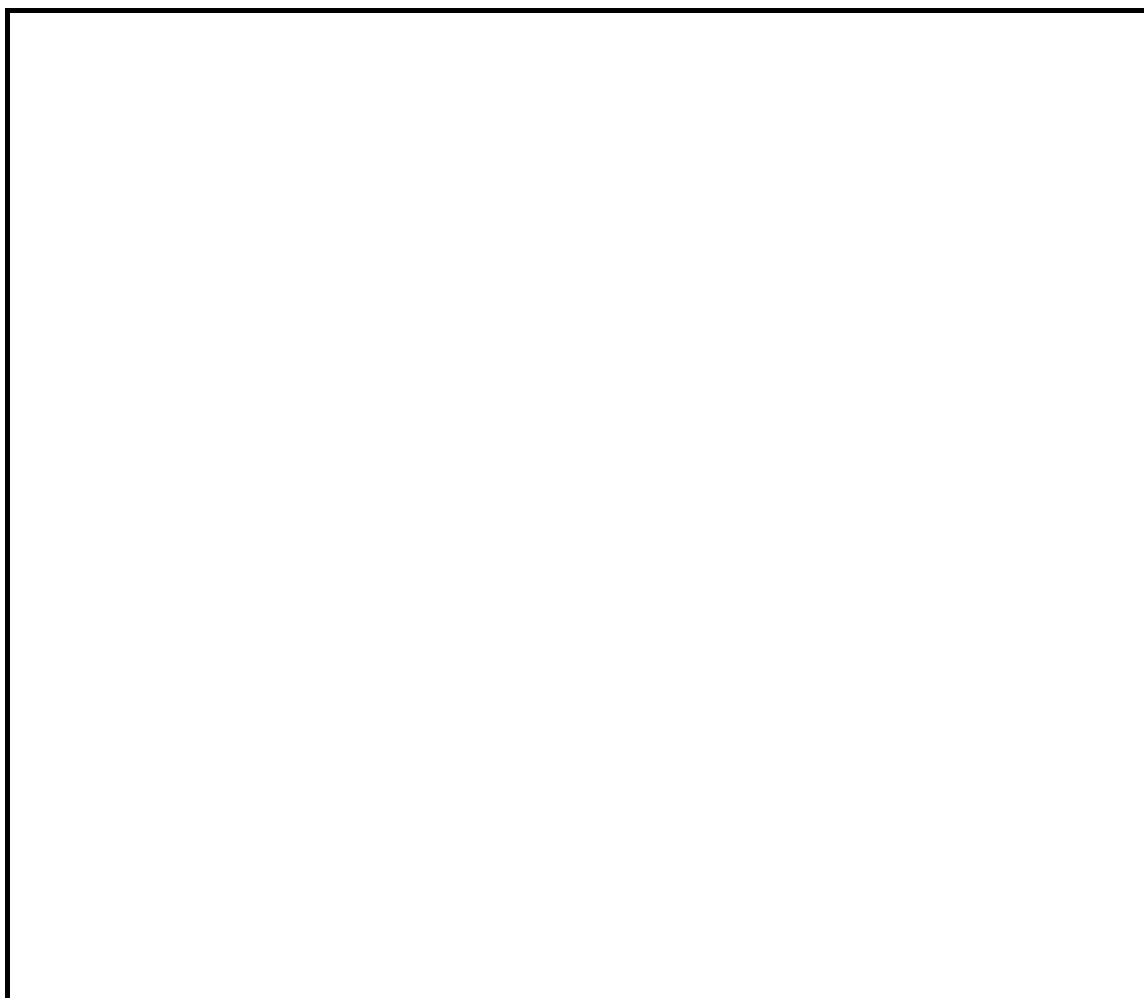


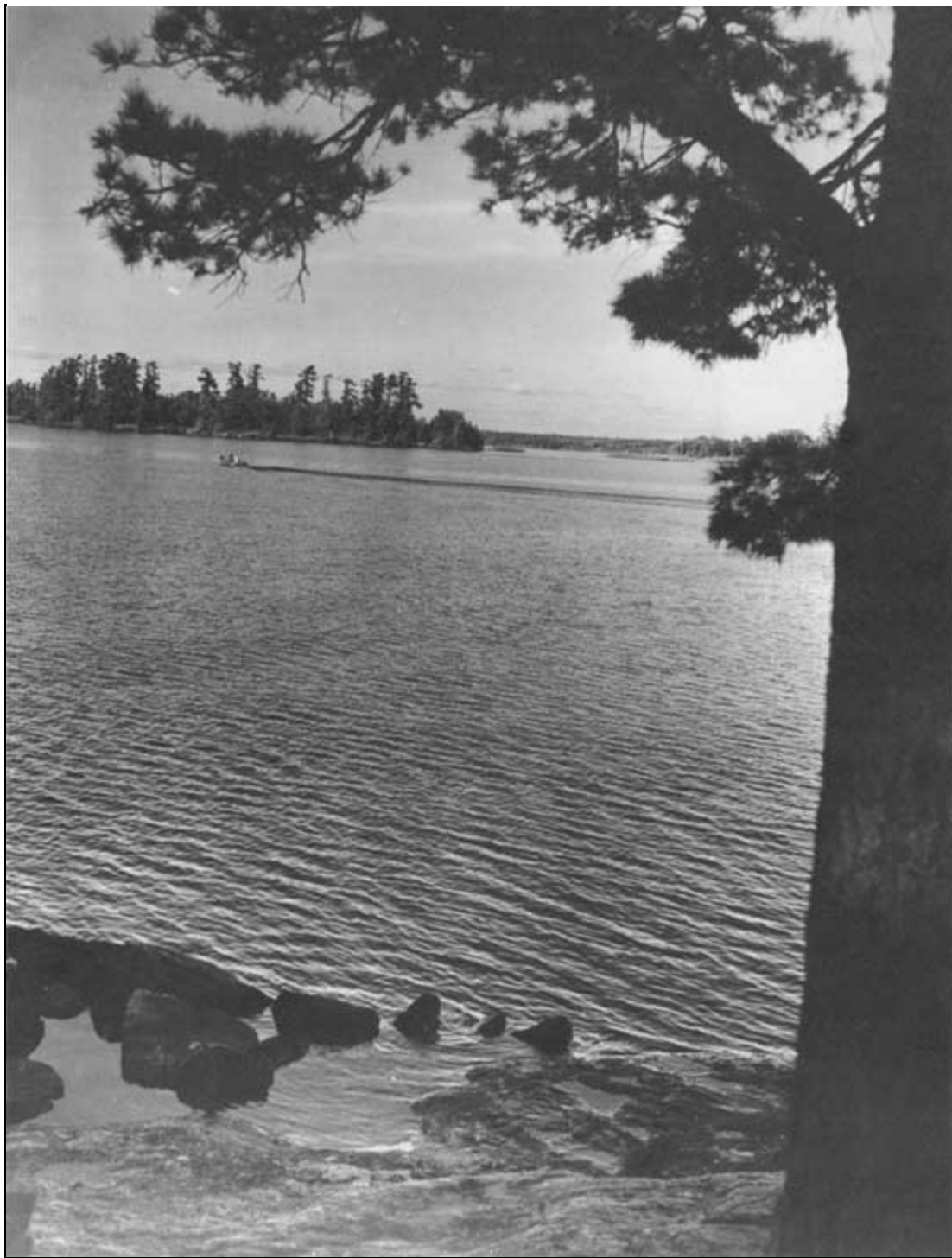
THE PROPOSAL

The area under study is of unusual interest because of its varied scenic, natural and historical resources which in combination are of national and possibly international significance. Among these resources are: an outstanding representation of Precambrian geology and a land surface shaped by continental glaciation; the superlative scenery of an unusually beautiful system of lakes, streams and forests; and historical associations with the fur trade and the era of exploration along the International Boundary.

These natural, historical and recreational resources are not adequately represented in the National Park System today. The area also meets suitability and feasibility requirements for a National Park.

Based on these conclusions it is recommended that this section of superlative lake country located between Black Bay of Rainy Lake and Namakan Lake, including Kabetogama Peninsula and Kabetogama and Rainy Lakes, plus a portion of Namakan Lake, be established as the Voyageurs National Park.





