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Material
Complete

SAVANNA PORTAGE

McGregor
Pilot
Review
June 9,
1932

and others.

This
first

Page 2

June 16
1932

"Prof. Irving S. Hart, head of the extension department of the Iowa Teacher's College, has unearthed and brought to light many interesting facts in regards to the historical background of Lakes Region. The old Savanna Portage and many other sites have been relocated by Mr. Hart and Wm. P. Ingersoll and the Minnesota State Historical Society have endorsed these sites as being authentic"....

"In the early days before and during the period of the Revolutionary War, the fur trade was in the hands of 'free traders' who themselves both trapped and traded with the Indians for furs. In the period of 'free trade' as contrasted with that of the organized trade with the companies, the furs were often collected at a packing point." (See Yellow Sheet)

"At the packing point small canoes were loaded with the packs and paddled up the Prairie River to the mouth of the West Savanna and thence up this winding stream as far as canoes could be paddled or dragged. The head of this primitive type of Navigation of the West Savanna was at a point where the valley of the little stream widens out into what is now a hay meadow just to the west of the road, leading to the Anderson farm, in Balsam township, and one half mile below Savanna Lake. This part of the journey took a day. Originally it was necessary to carry both packs and canoes over the Portage, but later fleets of canoes were kept at either end and only the packs, cooking utensils, camp equipment, and weapons had to be carried."

With the morning the overland journey began along a trail of plainly marked and deeply worn by feet of thousands of persons who had traversed it perhaps for uncounted centuries.

the Portage with 12 "pieces" per man.

Long before the white man set foot in North America, the Savanna Trail and Portage was an established route of travel for the Indian. It is assumed that it was along this trail that the first Chippewas pushed westward from their homes on Lake Superior into the territory then occupied by the Sioux around Sandy Lake.

In the seventeenth century, came the first explorer, and it is believed by this route that Du Roi in the summer of 1679, penetrated with his lively crew of Voyageurs to the Sandy Lake Country, being probably the first white trader upon the headwaters of the Mississippi: (1)

(2) M. H. 7:31 M. H. 8:118

25
Conducted a Methodist mission for the Indians
of Sandy Lake in the forties and fifties.

"The trail is indicated on a manuscript map of the Northwest by John Sutton, dated 1814, and on one of a section of northeastern Minnesota prepared in 1870 by Alfred J. Hall for Charles H. Baker. The trail is shown on a detailed map of Aitkin County by Warren Upham in the Geological and Natural History Survey of Minnesota, Final Report, 1900, Vol. 6, Plate 57. As here given, the route differs slightly from that indicated on Mr. Jagersoll's map (port, p. 131). A map appearing in the Minneapolis Tribune Dec. 18, 1932, by the State Conservation Department of the trail and surrounding territory, as a proposed state forest. (18)

(18) Irving H. Hall, Savanna Portage, N. H. 8:129
Ray Mills, Savanna Portage, Dec. 18, 1932.

Methodist mission for the Indians of Sandy
Lake in the forties and fifties.

Irving H. Hart. ~~Savannah~~ Putage M. H. 8:128.

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12

bad: It is not only a bed of mire, but the difficulty of passing it is greatly increased by fallen trees, limbs, and sharp knots of the pitch pine, in some places on the surface, in others imbedded one or two feet below. Where there are hollows or depressions in the ground, tall coarse grass, brush, and pools of stagnant water are encountered. Old voyagers say, that this part of the Portage was formerly covered with a heavy bog, or a kind of a peat, upon which the walking was very good, but during a dry season, it accidentally caught fire and burnt over the surface of the earth so as to lower its level two or three feet when it became mirey, and subject to inundation from the Savanna River. The country after passing the third pause, changes in a short distance, from a Marsh to a region of sand hills covered mostly with white and yellow pine, intermixed with aspen. The hills are short and conical, with a modern elevation. In some places they are drawn into

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ridges, but these ridges cannot be observed to run in any uniform course.

Palmyra

River

^{In note}
When the Portage approaches the sources of the West Savannah there is a descent into a small valley, covered with rank grass — without forest trees — and here and there clumps of willows. The Valley is skirted with a thick and bushy growth of alder, aspen, hazel etc. The stream here is just large enough to swim a canoe, and the navigation commences within a mile of its source. It pursues a very serpentine course to Sandy Lake, in a general direction (sic) The river receives a tributary from the south, called Ox Creek, and from the point of its junction the navigation is good at all seasons, to Sandy Lake, a distance of six miles. ✓

Walcott makes a peculiar error in the direction of the flow of the West Savannah, which he states flows north west instead of southwest. If it were

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not for the internal evidence of the description itself and for the later account in the narrative of the Schoolcraft expedition of 1832, which followed the same route, one might conclude that the portage here described lay between the East Savanna and Prairie rivers. There is, however, no place practicable for a portage between these two streams at which the distance is so small as six miles. Ot creek, which Wolcott mentions as a tributary, entering the West Savanna from the south, must in reality be Prairie River, which just before its junction with the West Savanna, curves sharply northward. At the point of the union, nowadays, the Prairie is distinctly the larger stream.

River

Henry R. Schoolcraft, who accompanied Cass as geologist in 1820, himself headed a second expedition to the headwaters of the Miss - by the way of the Savanna Portage in 1832. In his account of this journey, he gives a brief description of the Portage, agreeing in intimate detail

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with Walcott, but adding the in-15
formation that for distance of the
first three poses, "Trees and sticks
have, from time to time, been laid
to work on, which it requires the skill
of a balancing master to keep."

see

Schoolcraft Henry R. Summary Narrative
of an Exploratory Expedition to the Sources
of the Miss River.

With the Schoolcraft expedition of
1832, was Lieutenant James Allen,
who in his official report describes
the portage. Allen corrects Walcott's
apparent error as to the Prairie
River, and is much more nearly
accurate in his estimate of the dis-
tance from the junction of this stream
with the West Savanna to the Lake,
when he says, "about a mile from
Sandy Lake it receives a small
river from the east." To the description
of the portage proper, Allen makes
no significant additions.

1832

see

American State Papers (Military)
(Affairs)

M.H. 5: 328.

Savanna Portage
1832

~~General~~ Journal Ber. Boutwell
(1832) Diary (only)

Page 41

Grand Portage is nine miles long; and is divided into 19 'poses'.
(does not tell of length)

Page 42

Knife is but 9 miles from Grand Portage, but in getting here, we were obliged to walk half way. It is ~~if~~ ^{Poses} ~~the~~ ⁱⁿ length, when we again came to the St Louis river, made the portage and after having our canoes repaired, then proceed to the Grand Rapids about ten miles, where we are comfortably encamped for the night. In reaching this place, we ascended no less than four or five rapids, one or two which required all the skill and strength of the men. No one can form the least idea of the difficulty of ascending the rapids till he undertakes it himself.

