

THE STORY OF THE GRAND PORTAGE¹

Modern map-makers have the disagreeable habit, in the interest of economy, of dismembering the state of Minnesota and depicting the northeastern corner separately on a little inset map. Few people today realize that this little triangle of land, so cavalierly treated by our draughtsmen, was during many years the scene of more human activities than took place in all the rest of the state; that more than thirty years before the founding of Fort Snelling, which we are wont to look upon as the real beginning of Minnesota history, upwards of a thousand white men were assembled year after year at a post within this area; and that here occurred the only military operations of the American Revolution within the borders of the state.

The explanation of the importance of this region is to be sought in the realm of geography. The Pigeon River, which now forms the international boundary at Lake Superior, was, in the days of water transportation, the best natural highway between the Great Lakes or the St. Lawrence system and the great northwestern section of the continent, with its thousands of lakes and streams draining into Hudson Bay or the Arctic Ocean. But the Pigeon River, through the last twenty miles of its course before it flows into Lake Superior, is so obstructed by falls and by cascades in rocky canyons as to be impossible of navigation. On the Canadian side the land is too mountainous and the distance too great for portaging to be practicable; but on the American side the line of the lake shore is roughly parallel to the river, and about seven or eight miles from the mouth of the river a little bay forms a natural

¹ Read at the state historical convention under the auspices of the Minnesota Historical Society at Duluth, July 28, 1922. The writer desires to acknowledge the assistance of Miss Mary E. Wheelhouse and Miss Livia Appel of the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society in the assembling of the materials on which this paper is based.

harbor from which a portage of about nine miles over not too difficult country can be made to the Pigeon River above the cascades.

That this *Grand Portage* or great carrying place, as it was early designated by the French, was used by the Indians for generations before the advent of white men in the region is almost a certainty, although apparently not susceptible of proof. When and under what circumstances the first white man crossed the portage and who he was are questions which cannot now be answered. Nor do we know who was the first white man to visit the little bay at the eastern end of the trail, which takes its name from the portage. Radisson and Groseilliers are believed to have reached the north shore of Lake Superior in 1660, but it is not likely that they went as far east as Grand Portage.² Du Luth coasted along the north shore in 1679 and established there a fort or trading post, the location of which is generally believed to have been near what is now Fort William, about thirty miles northeast of Grand Portage. Some writers assert that this post was located at Grand Portage and was thus the first establishment of white men in Minnesota, but the evidence in the main is against this interpretation. It is highly probable, however, that Du Luth or some of his men entered the bay at Grand Portage, and they may have traversed the portage itself. Fort Kaministiquia, as Du Luth's post was called, was maintained for several years, then was abandoned, and was reestablished in 1717. That the traders who made this their headquarters failed to discover and make use of the Grand Portage is unbelievable.³

² Warren Upham, "Groseilliers and Radisson," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 10: 506, 513 (part 2). Reuben G. Thwaites in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 11: 96, n., interprets a sentence in Radisson's narrative as a reference to the Grand Portage. See also Lawrence J. Burpee, *The Search for the Western Sea*, lvi, 212, 307, n. (Toronto, 1908).

³ William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 1: 23, 44 (St. Paul, 1921). A statement in a letter of a French officer written in 1722 with reference to the best route from Kaministiquia to the site of a proposed post in the interior is probably a reference to the Pigeon River route. See Pierre Margry, ed., *Découvertes et établissements des Français*, 6: 516 (Paris

The first white man to leave a record of the use of the portage, however, is the Sieur de la Vérendrye, who crossed it on his famous expedition along the boundary waters in 1731. In his account he calls it the Grand Portage and refers to it in such a way as to lead to the inference that it was already well known by that name.⁴ From this time until the French and Indian War French traders were pushing constantly farther and farther into the great Northwest, and the indications are that practically all the traffic passed over the Grand Portage route. A post was undoubtedly established at the eastern end of the trail, where the goods destined for the trade were landed from the large canoes used on the lake and prepared for the nine-mile carry to the Pigeon River.⁵ At the western end of the trail, where the goods were loaded into smaller canoes suitable for river transportation, some sort of shelter probably was erected during the French period, but of this no information has been found. During the last conflict between the French and the English in America, which terminated with the surrender of Canada in 1760, the trade on Lake Superior and westward appears to have been abandoned, and the Indians were forced to resort to the posts of the Hudson's Bay Company far to the north or to get along without white man's goods.⁶

1886); Warren Upham, in *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 1:276 (New York, 1908); and Burpee, *Search for the Western Sea*, 202.