A fuller and more leisurely enjoyment by water

It is further recommended that the adjacent Crane-Namakan Lakes area of the Superior National Forest, which also has significant scenic, natural, and recreation resources and historical values, be studied by the Forest Service and the National Park Service to develop coordinated management plans to provide for public use and enjoyment and to further identify areas of historical significance and other features of interest.

It would also be most desirable if our good neighbors in Canada could institute a similar program so that management of the natural resources on both sides of the International Boundary would be comparable. The history as well as the natural resources of both Nations is so closely interwoven here that they are inseparable.



Boats will be the primary means of travel in the area.



The Proposed Area and its Administration

The proposed Voyageurs National Park covers approximately 168,000 acres of land and water--108,000 acres land, and 60,000 acres water. It is irregular in shape, about 24 miles

long from east to west, and varies in width from about 3 to 15 miles.

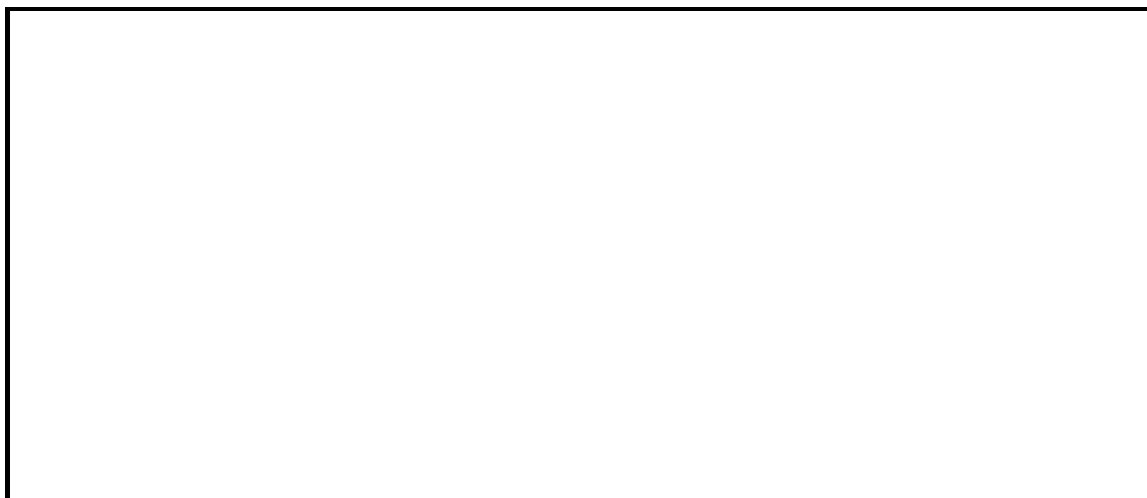
Preliminary studies disclosed that this area would be adequate for preservation and use of the varied resources involved and to provide for desired public and administrative facilities. The boundary bordering Kabetogama and Namakan Lakes was located close to the shoreline wherever possible so that present management and commercial use of the forest resources would be disturbed very little. The primary objective was to assure preservation of the lakeshores as seen by boaters, with shore-land extending to hill and ridge tops to accomplish this.

The Voyageurs National Park, water-resource based, is proposed as a unit of the National Park System to be administered under the provisions of the 1916 Act which established the National Park Service. Preservation for public enjoyment, therefore, would be the basic guiding principle.

Proposed Development and Use

The area offers an intriguing opportunity for a somewhat unusual pattern of use and enjoyment. A formula which is being considered would continue to limit access by roads, very much as it is now. All travel and use beyond the termini of these roads would be by water, with appropriate controls to limit boating to the more compatible types, allowing for motors, but also perhaps reserving some of the waters for canoes or hand-propelled craft. The whole idea would be to key developments, interpretation, and use to a fuller and more leisurely enjoyment by water and by trail. This approach could provide high quality experience, with essentially no scarring of the surroundings and a minimum of visible intrusive developments. Primary dependence on travel by boat instead of by car will greatly simplify preservation of the area.