Page 43 - River Savannah. June 30, 1832

Commenced our march this morning at half past 4, amidst musketoes that were very annoying. This river is deep, but the channel is quite narrow, and exceedingly winding. Its banks are low and covered with blue joint, and a species of cub grass. The growth of wood and timber near its mouth is indifferent, till you proceed a few miles, when it becomes valuable in size and quantity. White birch, maple, Pine and oak. Ducks in abundance.

2

The stream in the swamps is definitely more winding than in the forest. To describe the difficulties of this portage, would baffle a Scot, or a Knickerbocker, even neither language nor pencil can paint them. After making about half a pore, our baggage was landed on a wharf made of poles. A dyke was then made, and our canoes brought up through mud and water knee deep, and landed in the Portage path. By pushing and drawing in mud and water to their middle, made their way in this manner for a half a mile and unloaded on a second wharf. When all was up a second dyke was made, which raised the water sufficient just to swim the canoes, which were reloaded and carried all to another pore. Some of the men were carried across in the canoes with the baggage, others with myself, forced their way on foot through mud and water. The musketoos came in hordes and threatened to carry away a man alive.

Made three pauses, and reached a maple ridge where we encamped, and spent the Sabbath. July 1, 1832. Savanruk Portage
About 10 this morning, Sicut Allen came up in the midst of a torrent of rain. He was detained

3

at Grand Rapids, to mend his canoes,
which he broke three times in ascending
them. He encamped at the head of Grand
Portage Sat eve. three miles distance.

Duskies prevented our having any service
on the Subbath. The men passed the day
by singing and dancing. The

The rain Saturday evening and the
Subbath, has rendered the portage almost
impassable for man or beast. The mud
for the greater part of the way was over ankle
deep. In spots it is difficult to find bottom.

a perfect quagmire. Bruised legs and
mangled toes brought to the Dr. which I
venture to say will long fix in mind the
fatigues of this Portage. The stream into
which we now put our canoes is very
small rising in some bog or fen like to
what we have been passing, and flowing
18 or 20 miles empties into Sandy Lake.
Within a half mile of this end of the
Portage, we cross a pine ridge, which
seems to have escaped the fire which in
past times seems to have destroyed the first
growth of timber. The men have made 9th

poses with the baggage.

July 3-1832 End of Savannah Portage

We are now leaving for Sandy Lake, 18 miles. West Savannah river is just wide enough and depth to receive our canoes, its course is northwest. The grass on this, as on the East Savannah, furnishes forage sufficient for immense numbers of cattle, but it rots on the ground. When we reached Sandy Lake, we were grateful, indeed, after the endless windings of the Savannah.

P. 55

Sand Lake
Post

Here at (Sandy Lake) we were entertained by Mr Beaudoin, a clerk in Mr Aitkin's employ, Mr A. himself being on a journey to Mackinac. Mr Aitkin has a large establishment here, a two-story dwelling house, from 40 to 45 feet by 30, a store house still larger, besides a small house for his men, one or two other small out houses, besides stables for 30 head of cattle, 3 or 4 horses, and 15 swine. He raised 600 or 700 hundred bushels of Potatoes last year. ✓

P. 56

Fort

River

He has from 12-15 acres under improvement, cultivates, barley, peas and potatoes to a considerable extent, but no corn. Still, I am persuaded it would grow here. Barley has been overflawed by the Savannah, and mostly destroyed.

Mr Atkins Port is located on a point of land where the Savannah meets with the Miss - It faces the former on the east, and the latter on the west, elevated 15 or 20 feet above either, and perhaps 3 to 5 rods from each. Sicut Allen measured the Miss - at the mouth of the Savannah, found it $110\frac{1}{3}$ yards across. The Savannah river communicates with Sandy Lake, a short distance in a direct line, but from one to two miles in its contortious winding. The lake is small, but very irregular in form, full of ~~from~~ bays and islands. On arriving at this port, the first thing that caught the eye was a flag.

Diary kept by the Rev. W. T. Bartwell Missionary
1832-1837 M. S. ✓

estimated at 7 miles

Bartwell (William T) Papers. 1832. M. S.

McGregor
Pilot Review
Aug 4-1932

about 1690 Se Luer, a French explorer, ascended the Miss - by canoe from the Falls of St. Anthony and is believed to have reached Sandy Lake as the northernmost point of his explorations, from this date on for almost a century the records are silent with regard to this region.

✓

Company's time. Their traders had a platform made, the extent of the bog, the remnants of which still can be seen; single logs have lately been laid at the extremity, and which is very dangerous to pass, especially with loads. ✓

The remaining eight "poses" were dry compared to those first passed; the land gradually rises for about four poses, and then descends. It marks the height of land from each side of which the waters run to Lake Superior and the Mississippi. ✓

M.H.
8:128

The east end of the portage, for the distance of a mile and half, runs through a tamarack swamp, which was flooded with water and next to impassable. It is generally considered the worst "carrying place" in the north west, and judging from the great numbers of canoes which lie decaying along this part of it, having been abandoned in consequence of the difficulty experienced in getting them over, its reputation is well deserved. East Savanna River where the portage strikes it, is about five yards wide. ✓

M. H. V
8 p 129

Chambers did not make ^{the} portage trip himself and spoke of it merely from hearsay. One might conclude from what he says that the route was still more or less in use at that time. It was with this information in hand gleaned from historical sources that in the summer of 1926 a trip was planned by Mr. Ingersoll, for many years a resident on or near Sandy Lake, in the effort to relocate the route of the old Savanna Portage. Newton H. Winchell crossed the portage in 1878 while making a canoe trip for the Minnesota Geological Survey through the lakes of northeastern Minnesota.

M.H.
8:129

Many missionaries used the portage to reach their posts on Sandy Lake and Leach Lake. J. W. Bardwell made the trip in 1843, Mrs. Lucy M. Lewis in 1844 and John H. Pitezel in 1849, and all have left records of their experiences. ✓

the St. Lawrence valleys was due to the physical fact that here the waters of these two great river systems probably approach each other more closely [✓]then at any other point. The student of physiography is naturally led to seek in the records of this region's geologic past the reason for the close proximity of the headwaters of these two river systems. Fortunately in this case there is an answer to his questions - an answer which reveals in striking manner the intimate relation existing between physiography and history and which tells a dramatic story of the results of the clash of natural forces in the days when our world was young. (The two old stream valleys of the two Savannas and of the Prairie and the unnamed little stream near its head are the routes of the Savanna and the Prairie River portages. Ages before man had first appeared on earth, nature, "moving in mysterious ways its wonders to perform" had carved out for men these two passageways for his later use in trade and transportation.