⁴ Margry, *Découvertes*, 6:586, 591.

⁵ Sir Alexander Mackenzie, in his *Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America*, viii (Philadelphia, 1802), refers to "the Grande Portage, where the French had a principal establishment, and was the line of their communication with the interior country. It was once destroyed by fire." Benjamin Sulte, in an article on "Early Forts in the North-West," dated 1919 and published in his *Mélanges historiques*, 10:139 (Montreal, 1922), says that "between 1718 and 1720 La Noue erected a fort at Grand Portage," but gives no indication of the evidence on which the statement is based.

⁶ Mackenzie, *Voyages*, vi; Louis F. Masson, "Esquisse Historique," in his *Les bourgeois de la compagnie du nord-ouest*, 1:9 (Quebec, 1889); Alexander Henry, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories*, 195 (New York, 1809); Gordon C. Davidson, *The North West Com-*

In November, 1761, a British garrison took possession of the post at Michilimackinac or Mackinac between Lakes Michigan and Huron. Shortly before this, however, one Alexander Henry, who had outfitted at Albany, New York, arrived at the post prepared to engage in the Indian trade on the upper lakes, and soon after other English traders made their appearance in the vicinity. If a narrative written nearly sixty years afterward is reliable, a party of these traders, accompanied by a military escort, made its way through Lake Superior to Grand Portage in May, 1762, this being the first voyage through Lake Superior under the British flag. This, if true, would indicate that Grand Portage was recognized at this time as the most important place in the western part of Lake Superior. The Indians of the Northwest, however, did not welcome the substitution of the English for the French; in 1763 the post of Mackinac was surprised, the garrison was massacred, one of the traders was killed, and the others were taken captive. This outbreak, which was a part of the conspiracy of Pontiac, put an end to British attempts at trade in the Northwest until the close of the Indian war in 1765.⁷

In that year Alexander Henry began trading operations at Chequamegon Bay, on the southern shore of Lake Superior, whence he dispatched an agent with some Indians to Fond du Lac; and in a year or two traders were established at various places around the lake and were making their way over the Grand Portage to the old French posts in the interior.⁸ When Jonathan Carver, in 1767, found himself stranded on the upper Mississippi for lack of supplies, which he had expected to get from traders at Prairie du Chien, he determined to go to Lake Superior "in hopes of meeting at the Grand Portage . . . the traders that annually go from Michilimack-

pany, 33 (University of California, *Publications in History*, vol. 7 — Berkeley, 1918); Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1: 53.

⁷ Henry, *Travels and Adventures*, part 1; "Thompson Maxwell's Narrative — 1760-1763," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 11: 215.

⁸ Henry, *Travels and Adventures*, 192-196; Mackenzie, *Voyages*, viii; Davidson, *North West Company*, 34.

inac to the northwest; of whom I doubted not but that I should be able to procure goods enough to answer my purpose." Arriving at Grand Portage in July, Carver found about three hundred Indians assembled there "to meet the traders from Michilimackinac, who make this their road to the Northwest." The Indians received him kindly, gave him much information about the lakes and streams of the interior, and entertained him with a marvelous incantation and a prophecy, which was promptly fulfilled. Finally the traders arrived, but Carver was unable to procure from them the supplies which he needed for the continuance of his explorations and so he made his way eastward through Lake Superior. Carver makes no mention of any post at Grand Portage and from his narrative it is evident that at that time the place was occupied only intermittently.⁹

Alexander Henry made his first trip to the country west of Lake Superior in 1775. Arriving at Grand Portage on June 28, he "found the traders in a state of extreme reciprocal hostility, each pursuing his interests in such a manner as might most injure his neighbour. The consequences were very hurtful to the morals of the Indians." The transportation of Henry's goods across the portage was "a work of seven days of severe and dangerous exertion."¹⁰

The rapid increase in the trade by way of Grand Portage is indicated by a memorandum drawn up by General Haldimand in January, 1778. At that time it amounted annually to forty thousand pounds and employed five hundred persons, who, "for about a month in the summer season, have a general rendezvous at the Portage, and for the refreshing and comforting those who are employed in the more distant voyages the Traders from hence have built tolerable Houses; and in order to cover them from any insult from the numerous savage Tribes, who resort there during that time, have made

⁹ Jonathan Carver, *Travels through the Interior Parts of North America in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768*, 93, 106 (London, 1778).