Major park developments would probably be close to but separated from the existing communities of Kabetogama and Ash River Trail, and also to International Falls, which is the logical access point to the Rainy Lake section of the park. These communities and the surrounding areas should benefit from the project. The park developments would consist of administrative, interpretive, and visitor facilities which would, together with private facilities in the surrounding area, give each visitor the kind of accommodations and services best suited to his likes and means. Such developments would be concentrated within comparatively small areas but would be so located as to achieve a spacious park-like atmosphere. Primary planning consideration would be to preserve the naturalness of the area as much as possible and to make all developments blend inconspicuously with the landscape, especially as viewed from the lakes. Limited acreage outside the proposed park boundary shown on the map in this report would be required for such developments.





Above: Access and development at Kabetogama Village, Kabetogama Lake.
Below: Ash River access and development.



Boat rental facilities, from canoes to inboards, would be available, and docking facilities would be provided for all, boat owners and renters alike. Every means possible to assure the visitor an opportunity for travel over the waters would be provided. Guided tours would be available. These would be made by various means of transportation--roomy outboards for exploring the shallow bays and sparkling streams; and foot travel perhaps ending with a canoe experience on a small, intimate inland lake. Regularly scheduled boat service would

also be provided to take campers to isolated campgrounds, leave them, and return for them later.

Camping is an enjoyable activity in this country and indeed a necessary one for those who want to penetrate into the more remote wilderness portions. Campgrounds, from the modern types accessible by road to those reached only by boat or trail, would be provided. The latter would be strategically located on islands and along the shores of lakes and streams.



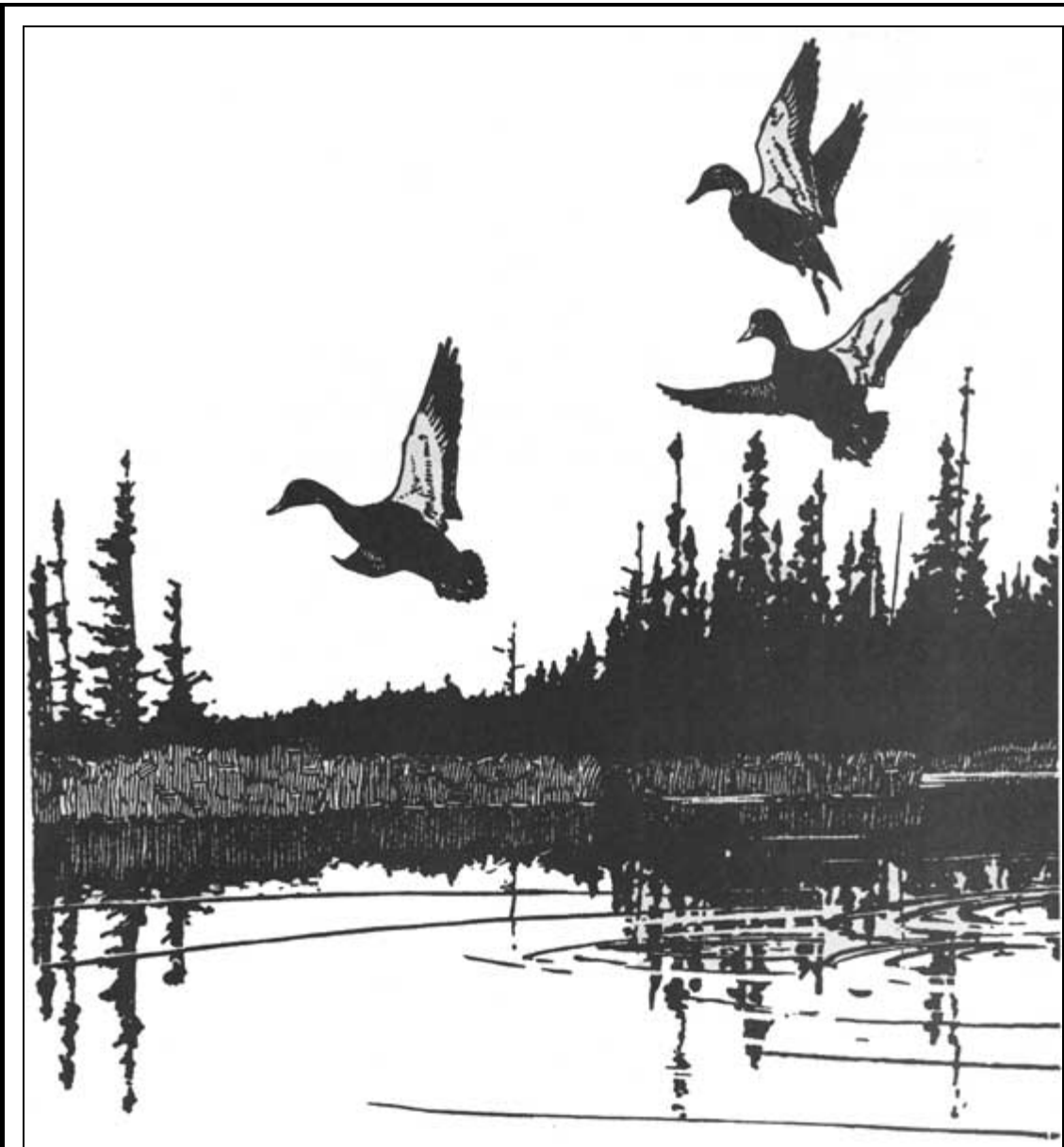
A wilderness camping experience on a lakeshore could be enjoyed by many.