Minn.
Hist.
V 14
p 116

Some of the history of the area around Sandy Lake and the old Savanna Portage is recounted in a feature article in the Minneapolis Tribune for December 18, by Rolf Mills, who calls attention to the proposal of the Minnesota department of conservation that this region be set aside as a state forest. The writer mentions some of the explorers who used the well-known Savanna Portage route between Lake Superior and the upper Mississippi and who left descriptions of the country, [✓]Through which they passed, and he calls special attention to the Schoolcraft expeditions of 1832. He also tells of the retracing of the portage route in the summer of 1926 by Professor Irving H. Hart and Mr. William P. Ingersoll and describes the more recent survey of the region by members of the department of conservation!

1
used the old Savanna Portage. This trail was however, never in common use within the period of Mrs. Curtis.

Oct. 20,
1932

✓ The beginning of the missionary effort was due to an invitation extended by William A. Aitkin in 1831 to a young man named Frederick Ayer. In addition to his duties as teacher, Ayer devoted his time in the winter 1832-33 to the completion of the manuscript of a Chippewa speller which he began at La Pointe. Ayer was succeeded in the school at Sandy Lake by E. F. Ely, to whose scholastic duties of missionary and preacher were added. *This was all printed in McGregor's Paper*

M.H.
4:384

Martin McLeod, on an expedition, crossed the portage on Nov. 5, 1836 and reported it so damnable that they had to wade in water up to their hips for nearly three miles and carry equipment besides. He says the portage is eight miles long. (Route of Martin McLeod's travels Oct. 22, 1836 to April 16, 1837 - M.H.4:379) ✓

McLeod's
Diary, Nov.
4, 1836 in Minnesota;
yet his connection with James Dickson's expedition seems
M.H.4:
383&457

Martin McLeod the author of this diary was well known in Minnesota; yet his connection with James Dickson's expedition seems to have been practically unknown until his diary came to the society.

At the junction of the St. Louis and East Savanna rivers the former comes in from the north and the latter from the general direction of Sand Lake to the south. With a carrying-place between them the East and West Savanna Rivers form a good canoe route to Sandy Lake. McLeod designates some branch of the East Savanna as the Prairie River. Contemporary maps show the Prairie as a branch of the West Savanna, and the stream still bears that name. The map which Dickson's party used must have been quite incorrect, indeed, if it showed Prairie River as a branch of the East Savanna River. ✓ *not correct*

Minn.
History
5:35

The Savanna Portage is seven miles long located between the East Savanna River and the West Savanna River. It is low and in the spring and wet seasons, the men had to wade through mud and water.

II Five days is the usual time taken to cross the portage with 12 "pieces" per man. Aitkin County -(Map M.H.3:119) ✓

June 30, Passed several rapids and country (23 miles) until we reached the mouth of East Savanna river, where our route left Fond du Lac river. The East Savanna river is a little, narrow and very crooked stream, having its source in wet meadows and swamps, about 30 miles from its mouth, and running in a general direction northeast, in a very direct line from Fond du Lac river to Sandy lake, on the Mississippi, where we are going; we accordingly ascended it twenty-four miles to the Savanna portage. The country at first was low and rich, afterwards more elevated, and some pine ridges, and the last ten or twelve miles was through a wet savanna, from a half to two and three miles broad, bordered by tamarack and cedar swamps. The river was from ten to thirty feet broad, and very crooked all the way, but particularly so through the Savanna, where canoes might be a mile or more apart in the actual length of the river, and only a few yards, in a direct line. The channel was generally seven or eight feet deep; and part of the Savanna was so much overflowed that canoes could pass over it, through the grass. About a mile below the portage, the river forks and the channel though still deep, is so very narrow and crooked that canoes can scarcely turn the shorter bends. The meadow here is dry, and is grown over with a most beautiful luxuriant, and heavy growth of grass- a species of carex or sedge. I landed at the portage near the end of this meadow, at 6 p.m. where, I found by a note left for me by Dr. Houghton that Mr. S. having preceded me about six hours, had gone through four pauses of the Portage to encamp. I got part of the baggage through the first pause, and encamped where we landed, in an atmosphere of moschetoos. Journey this day 47 miles.

July 1, (Sunday) - It rained constantly,but the unpleasant situation of our encampment, and my anxiety to overtake Mr. S. who I knew would not travel to-day, determined me to proceed. At the end of the first pause, which was a perfect mud hole throughout, the

swamp had water enough to float our loaded canoes, and we accordingly embarked them in a little chanal or channel... We worked our canoes and baggage, in this way, through two pauses, or about a mile as far as we could, and carried the canoes and baggage one pause farther.

P 37

July 2 - We had four miles of the portage (2 pauses) before us this morning, and Mr. S. made great efforts to accomplish the whole of it this day; and my men in emulation of his voyageurs to travel at the same rate. The route was of the worst character, being mostly through swamp of tough deep, mud, which it was difficult to walk through unencumbered; and that could scarcely be deemed practicable, with the loads that the men were obliged to carry. They frequently stuck fast in the mud until they abandoned their load, or were assisted out; and before night some of my best and strongest men fell down by the road side, unable to proceed farther. I collected them and the baggage on a dry spot, half a mile from the end of the portage, and encamped before sunset. Mr. S. had his tents taken entirely through, and encamped on the bank of the West Savanna river. Our journey to-day was three and a half miles, and much the most fatiguing of all our journey since we left home.

July 3 - We however got through the remaining pause of this horrible portage by twelve o'clock, and embarked in West Savanna river. The Savanna Portage, that we had now crossed, is six miles in length; the first two through a swamp, such as I have described, and the remaining four over land more elevated, and some little hills and ridges but with deep ugly swamps intervening, making this much the most troublesome and difficulty of any part of our route. The highest point crossed by the portage, is about one hundred and fifty feet above the Savanna rivers."