¹⁰ Henry, *Travels and Adventures*, 238.

stockades around them." The memorandum goes on to state that there was some jarring of interests at Grand Portage and that from the lack of officers representing the government in the region the traders had found it necessary to provide some show and parade such as the firing of cannon to signalize the arrival of the brigades and the distribution of medals — the purpose of this being to impress the Indians.¹¹

The antagonisms among traders representing separate interests, possible dangers from the Indians, and above all the fear that disaffected persons at the portage might send supplies to the American troops then operating in the Illinois country were the reasons for the sending of a military expedition from Mackinac to Grand Portage about June 1, 1778. On May 18 John Askin, the commissary at Mackinac, wrote to M. Beausoleille, the clerk of the Northwest traders at Grand Portage, to inform him that he would have "an officer and several soldiers to pass the summer" there, and to direct him to have a house, equipped with a chimney, ready to receive them. The letter concludes with the following remarkable sentences, of which no explanation will be attempted: "I need two pretty Slave girls from 9 to 16 years old. Have the goodness to ask the Gentlemen to procure two for me." The officer detailed for duty at this northwesternmost point of British military operations during the Revolution was Lieutenant Thomas Bennett of the Eighth Regiment of Foot, and his detachment consisted of about twelve soldiers. Their operations at Grand Portage included the construction of a small fort, at the expense of the traders, and possibly the laying out of a road across the portage. Apparently they left in the fall, for the next year the traders petitioned for another detachment. Major De Peyster, in command at Mackinac, protested that, in view of the imminent danger of his being attacked by the rebels, he could not spare the troops; and no evidence has been found as to whether or not they were sent.¹²

¹¹ *Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collections*, 19: 337-339.

¹² *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 11: 142, 19: 237, 239, 243; *Michi-*

By this time the Northwest trade had grown to such proportions and the competition between different interests was resulting in so many abuses that movements were under way for consolidation ; and, after several preliminary "joint stocks," the famous Northwest Company was organized in 1783.¹³ The next twenty years comprise the greatest period in the history of the Grand Portage. The Northwest Company had a fort or stockade on the bay, which consisted of an enclosure of palisades twenty-four by thirty rods in size. The buildings within the fort, according to a contemporary description, were "sixteen in number made with cedar and white spruce fir split with whip saws after being squared, the Roofs are covered with Shingles of Cedar and Pine, most of their posts, Doors and windows, are painted with Spanish brown. Six of these buildings are Store Houses for the company's Merchandise and Furs, &c., the rest are dwelling houses shops compting house and Mess House — they have also a wharf or quay for their vessels to unload and Load."¹⁴ The company had a vessel of ninety-five tons burden which made four or five trips to Grand Portage each summer. In the bay was a large canoe yard where seventy canoes were constructed annually for use in the trade.¹⁵

During July and August, Grand Portage was a very busy place. Here the brigades from Montreal, with goods for the trade of the ensuing winter, accompanied by two of the Montreal partners, met the wintering partners and other traders

gan Pioneer and Historical Collections, 9: 356; 19: 345, 372; Davidson, *North West Company*, 28. Davidson states that a detachment was stationed at Grand Portage "in 1777 and succeeding years."

¹³ Davidson, *North West Company*, 8-14.

¹⁴ Anonymous journal of 1793 in the Masson Papers in the library of McGill University, Montreal, quoted in Davidson, *North West Company*, 237. A somewhat different version of parts of this document is in Burpee, *Search for the Western Sea*, 306. For other descriptions of the post, see Mackenzie, *Voyages*, xliii; Daniel W. Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels*, 40 (Andover, 1820); and George Heriot, *Travels through the Canadas*, 203 (London, 1807).

¹⁵ Heriot, *Travels*, 204.

coming in from their posts scattered throughout the Northwest from the upper Red River to Lake Athabasca. Here was held the annual meeting of the company, at which arrangements were made and agreements entered into for the ensuing year. Here the employees received, and largely spent, their annual wages. The partners, traders, clerks, and guides, to the number of two or three hundred lived in the fort and ate in the great dining hall, and outside were the camps of the pork-eaters and the winterers, as the canoemen from Montreal and the interior respectively were called. These *engagés* subsisted principally upon pork and hominy, with plentiful supplies of liquor and tobacco; but the food served in the dining hall included bread, salt pork, beef, ham, fish, venison, butter, peas, corn, potatoes, tea, and wine. There was even plenty of milk, for a herd of cows was kept at Grand Portage. In the evenings the great hall was often the scene of much merriment, and interesting accounts may be read of festive balls at which the dusky maidens of the forest are reported to have danced very well and to have conducted themselves with much propriety. Besides the resident Indians, many others congregated about the fort during the summer.¹⁶