From *Canoe Country* by Florence Page Jaques,
Illustrated by Francis Lee Jaques
Courtesy the University of Minnesota Press

Hiking trails would be developed extensively within the park because of the great potential and anticipated popularity of this activity.

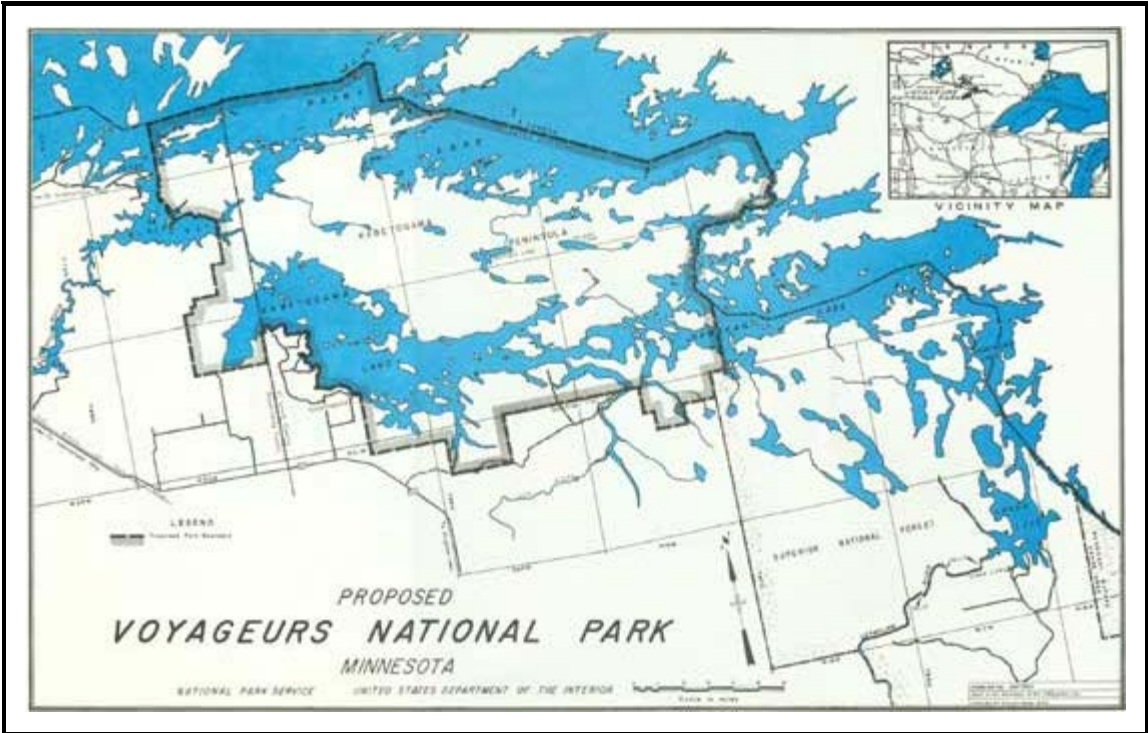
The varied opportunities in this park would provide rewarding experiences for those with interests in geology, botany, wildlife and history--as well as for those primarily interested in boating, fishing, camping, hiking, birdwatching and photography.