"Mr. Schoolcraft and myself (Rev. Boutwell) embarked in our canoe, with 8 men. Mr. Johnson the interpreter and Doctor Houghton, the surgeon, embarked in the other, with 6 men, 34 in all. Reached the

4B

From the point of view of history, the Chippewas are fortunate in having had many of the traditions and facts of their life recorded by one of their own number, William W. Warren son of a white father and a Chippewa mother. --- He received what was for those days on the frontier a good education and latter became a member of the Minn. legislature ---

X

The first permanent foothold of the Chippewas within the present boundaries of Minn. was at a point, later on the site of the post and village of Fond du Lac (Minn.) and on the islands nearly in the St. Louis river. It is possible that the Chippewas were established here at the time of Du Suth endeavored unsuccessfully to make peace between these two warring people expedition into what is now Minn. - in 1679. Du Suth endeavored unsuccessfully to make peace between the Sioux and Chippewas. ✓

Portage does not tell length Page 25
Portage at 12 o'clock, and here breakfasted. To describe the difficulties of this portage, would puzzle a Scott, or Knickerbocker, even. Neither language nor pencil can paint them. After making about half a pose, our baggage was landed on a wharf made of poles.

p 26 A dyke was then made, and our canoes brought up through mud and water knee-deep, and landed in the portage path. A few pieces were put on board, and one at the bow and another at the stem, the latter pushing and the former drawing in mud and water to their middle; made their way in this manner for half a mile, and unloaded on a second wharf. When all was up, a second dyke was made, which raised the water sufficient just to swim the canoes, which were loaded the second time, and carried all to another pose. Some of the gentlemen were carried across in the canoes with the baggage, others with myself, forced their way on foot through mud and water. The musketoes came in hordes and threatened to carry away a man alive our devour him ere they could get him away. Made three poses and reached a maple ridge where we encamped, and spent the Sabbath.

July 1, 1832 - Savannah Portage. About 10 this morning, Lieut. Allen came up in the midst of a torrent of rain. He encamped at the head of the portage Saturday eve, three poses distant. Saturday night very rainy. Sabbath morning and during a part of the day, came down in torrents. The rain and the musketoes prevented our having any service. This day has passed without either profit or pleasure to myself, through the reading of the word, and a few pages of Pilgrim's Progress, might be expected, had not my attention been so oft interrupted and discomposed by every strange and before unheard of noise. Some of our Indian friends still follow us.

July 2, 1832 - Rose at 6. Pleasant sun this morning, but the musketoes are smoke and fire proof. The rain Saturday evening and the Sabbath, has rendered the portage almost impassable for man or beast. Our men look like renegades, covered with mud from head to foot, some have lost one leg of the pantaloons, others both. Their shirts and moccasins are

M.H.
8:123
8:124

Dr. Alexander Wolcott, a surgeon with the Lewis Cass party, gives 1832 a detailed description of the portage: "The length of the Savanna Portage is six miles, and is passed at thirteen pauses (resting places on portage). The first three pauses are shockingly bad. It is not only a bed of mire, but the difficulty of passing it is greatly increased by fallen trees, limbs and sharp knots of pine pitch, in some places on the surface, in others, imbedded one or two feet below. Where there are hollows or depressions in the ground, tall coarse grass, brush, and pools of stagnant water are encountered. Old voyageurs say, that this part of the portage was formerly covered with a heavy bog, or a kind of peat, upon which the walking was very good, but that during a dry season, it accidentally caught fire and burnt over the surface of the earth so as to lower its level two or three feet when it became mirey, and subject to inundation from the Savanna river. The country, after passing the third pause, changes in a short distance, from a marsh to a region of sand hills covered mostly with white and yellow pine, intermixed with aspen. The hills are short and conical, with a moderate elevation. In some places they are drawn into a ridge, but these ridges cannot be observed to run in any uniform course. Where the portage approaches the sources of the West Savanna there is a descent into a small valley covered with rank grass, without forest trees - and here and there clumps of willows. The valley is skirted with a thick and brushy growth of alder, aspen, hazel, etc. The adjoining hills are sandy, covered with pine. The stream here is just large enough to swim a canoe, and the navigation commences within a mile of its source. It pursues a very serpentine course, to Sandy Lake in the general direction northwest. ✓

8:124

The river east receives a tributary from the south, called OX creek, and from the point of its junction the navigation is good at all seasons, to Sandy Lake, a distance of six miles." ✓

J. H. Hart
Savanna P.
M.H. 8:124

11a

Walcott makes a peculiar error in the direction of the flow of the West Savanna, which he states flows northwest instead of southwest. If it were not for the internal evidence of the description itself and for the later account in the narrative of the Schoenbeck expedition of 1832, which followed the same route, one might conclude that the Portage here described lay between the East Savanna and Prairie rivers. There is, however, no place practicable for a Portage between these two streams at which the distance is so small as six miles. Ox Creek, which Walcott mentions as a tributary, entering the West Savanna from the south, must in reality be Prairie River, which, just before its junction with the West Savanna, curves sharply northward. At the point of the union, nowadays, the Prairie is distinctly the larger stream. ✓

Savanna Portage Bantwell 159

Hart
(S.P.)

M.H.8:26

Bantwell gives the direction of the flow of the West Savanna as northwest, as does W. Elliott. The day of their departure to descend the West Savanna was, however, as he indicates, cloudy, thus giving them no opportunity to determine their course by the sun. Schofield perpetuates this error in the map accompanying the narrative of the expedition of 1820. Again were it not for internal evidence and for the exact accordance of the route described with the terrain of that traced out by the writer, one might conclude that the stream then called the West Savanna was what is now known as the Prairie R.

Ely

Hart
(S.P.)

M.H.8:26

The Reverend Edmund F. Ely another Pioneer Congregational missionary, came to Sandy Lake in 1833, where he established 1833 one of the first schools in Oriskany. On this trip he was accompanied by William A. Atkin, the American Fur Company trader at Sandy Lake, and Bantwell. Ely says, in his description of the Portage, that at the eastern end "A very small stream runs into the

Hart
(A.P.)
M.H. 8; 127

Portage M. W. I should think - this stream when dammed is of sufficient depth to allow a canoe to be drawn with $\frac{1}{2}$ load --- about $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile [S]. This suggests that in its first stages the eastern part of the trail may have followed the course of the rivulet by which Wolf Lake then emptied into the East Savanna. The construction of a drainage ditch in recent years, by which the waters of this lake now empty into the East Savanna, and the nature of the low-lying swamp lands through which this part of the trail runs make it impossible at the present time to determine the original course of this stream.

125

16

Another member of the Schoolcraft expedition of 1832, the Reverend William T. Bantwell, a Congregational missionary to the Indians, wrote in his diary a colorful description of the portage, from which the following is taken:

1832

River Savanna. June 30, 1832

1832

To describe the difficulties of this portage, would puzzle a Scot, or a Knickerbocker, even. Neither language nor pencil can paint them.

see.