The task of transporting the packs of supplies and furs across the portage was a long and arduous one and required the services of a hundred men for several weeks. Parts of the trail were often in very bad condition being "knee-deep in mud and clay, and so slippery as to make walking tedious." The packs

¹⁶ Masson, *Bourgeois*, 2: 466, 480; Mackenzie, *Voyages*, xliii-xlv; Harmon, *Voyages and Travels*, 41-43; Heriot, *Travels*, 204; Davidson *North West Company*, 22, 204, 230; William W. Warren, "History of the Ojibways," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 5: 379. See also the "Accounts of the Fur-trade, extracted from the journal of Count Andriani of Milan, who travelled in the interior parts of America in the year 1791," in the Duke de la Rochefoucault Liancourt, *Travels through the United States of North America, the Country of the Iroquois, and Upper Canada, in the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*, 1: 325-334 (London, 1799). The statements are here made that "a fort . . . garrisoned with fifty men" was maintained at Grand Portage and that "in this place there is frequently a concourse of one thousand people and upward."

weighed ninety pounds each and two or more were carried by the men on their backs, the round trip of eighteen miles requiring about six hours. How many thousands of trips back and forth across this trail were made during the entire period, it is impossible to estimate, but it is small wonder that the soil still shows evidences of the trampling of many feet. In 1788 the company requested a grant of land along the route to enable it to construct a wagon road over the trail. The request was denied by the council at Quebec, probably because it would have given the company a monopoly of the route, but later on the trail was improved so that ox-carts could be used on it.¹⁷

At the western end of the portage, where it met the Pigeon River, was another stockade enclosing several buildings, which was known as Fort Charlotte. Here the goods were stored until the traders were ready to load them into their canoes and start for the wintering grounds. Of the history of this fort little has been ascertained as yet, but it evidently was a place of considerable importance for many years.¹⁸

The Northwest Company was not able to maintain a complete monopoly over the trade which passed across the Grand Portage. Rival companies were established from time to time, usually to flourish a few years and then amalgamate with "the Great Company." One of these rivals, the X. Y. Company, which operated from 1797 to 1804, had a separate establishment at Grand Portage and also, probably, at Fort Charlotte, for the map drawn by the surveyors for the boundary com-

¹⁷ Alexander Henry, the younger, in Elliott Coues, ed., *New Light on the Early History of the Greater Northwest*, 1:6 (New York, 1897); Mackenzie, *Voyages*, xlii; Henry Y. Hind, *Narrative of the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition of 1857*, 1:74 (London, 1860); George Bryce, *Mackenzie, Selkirk, Simpson*, 12 (*The Makers of Canada*, vol. 8, Parkman edition — Toronto, 1909); Davidson, *North West Company*, 23, 49, n., 204, 211, 231. For an account of the method of carrying over portages see John Johnston in Masson, *Bourgeois*, 2:165.

¹⁸ Harmon, *Voyages and Travels*, 43; Henry, in Coues, *New Light*, 1:6; Heriot, *Travels*, 205.

mission in 1824 indicates the outlines of two stockades at the western end of the portage.¹⁹

At the very beginning of this period of the greatest activity on the Grand Portage, the land over which it ran became, by virtue of the treaty of 1783, a part of the United States. The boundary, as laid down in the treaty, was somewhat indefinite, but it was generally understood by the traders that it had been fixed at the Pigeon River. So long as the military posts on the American side of the line in the Great Lakes region remained in the hands of the British, there was little likelihood that the traders would be disturbed; and those posts, for reasons which need not be considered here, were not surrendered until 1796. Soon after the occupation of Mackinac by an American garrison, however, intimations were given to the traders that a revenue officer might be sent to Grand Portage to collect duty on the great quantity of goods being imported there into the United States. As a result of this threat, and also, perhaps, of a desire to avoid the difficulties of the long carrying place, the Northwest Company began casting about for another route to the interior. In 1798 the Kaministiquia route, by way of Dog Lake to the boundary waters, was discovered, or rediscovered, for it had been known to the French; and in 1801 the company commenced the erection of a new headquarters at the mouth of the Kaministiquia River. To this, subsequently, was given the name of Fort William.²⁰

Apparently the X. Y. Company retained its headquarters at Grand Portage until the union of the two companies in

¹⁹ Harmon, *Voyages and Travels*, 40; Coues, *New Light*, 7, n.; John B. Moore, *History and Digest of the International Arbitrations to Which the United States Has Been a Party*, 6: map 57 (Washington, 1898). Since the above was written the outlines of the two stockades have been located on the ground. See *post*, n. 29.