All these activities would be encouraged and made more meaningful by park naturalists and historians who would interpret the rich natural and human history of this region for the benefit of the visitor. Conducted boat trips, nature walks, and campfire, programs would enable those interested to have unforgettable experiences in the park. Interpretive markers, self-guiding nature trails, and wayside exhibits would provide interesting details of the natural and historical scene for the benefit of those exploring on their own.

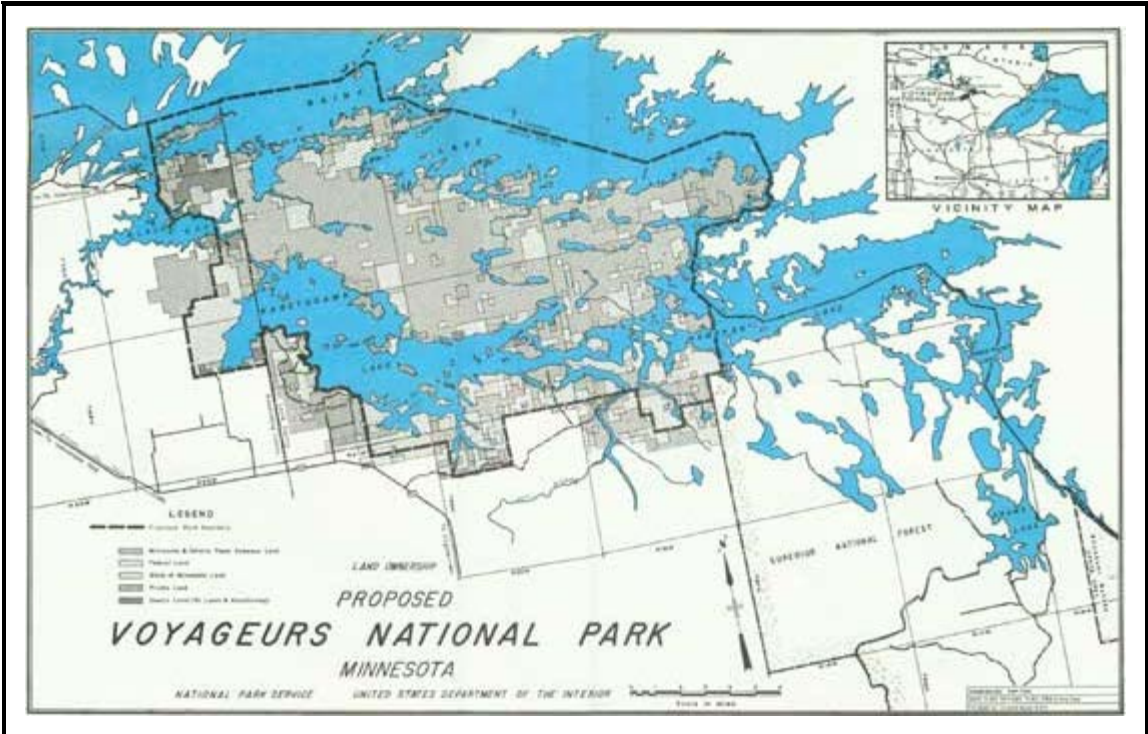


From *Canoe Country* by Florence Page Jaques,

Illustrated by Francis Lee Jaques
Courtesy the University of Minnesota Press



Proposed Voyageurs National Park. (click on image for a PDF version)



Proposed Voyageurs National Park (Land Ownership) (click on image for a PDF version)

voya/proposed/proposal.htm
Last Updated: 03-Feb-2009

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Proposed Voyageurs National Park, Minnesota



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS STATEMENT CONCERNING THE PROPOSED VOYAGEURS NATIONAL PARK Minnesota