Henry R. Schoolcraft, Narrative of an Exploratory Expedition to the sources of the Miss - River

Bantwell have that.
Ely have that

m. H. 8. 127

In 1833, William Johnston, a half breed Chippewa in the service of a rival of the American Fur Company, wrote a very complete description of the entire route from Fond du Lac to Sandy Lake. He characterizes the first half dose of the Savanna Portage as "muddling," and the next two doses as having sufficient water to allow half canoe loads to be dragged through. Continuing, Johnson writes:

1833

Lawrence Passage

17

mt. H. 8/12/7

N.W. Post
only

letter

Very little labour is required to make this Portage passable for canoes, nothing however has been done to it since the Northwest Company's time, their traders had a platform made, the extent of the log, the remnants of which still can be seen; single logs have lately been laid at the extremity, and which is very dangerous to pass, especially with load...

The remaining eight poses were dry compared to those first passed; the land gradually rises for about four poses; and then descends; it marks the height of land from each side of which, the waters run to Lake Superior and the Miss -

William Johnston, "Settlers on Fur Trade in Michigan Pioneer and Hist. Col. 37 170-72."

~~Julius Chambers, The Miss - river and its wonderful valley. Have that~~

not here

~~Samuel Stiles to Jabez Brooks. Mar. 8/1855. Pikes~~

stop here and those missing.

find

David Dale Owen
Geological Survey.

Wis. Min. J. W. Johnson

Page 360

Hart

S.P.

M. H. 8:128.

(River)

Joseph G. Norwood, a geologist in the service of the United States Government, made a survey of this portion of Minn. in 1848. His report contains a record of his passage of Savanna Portage, from which the following extract is taken.

On June 24th, we left Sandy Lake for Lake Superior by the route over which the Fur Companies have transported their goods toward the far Northwestern posts for many years passed. -- In winter and occasionally in summer, the Indians, passing from Sandy Lake to Fond du Lac, follow this (Prairie) river to its source, and then, by portage of twelve miles, reach St. Louis River, a few miles below the mouth of the East Savanna River. The distance to Fond du Lac by this route is considerably less than by the Savanna River. In summer, however, the swamps about the head of the Prairie River are almost impassable, and then the line of travel is the same as the one pursued by us. (See page 18 a) for rest.

West Savanna

West Savanna River enters Prairie

River about a mile and a half above Sandy Lake. (Cm. P. 19)

Hart
(S.P.)
M.H. 128

Spates.

18 B

1855

A late reference to the use of the Sas-
anna Portage is that in a letter written in
1855 by The Reverend Samuel Spates, who
conducted a Methodist mission for the Indians
of Sandy Lake in the forties and fifties.

Hart
S.P.
M.H. 129

Then Chambers, who visited the region
in 1872 writes:

1872

"We slept that night at the mouth
of Sandy Lake River, upon the floor of Mr.
Sibby's historic trading post. "Sibby's" has
been known for three generations as the point
of Portage for the "Big Sea Water" (Lake Superior),
reached by descending the turbulent St Louis R.

Chambers did not make the portage
trip himself, and spoke of it merely from
hearsay. One might conclude from what
he says that the route was still more or
less in use at that time.
insert from ref.

It was with this information in hand,
gleaned from historical sources, that in the
summer of 1926 a trip was planned by 1926
the writer and Mr. Jagersoll, for many

18 G.

Hart
S.P.
M.H. 8:129

years a resident on or near Sandy Lake,
in effort to relocate the route of the old
Savanna Portage. The historical data
were supplemented by interviews with
old residents of the locality.

Hart
S.P.
M.H. 8:129

In addition to the examples cited
in this paper, there are on record several
instances of the use of the Savanna Portage
by other travelers. In order to reach their
posts on Sandy Lake and Seesh Lake,
missionaries seem to have used the
Portage frequently. Thus J. P. Bardwell
made the trip in 1843, Mrs. Lucy M. 1843
Lewis in 1844, and John H. Pategel in
1849, and all have left records of their 1849
experiences. Newton H. Winchell, with
two companions, crossed the Portage in
1878 while making a canoe trip for the 1878
Minn. - Geological Survey through the
lakes of northeastern Minn. -

Hart
(S.P.)
M.H. 8.129.

Attention may be called to the fact that the Portage trail is indicated on a manuscript map of the Northwest by John Dutton, dated 1814, and on one of a section of northeastern Minn. - prepared in 1870 by Alfred J. Hill for Charles H. Baker. The trail is shown in detail on a map of Cuthbert County by Warren Upham, in the Geological and Natural History Survey of Minn., - Final Report, 1900 Vol. 6, plate 57. As here given the route differs slightly from that indicated on Mr. Jagersall's map. Post, p. 131

~~see page 21. lower half~~
~~Here check.~~

David Wall Owen
Geological Survey
6

Minn. Wis. Jour. p. 300

Map

M.H. 8.129

Retracing

Hart

LP

M.H. 8/130

19

The continual rains of August and September delayed our departure, and compelled us to abandon an earlier project of packing in our supplies and tentage on foot from a point on State Highway Number 5, north of Sandy Lake, to Savanna Lake at the head of The West Savanna River. Fearing that the rivers that we should have to cross would be overflowed to such an extent that it would be impracticable to cross them, we finally elected to proceed by automobile around the south end of Sandy Lake, following the forest roads as far as possible, and then to strike out on foot toward our objective. Our equipment included the best maps of the Portage region that we were able to obtain, of which the most serviceable proved to be the United States engineer's map of Sandy Lake basin and the Township maps based upon the government surveys. From the latter it appeared probable

20

Hart
(S P) That the west end of the trail was located
somewhere in section 7, Township 50 north,
M.H. 8, 130 range 22 west, as Mr. Murphy had informed
us. Mr. Murphy had told us, and the map
confirmed his statement, that along the north
line of Township 50 a drainage ditch has been
constructed, with laterals extending southward
between sections 2 and 3 and sections 1 and 2.

M#8:134

of the valley, at the foot of a steep hill, stand the remains of a number of log buildings, which we later learned are what is left of an old lumber camp. At the south end of this row of ruins, we found a well-defined trail climbing the ridge to the eastward. The course of this trail, which we followed for several miles, was clearly marked for the eyes of a woodsman by blazes - some of them very old - on the trees. --- As we went on we were forced to believe that we had taken the wrong route and that what we were following must be an old logging road. As the trail we were seeking ran somewhere to the north, we struck out cross country through the dense woods, past a beautiful little lake tucked away of sight so far from civilization that it has neither name or place on the maps, until at length we came in sight of a clearing which proved to be Anderson's on Shumway Lake. Mr Anderson told us that there was an old trail running northeasterly through the woods north of his place, which was said to be the old "Hudson Bay Trail".