²⁰ Roderic McKenzie, "Reminiscences," in Masson, *Bourgeois*, 1: 46-48; Warren in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 5: 292; Coues, *New Light*, 220, n.; Davidson, *North West Company*, 48, 105. David Thompson says that a United States collector landed at Grand Portage in 1800 and declared his intention of levying duties. See quotation in Burpee, "Highways of the Fur Trade," in Royal Society of Canada, *Transactions*, series 3, vol. 8, section 2, p. 188 (September, 1914).

1804,²¹ but thereafter the greatness of the place was a thing of the past. A local trading post was maintained by the company at Grand Portage until after the War of 1812, but the portage itself was little used, and apparently Fort Charlotte was allowed to fall into decay.²² During this war a British trader is said to have visited Grand Portage for the purpose of endeavoring to enlist the Chippewa Indians there resident against the Americans.²³ At the close of the War of 1812, Congress passed an act excluding foreigners from the fur trade in American territory, and Astor's American Fur Company purchased the posts of the Northwest Company south of the line. Lewis Cass, governor of Michigan Territory, in 1815 recommended the establishment of a United States military post at Grand Portage for the collection of duties and the enforcement of trade regulations. The recommendation was not followed, however; and, as the American Fur Company confined its operations on Lake Superior to the southern shore for several years, the Grand Portage band of Indians continued to be supplied from Fort William. "In the winter of 1824," according to Henry R. Schoolcraft, "persons in the service of

²¹ Henry, in Coues, *New Light*, 1: 218; François V. Malhiot, "A Wisconsin Fur-Trader's Journal, 1804-05," in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 19: 169; Davidson, *North West Company*, 90.

²² A map in the British Museum, which is reproduced in Davidson, *North West Company*, 144, indicates that there was a Northwest Company post at Grand Portage as late as 1818. Hind apparently thought that Fort Charlotte was an important post after the headquarters were moved from Grand Portage. He states that "Fort Charlotte was connected with Point des Meurons [*near Fort William*] by a traveled road in the time of the North-West Company." See his *Narrative*, 1: 14, 74. General James H. Baker, on the other hand, in his "History of Transportation in Minnesota," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9: 9, says that a road thirty-six miles long was built in the earliest years of the nineteenth century between Grand Portage and Fort William and claims to have seen the remains of some of the bridges. Newton H. Winchell, in the Geological and Natural History Survey of Minnesota, *Final Report*, 4: 502, describes the remains of the dock at Fort Charlotte as they were in 1893. He makes the mistake, however, of assigning the name "Fort Charlotte" to the post at Grand Portage.

²³ Thwaites, in *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 19: 190, n.

the Hudson Bay Company [*which had absorbed the Northwest Company in 1820*] carried off in trains the band of Chippeaws, living near old Grand Portage . . . after the arrival of an American trader." ²⁴

In 1831 a single trader was licensed for Grand Portage, but the principal activities at the place during the thirties centered around the fishing industry conducted by the American Fur Company. Grand Portage was a central station for these operations, and large quantities of Lake Superior fish were there assembled from various stations along the north shore and packed in barrels for the export trade. In 1839 the establishment there consisted of two family dwelling houses, a "new store," two "mens houses, 1 Coopers Shop, 1 Fish Store, Stable Barn, Root house, &c below or near the beach, placed here and there without order or symetry." About three acres were under cultivation and produced over two hundred bushels of potatoes. The fishing business was unprofitable, however, and seems to have been abandoned when the American Fur Company sold out in the forties. ²⁵

The village of Ojibway Indians, which had been located near Grand Portage Bay apparently before the coming of the first traders, remained after the glories of the place had departed. For these Indians a Catholic mission was established

²⁴ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, 19: 378, 430; 22 Congress, 1 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 90, p. 43, 46 (serial 213); Warren, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 5: 382; Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1: 132. The American trader referred to may have been Bela Chapman, who wintered on the north shore of Lake Superior in 1823-24 and visited Grand Portage in the spring. In his journal, which is in the Sibley Papers in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society, he tells of his unsuccessful efforts to prevent Indians from taking their furs to the British, who had given them "credits."