1. What is the proposal?

The National Park Service has proposed setting aside an area of approximately 168,000 acres (108,000 acres of land and 60,000 acres of water) along the International Boundary in Minnesota to be preserved as a National Park for the enjoyment and inspiration of the people of the Nation. The area lies east of International Falls and includes Kabetogama Peninsula, Kabetogama Lake, and parts of Rainy and Namakan Lakes. The park would contain the superlative scenery of an unusually beautiful system of lakes, streams and forests; an outstanding representation of Precambrian geology and a land surface shaped by continental glaciation; and historical associations with the fur trade and the era of exploration along the International Boundary. Preservation of the area's wild and natural qualities while allowing its use would be the basic objective of all planning, development and administration.

Copies of the National Park Service report, a proposed Voyageurs National Park, may be obtained by writing to the Regional Director, National Park Service, Midwest Region, 1709 Jackson Street, Omaha, Nebraska, 68102.

2. What is the National Park Service and what is its job?

The National Park Service, a Bureau of the Department of the Interior, is the agency of the Federal Government established by the Congress to preserve this Nation's outstanding scenic, scientific, and historic areas so that they may be enjoyed by all. More specifically, the Act of August 25, 1916, which established the Service, stated that the purpose of National Parks, Monuments and similar reservations is, "to conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations."

3. What is a National Park?

A National Park is a spacious area essentially of primitive or wilderness character which contains scenic, natural, and historic qualities so outstanding that its preservation intact has been provided for by its having been designated and set aside by the Federal Government for the benefit, enjoyment, and inspiration of all the people.

National Parks must be spacious to allow for protection of the scene, to maintain a reasonable balance of the plants and animals which are a natural part of that scene and, at the same time, allow for public use. Only areas of the most outstanding scenic, scientific and historic values are able to qualify for National Park status. Hence, there are only 31 National Parks in the United States today. National Park status is a guarantee of quality; many people visit parks just because they are National Parks--Voyageurs well qualifies to join this select group.

4. How is a National Park established?

An act of Congress is required to authorize a National Park. After being so authorized, a park is formally established when enough land has been acquired to form an administrable unit. The time lapse between a park's authorization and the actual establishment may vary considerably depending on the program of land acquisition.

The first National Parks were established in the west from land already owned by the Federal Government. Such public land could be designated as National Parks or National Monuments without land purchase. For new parks in the east, Congress usually specified in the authorizing legislation that there be no appropriation of Federal funds for land acquisition. The land needed was acquired by the States or by private donation and conveyed to the Federal Government for administration by the National Park Service. Some recent legislation authorizes Federal appropriation of funds for land purchase. Undoubtedly, however, the greater the State's participation in the acquisition of lands, the sooner an area could be established.

5. Should a Voyageurs National Park be authorized, under what procedures would private lands and dwellings be acquired?

Normally, land may be acquired by purchase, exchange, donation, or should Federal land be involved, by transfer.

Should the Federal Government purchase any of the land, it would do so through direct negotiation with the property owners on the basis of fair market values determined by non-Federal, qualified appraisers. Every reasonable effort would be made to reach amicable agreements with the owners for acquisition of their properties. While the United States has authority to acquire lands within an authorized Federal area by eminent domain, it is the policy of the National Park Service to resort to such action only in those instances where necessary to clear title, to provide a place for a needed public facility, and to prevent adverse types of development and use.

In developing a plan, it is necessary to decide what lands are required to achieve the public objective. Should the project be authorized, detailed studies would be needed to determine the final boundary. Ownership and severance considerations would then be pertinent factors.

6. As private properties in the park are acquired, would home owners be permitted to remain?

Where continued occupancy does not defeat or seriously impair the major preservation and public use purposes of a National Park, the Service frequently buys property subject to lifetime or for specified periods of occupancy by their owners, if they so wish. In such cases, the owners are paid a fair market value for the property, less a fair market value of the use right retained by the owners. Somewhat similar arrangements might be worked out where camps or clubs are concerned.

7. How long would it take for development of the park after establishment?

A Master Plan for the park would be prepared by the National Park Service, including detailed plans for access roads, trails and facilities needed. Development normally would be programmed over a number of years for a new park of this size.