135

from here we lost the trail entirely. . . .
 We then struck off through the woods going
 northeast in a blind search for it. Mr.
 Ingersoll discovered the trail again. This
 part is so completely overgrown with bush
 that none but an experienced woodman
 could ever have found it. From this point
 on it was easy to find. The larger trees
 have all been lumbered off years ago,
 here and there along the trail we found
 blazes, often almost obliterated by the
 passage of time, but still discernible.
 We kept on the course until, according to the
 expectation based on the old descriptions
 of the trail, it descended into a tamarack
 swamp. In old days, this part of the
 trail was known as "the worst carrying -
 place in the northwest" and years of neglect
 have not served to improve it. The way lay
 clear before us, a well-marked path
 through the wilderness of swamp, but
 rendered almost impassable at times
 by fallen trees and sink holes. The only
 thing which made it possible for us
 to make our way at all was the fact

Old Trail

M.H. 8:135

24
That occasionally in the worst places we found, embedded in the morass a few inches below the surface, tamarack poles running lengthwise of the trail. Had this been an old logging road, these poles would have been laid crosswise to form a corduroy road. This discovery was all that was needed to convince us that we were actually following the original trail of the portage, as our notes indicated that the fur companies had laid poles lengthwise of the trail to make passage possible. ---

136

It may be that some of the poles which saved us from sinking in the mire are the ones of which Schoolcraft speaks, when he says, "Trees and sticks have, from time to time, been laid --- to walk on, which it requires the skill of a balancing master to keep." Schoolcraft was right. After a mile or more of the trail through the tamarack swamps we came out suddenly upon the lateral drainage ditch between sections 2 and 3 for which our maps

M.H. 8:136
new trail

MT. 8:136

had led us to look... at the eastern end²⁵ of the trail we decided to take the easy way around the rest of the swamp by way of ditch roads. These ditch roads are now mere paths which run along the tops of the dikes thrown up by the steam shovels used in constructing the ditches. Some years ago. The original intention seems to have been to build roads along these dikes, but the hopes and money expended in the attempt to drain the swamps have proved profitless. The land is still hopeless swamp, as so far as anyone can now see will always remain so.

Then too, on the heels of the human engineers who laid out and constructed these works, have come some natural engineers whose has gone to undo that of man. At the north end of the lateral ditch, we ran on to the first of twelve beaver dams built across the ditch, which have served to raise the level of the water.

Don. H. 8:136

137

until, in the upper course of the ditch, ²⁶ it overflows all of the surrounding forest land. ...

Along the eastward course of the big ditch, we traveled until we came to a hay meadow, through the middle of which flowed a winding stream which we recognized as the East Savanna. This completed the tracing of out of more than two-thirds of the trail, and all the worst part of it. Retracing our steps to the main ditch, we proceeded westward. Our only choice of a route back to camp was to skirt the north shore of the lake to our destination. ... We were duly thankful, however, that we were not burdened as were the men of that early day with the heavy packs which it was their task to carry. With the personal assistance of Mr. Bol who was in charge of a lumber camp at the west end of Wolf Lake, we were able to locate with reasonable certainty the site of the fur company camp on a little knoll just above the bend of the West Savanna.

M.H. 18:138
new
trail

The first four miles from the western end of the trail are comparatively high and dry. Its general course is north of east, proceeding in a fairly direct line except where it veers to the one side or the other to avoid the ascent of one of the many hills that characterize the region. One who travels this trail can see how every natural advantage was taken to make the route as easy as possible for burdened men. ~~Some~~ ~~inferior~~ The timber for the first part of the trail is poplar and hardwood, with many old pine slashings. Some birch and oak trees from seventy to a hundred years old were seen, but most of the valuable timber has been cut off. For the last two miles, the way lies through a tamarack swamp. There is in general a gradual slope to the eastward. The trail is marked by old blazes and a number of later ones, evidence of its use in part as a logging road in comparatively recent times. It is from one to two yards wide in places, but elsewhere is little more than a narrow

Logging
road

M. H. 8:13.9 Path particularly where it passed through the Tamarack swamp. There are no present evidence of forest fires having swept through this region, but as such a catastrophe may occur at any time, there is danger that the exact location may be lost entirely. While it can still be traced throughout its course, an effort should be made to mark for future generations the location of this ancient highway, for it brings back vividly the romantic days when it was an important trade route from the Miso Valley to the markets of the East.

Trading posts.
M. H. 11

Hudson's Bay Company, Northwest Company. from 1763-1816. American Fur Co. 1816 to the middle forties. Prior to 1816 most of the posts in what is now Minnesota - belonged to the N.W. Co. after 1821 nearly all of the posts of that area were American Fur Co.

M. W. T. Post
M. H. 7:311

The post of the M. W. C. on Sandy Lake in Aitkin County was the first enduring establishment of its type west of Fond du Lac on Lake Superior, and from the date of its erection in 1794 to the close of the British occupancy of the region after the war 1812,

M.W.T. Post
Dn. H. 7:311
By. Hart.

29
it was one of the most important fur-trading
stations in the M-W-. The location on Sandy
Lake was determined by its proximity
to the route between Lake Superior and the
Miss - by the way of the St. Louis and
East Savanna rivers, the Savanna
Portage, the West Savanna and Prairie
rivers, Sandy Lake and Sandy river. This
route, which gave access to the great
regions lying south, west, and north, had
probably been used by the Indians for
centuries before the advent of the white
man. ~~also met at Sandy Lake~~ (now get Fort du Lac Post,
Jacob V. Brainer, Prehistoric man The Head-
waters of the Miss - River," in Minn. Hist. Col. 838

It was by this route that Du Roch in
the summer of 1679¹¹ penetrated with his lively
crew of voyageurs to the Sandy Lake country,
being probably the first white trader upon
the head-waters of the Miss <sup>Renben G. Thwaites "The story
of Chequamegon Bay"</sup> this Hist. Col. 13-2/07

Fort
Here in 1794, William Morrison, according
to his brother Allan, built "the original
fort on Sandy Lake. Whether or not the
fort built by Morrison is the one which

N. W. Fur Co.
M. H. L.
V: 378

The Northwest Fur Co. was not formed.
till the year 1787. 1787

In the year 1792, immediately after the noted expedition of John Baptiste Cadotte to the Upper Miss., the Northwest Co. extended their operations over the whole Ojibway country within the limits of the United States, on Lake Superior and the Miss.. Their trade in these regions was divided into four departments: -

The Fond du Lac department consisted of the country at the of Lake Superior, and the sources of the St. Louis and Miss. rivers. The Falls Arvine department consisted of the country drained by the waters of the St. Croix. The Lac Cartier department covered the waters of the Chippewy; and the Lac du Flambeau department, the waters of Wis..