²⁵ Table in 22 Congress, 2 session, *Senate Documents*, no. 90, p. 50; Gabriel Franchere's "Remarks made on a visit from Lapointe to the Fishing Stations of Grand Portage, Isle Royal and Ance Quiwinan—August 1839"; account of the fur trade around Lake Superior, written probably by Clement H. Beaulieu about 1880. The last two items are manuscripts in the possession of the Minnesota Historical Society. Hind found an American trading post at Grand Portage in 1857. See his *Narrative*, 1: 75.

at Grand Portage about 1838 by the Reverend Francis X. Pierz; and a few years later the Right Reverend Frederic Baraga, the famous missionary bishop, visited the place and held confirmation services. Sometime during the forties the Jesuits are said to have erected a mission on the American side of the Pigeon River about a mile from its mouth and half a mile below the falls.²⁶

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the history of the Grand Portage in the nineteenth century is its connection with the boundary controversy. The region was carefully explored and mapped in 1822 by the surveyors of the commission provided for in the treaty of Ghent. When the commissioners held their final meeting in 1827, the representative of Great Britain offered to accept the Pigeon River route as the boundary, provided the line should be drawn through the portages, including the Grand Portage. When this was rejected he offered to accept the river as the boundary, providing the portages should be free and open to the use of both parties. This offer also was rejected; but, when the boundary controversy was finally settled by the Webster-Ashburton treaty in 1842, it was on exactly these terms. This treaty is still in force, and presumably British citizens would be entitled today to demand the unobstructed use of the ancient trail over the Grand Portage.²⁷

In 1854 the United States purchased the triangle north of Lake Superior from the Chippewa, but a tract extending from the lake to the Pigeon River and including the entire line of the portage was set aside as a reservation for the Indians.

²⁶ P. Chrysostomus Verwyst, *Life and Labors of Rt. Rev. Frederic Baraga*, 284, 384, 386 (Milwaukee, 1900); *Catholic Encyclopedia*, 13:487 (New York, 1912); Joseph G. Norwood, "Geological Report of a Survey of Portions of Wisconsin and Minnesota, made during the Years 1847, '48, '49, and '50," in David Dale Owen, *Report of a Geological Survey of Wisconsin, Iowa, and Minnesota*, 397, 398, 405 (Philadelphia, 1852). The location of the mission on Pigeon River is indicated on a map, plate N, at the back of Owen, *Geological Survey*.

²⁷ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 1: 500-502.

In the later years of the nineteenth century, this reservation was broken up, allotments were given to the Indians, and the remainder of the land, with the exception of reservations for possible hydroelectric development, was sold for lumbering purposes or opened up to homesteading. A number of settlers have taken up claims which lie across the old trail, and it is said that one of them has posted a sign to the effect that the road is closed.²⁸

About two weeks ago a member of the staff of the Minnesota Historical Society and a representative of a Minneapolis paper explored the old portage trail and found it still passable. At the western end they discovered the cellars and other remains of old Fort Charlotte and remnants of an ancient dock on the bank of the Pigeon River. Arrangements have been made for a detailed exploration of the site in the hope that it will be possible to reconstruct the outlines of the buildings and stockades.²⁹ The land traversed by this first white man's road in Minnesota, with its many historic associations, together with the site of Fort Charlotte and the cascades of the Pigeon River, should be included in a state park before it is too late.

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²⁸ United States, *Statutes at Large*, 10: 1109; 25: 642; reports of the commissioner of Indian affairs, in Department of the Interior, *Reports*, 1896, vol. 2, p. 330; 1897, vol. 2, p. 312; 1906, vol. 2, p. 397; 1917, vol. 2, p. 93; report of the commissioner of the general land office, in Department of the Interior, *Reports*, 1916, vol. 1, p. 163; A. H. Sawyer to Minnesota Historical Society, April 26, 1922.

²⁹ Paul Bliss, "Back Two Centuries over Minnesota's Oldest Highway to Oldest Fort," in *Minneapolis Journal*, July 16, 1922, editorial section. For an account of the later exploration see the "Minnesota Historical Society Notes," in the BULLETIN for August–November, 1922 (vol. 4, no. 7–8).



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