Accomplishment of proposed developments would depend on the rate of annual appropriations by the Congress. However, the Service would hope to provide, as soon as practicable, basic facilities which would enable the park visitors to use and enjoy the area.

8. What would be the economic benefits if a park is established in this area?

The National Park Service has contracted with the University of Minnesota, Duluth, for an economic study of the effect establishment of a National Park would have on the surrounding area. Included in the study will be a determination of the effect on tax receipts of local governments; an evaluation of the effect on the local economic contributions of forest products industries; estimates of the number of visitors to be expected annually and estimates of average length of stay by visitors; the extent and local impact of new public and private investment likely to result in the study area; and an estimation of the net effect on income and employment in the study area.

This study is scheduled to be completed by November 15, 1964, and the results will be made public.

Similar studies elsewhere have demonstrated that National Parks have resulted in economic benefit to local communities and the States. A University of Wyoming study of the economic effect of Grand Teton National Park, Wyoming, showed that from 1950 to 1958 the retail sales index of Teton County rose from 122 to 218; the total assessment value of real and personal property increased from \$4,696,412 to \$8,190,768; and the revenue from a sales and use tax increased from \$7,645,667, to \$15,370,637.

A travel study at Glacier National Park showed that in the 12-month period ending in September 1951, people from all the States, the District of Columbia, Canada, and other countries spent some \$4 million in and around the Park and an additional \$8 million in the State of Montana. A similar survey of the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, made in 1956 by State Highway Departments and the Bureau of Public Roads, showed that the 2.5 million people who visited the Park during one year spent more than \$28 million within a 30-mile radius of the Park. More recently, it has been estimated that in 1964 the tourist business in the Gatlinburg, Tennessee area will amount to approximately \$42 million, and that visitation to the Great Smoky National Park will be close to 5-1/2 million.

9. How many people would be employed in such a National Park?

Once the park would be fully developed, it is anticipated there would be 20 to 30 permanent employees, plus a considerable number of seasonal employees. Permanent positions are filled under the rules and regulations of the U.S. Civil Service Commission. Clerical and maintenance personnel are usually recruited from the local area.

10. What general visitor uses would be appropriate in a Voyageurs National Park and to what extent would necessary facilities for these uses be provided?

The varied opportunities in this park would provide rewarding experiences for those interested in geology, botany, wildlife, and history, as well as those interested primarily in fishing, camping, hiking, birdwatching, photography, and boating.

Conducted boat trips, nature walks, campfire programs, interpretive markers, self-guiding nature trails and wayside exhibits would provide interesting details of the natural and historical scene. Visitor facilities would consist of campgrounds, boat rental and docking facilities, and visitor centers. Any developments needed would be designed and located to intrude on the natural scene as little as possible.

11. What provisions would be made within the park for meals, lodging, and related services?

The National Park Service plan does not provide for motels, lodges, cabins, and related services within the proposed park, so long as these are adequately provided outside the park. There are several communities close to the area which should have an opportunity to provide

necessary visitor facilities through private enterprise. Such efforts could well make important contributions to the economy of these communities.

12. Would fishing, hunting and trapping be permitted within the park?

Fishing would be an important use. The Federal Government does not issue permits for this use, since fishing in National Parks and Monuments is usually in conformity with the laws of the States within which they are located, including the application of any State license requirements. Management as related to fishing would be in cooperation with the State Department of Conservation and the Bureau of Sports Fisheries and Wildlife of the Department of the Interior.

Hunting and trapping are not compatible with the basic purpose of establishing an area as a National Park to preserve its natural values. Public enjoyment of native wildlife is a major purpose of park conservation.

13. What circulation systems would be provided in the park?

Access roads would be limited much as now. Travel and use beyond the termini of these roads would be by trail and water.

"As a primary goal, we would recommend that the biotic associations within each park be maintained, or where necessary recreated, as nearly as possible in the condition that prevailed when the area was first visited by the white man. A national park should represent a vignette of primitive America."

Advisory Board on Wildlife Management
U.S. Department of the Interior
Wildlife Management in the National Parks
March 4, 1963

Prepared by:

Midwest Region
National Park Service
Omaha, Nebraska
September 1964

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