The depot for this portion of their trade was located at Fond du Lac, but their great depot was at Grand Portage on the north coast of Lake Superior and within the limits of what is now known as Minn. Ter..

M. H. L.
V: 379

original

on copy
Aug 25

Northwest Company. T. Post

1

III

Perrault took a contract to build for the Northwest Company a fort at Fond du Sac for the sum of eighty pounds. in 1792-93. This fort was to be the company depot in the Fond du Sac region. This was the first permanent fur-trading post in the St Louis Valley. As Fond du Sac lies at the head of Lake Superior, this location commanded the trade of St Louis and upper Miss - valleys, and soon gave to the Northwest company a position of undisturbed primacy in the trade of this region. The fort included two houses forty feet long, a shed sixty feet long, and a ware house, all surrounded by a stockade. It was called Fort St Louis and was continuously occupied by the Northwest Company until after the war of 1812, when the Company was compelled to withdraw from American territory.

Sept. 1-1932

From this time on for a number of years, Perrault remained in the employ of the Northwest Company having his station at Red Cedar Lake. He mentions a man by the name of Bousquet as have charge

Northwest Company 7. Post

2

McGregor of the company's post on Sandy Lake during Sept. 1-1932. The winter of 1794-95 during which time the stockaded post on Brown's Point on Sandy Lake was built for the company by William Morrison. --- Bousquet continued in charge at Sandy Lake in 1796-97 and Perrault at Red Cedar Lake. On the return journey Perrault records, "I descended to Lac des Sables (Sandy Lake) with five men in two canoes loaded with nineteen packs of furs and eight kegs of sugar. I slept that night at Bousquet's and the next day reached the Portage de la Savanne where St. Louis, one of my men, was poisoned. We buried him at the Portage and I was compelled to hire some Indians to help us cross the Portages." So old Savanne Portage has at least this one known dedication of human life to add to its historic interest.

~~After~~ Hudson Bay Company which had been in existence since 1670, but which had confined its activities to the region between Hudson and the northern

McGregor
Sept. 1-1932 shores of the Great Lakes and thence westward.

In 1783 a Partnership of Scotch merchants was formed with headquarters at Montreal which culminated in 1787 in the formation of the famous Northwest Company. -- At first its principal distributing and collecting points were at Mackinac, Grand Portage (at the mouth of Pigeon river), Green Bay, and Prairie du Chien.

Investigations of possibility of trade in the upper valley soon after the formation of the Northwest Company led them to establish a new permanent post at the head of Lake Superior for the control of the trade of the Sandy Lake region. This post was the one built in 1792 by Perault. Fort St. Louis at Fond du Lac was then and for several years thereafter the central post of this department. In 1794 another permanent post of the Company was built on Sandy Lake and within a few years the headquarters of the department of

Fur Trading Posts

McGregor
Sept. 1-1932

4
of Fond du Lac was transferred to this location. From this time on until the final decline of the trade about 1840, Sandy Lake was the center of the trade of a large area.

III

Start Sept. 1

McGregor
Palat Review

The post of the Northwest Company on Sandy Lake was built in 1794, probably by William Morrison later for a time an opposition trader and still an employee of the company. Its right to the distinction of being the first permanent fur trading post built west of Lake Superior cannot be successfully disputed. The post stood on the south shore of the bay which forms the northernmost extension of this beautiful lake, about midway of the distance from the state highway to the end of Brown's Point. The general location of the post is indicated by an official marker placed on highway no 5, opposite the entrance to the road leading along Brown's Point.

5

The Post was one of the stopping places of the surveyor and astronomer, David Thompson, who in the spring of 1797 entered the service of the Northwest Company and made a trip through the fur country westward along the forty-ninth parallel of latitude. He returned by way of the Red and Red Lake rivers to Red Lake, whence he portaged to Turtle Lake and descended the Miss- to Sandy Lake. Thompson visited the Northwest post here in 1798 and then continued his journey over the Sawanaw Portage to Fond du Lac. Thompson's route from the Red River valley to Sandy Lake was that used by the traders in their commerce with the Indians of the far West.

In 1806 the post was visited by Z. M. Pike, who left a detailed description of it in the report of his expedition to the headwaters of the Miss- Lake left the main body of his company camped on the Miss- and with one companion pushed on northeastward at night to find the post on Sandy Lake. He evidently missed the old Portage trail which led from the river to the lake for he writes;

6

McGinn
Sept 18, 1932

"We traversed about two leagues of wilderness and at length struck the shore of Lake de Sable (Sandy Lake) over a branch which our course lay. The snow having covered the trail made by the Frenchman who had passed before the rackets (snowshoes), I was fearful of losing ourselves on the lake. Thinking that we could observe the bank of the other shore, we kept a straight course. Sometime after we discovered lights, and on our arrival were not a little surprised to find a large stockade. The gate being opened we entered."

It may be assumed that Pike had veered to the right of the old Miss-trail and that the branch of the lake which he mentions was Fisherman's Bay. What is now called Brown's Bay was probably at that time a small lake connected with the main lake only at high water. Early maps of Sandy Lake show this to have been true. Pike locates the stockade and post as: "11-4 m. S. of the discharge of the lake into the short throughfare by which it reaches the Miss-"
Pike describes it as follows;

7
1820

Schoolcraft in his narrative journal of the Cass expedition in 1820, which visited Sandy Lake en route and stopped at the Post, describes it almost in Pike's words, but adds the inform- that the pickets of the main stockade were "pinned together with stake poles of the same material."

Here ~~was~~ the Post on Brown's Point, surrounded by a strong stockade, the factors of the N-W-C- exercised their sway for more than twenty years. It is somewhat surprising that the activities of this British Company should have continued within U-S-territory as long as they did. By the treaty of 1783, at the end of the Revolutionary War, the northern boundary of the U-S- was fixed a line running from the head of Lake Superior by the most practicable water route to the Lake of the Woods and thence to the headwaters of the Mississippi. There was opportunity for question and dispute as to what was meant by the most practicable water route referred to in the treaty. The U-S- claimed that is the chain of rivers and lakes forming the present

northern boundary of Minn-; but naturally⁸
the British preferred a more southern location
of the boundary. The quo. was not settled until
after the War of 1812 when the joint com-¹⁸¹²
missioners of the two countries met at Ghent
in Belgium for the conclusion of a treaty
of peace.

According to Schoolcraft, the British
commissioners at this time endeavored to
establish the claim that the most practi-
cable water route from Lake Superior to the
Lake of the Woods was the water and
portage route leading through S. S-
and thence up the Miss- and again by
rivers, lakes and portages northward and
westward to this terminus of the treaty line.
Had such claim been allowed by the
conference, the northern shores of S-S-
would to-day have been in Canada. G. B.
would have been left the possession of practi-
cally all the Arrowhead country of Minn-
and the subsequent course of history in
this region would have been very different.

In 1816 the A. T. C. took over all the
of the N. W. C. within the treaty limits
of the U. S. together with the rights of trade.

The post on Brown's Port continued to

later
for Forts

A. Description of the N. W. Co. Fort at Sandy Lake,
look for S. S. F. Co. & Fort de Sn. R. Co.

The fort at Sandy Lake is situated on the S. side,
near the W. end, and is a stockade 100 feet square,
with bastions at the S. E. and N. W. angles, pierced
for small-arms. The pickets are squared on the outside,
round within, about one foot diameter, and 13 feet above ground.
There are three gates; the principal one fronts the lake on the
N., and is 10 x 9 feet; the one on W. 6 x 4 feet; and the one on the
E. 6 x 5 feet. As you enter by the main gate you have on
the left a building of one story, 20 feet square, the residence
of the superintendent. Opposite this house on the left of the E.
gate, is a house 25 x 15 feet, the quarters of the men. On
entering the west gate you find the store house on the
right, 30 x 30 feet, and on your left a building 40 x 20 feet,
which contains rooms for clerks, workshop, and provision store.
On the W. and N. W. is a picketed inclosure of about four acres,
in which they raise Irish potatoes, cultivating no other
vegetables. In this inclosure is a very ingeniously con-
structed vault to contain the potatoes, and which likewise have
secret apartments to conceal liquors dry goods etc.

139.
Elliott Canon, The Expeditions of Zebulon M. Pike N. 1:281.
The horses he says, were obtained from the Red River region
from the Indians. In 1805 "they raised 400 bushels of Irish
potatoes, cultivating no other vegetables". Monks care in
recording so exactly the extent to which farming had
progressed at all the Company's Post merits the gratitude
of students of economic history, for such descriptions are all
too rare.

not in m 45:36 ~~not in m 45:36~~ ~~not in m 45:36~~ ~~not in m 45:36~~

Savanna Passage.

East and West Savanna Rivers, and and
the region surrounding it are rich with events
full of significance in the history of the great
northwest.

General inform.

Discoveries
of the
Sources
of the Miss R.
by
Schubert.
1820.
Page 110

When arriving at the Fond du Sac Post, we embarked, and after going two miles reached the foot of the first rapids of the St Louis. This spot is called the commencement of the Grand Portage - over this path all the goods, provisions, and canoes are to be carried by hand nine miles. Capt Douglass estimated the river to fall one hundred and eight feet during the first nine miles; and Dr Walcott, states, the aggregate fall from the mouth of the Savanne, to that point is two hundred and twelve feet. We made but five pauses the first day; and were three days on the Portage. ~~On embarking above the Portage,~~ On ascending six miles, we reached the Portage aux Coteaux, so

1820

the portage with 12 "pieces" per man.

"The entrance of River Sa Savanna is
~~for River~~ twenty-four miles from Portage Sa Savanna.
Here the river is not navigable even for the
smallest canoes. /

The location on Sandy Lake was determined by its proximity to the route between Lake Superior and The Mississippis by the way of The St. Louis and East Savanna rivers, The Savanna Portage, The West Savanna and Prairie Rivers, Sandy Lake and Sandy River. This route which gave access to the great regions lying south, west, and north had probably been used by the Indians before the coming of the white man." (2)

(2) M.H. 5: 35

~~"It was by this route that Du Roi in the Summer of 1679 penetrated with his lively crew of Voyageurs to the Sandy Lake Country, being probably the first~~

Schoolcraft
Allen. Expedition
to N.W. Indians

*F597.
.U554

Fort
Allen describes Mr. Atkins trading
post as, being situated in a long, narrow
longer point, which separates the two rivers
just before their junction. It was occupied
by the old N-W-C-, and subsequently
by the Am-F-C- to the present time. His
establishment, at present, consists of
a large dwelling, several storehouses,
and barns, stables, etc; he raises corn
and potatoes in fields near the house,
and has a good stock of cattle.

East Sav - River

The E-S-R- is a little, narrow,
and very crooked stream, having its
source in wet meadows and swamps,
about 30 miles from its mouth, and
running in a general direction N.E.,
in a very direct line from Fond du Lac
river to Sandy Lake, on the Miss., where
we are going; we accordingly ascended
it twenty-four miles to the S.P. ✓

of any part of our route. The highest
point crossed by the portage, is about
one hundred and fifty feet above the
Savanna river. (14)

(14) Schoolcraft and Allen - Expedition with Indians
Letter from Sec. of War - House Doc. 323

By
Perrault

The Fur Companies on Sandy Lake.

(1)

Fond du Lac.

From the season of 1792-93, Perrault took a 1792
contract to build for the M-W-C-a fort at
Fond du Lac, for the sum of eight pounds. This
fort was to be the company depot in the Fond du
Lac region. With ten men to help him,
Perrault completed "in the course of the autumn,
winter, and spring" ^{being the} this first permanent fur-
trading post in the St. Louis Valley. As Fond du
Lac lies at the head of St. L., this location com-
manded the trade of the St. Louis and upper Missouri
Valleys, and soon gave to the M-W-C-a pos-
ition of undisputed primary in the trade of this
region. The fort included two houses ~~forty~~
~~feet long~~, a shed ~~sixty~~ ^{feet} long, and a warehouse,
all surrounded by a stockade. It was called
Fort St. Louis and was continuously occupied
by the M-W-C- until after the war of 1812, 1812
when the Co- was compelled to withdraw from
W-Territory.

✓

McGowan

Sept 1, 1932 (From this time on for a number of years) (2)
Perrault remained in the employ of the
Co. W. C., having his station at Red Cedar
Lake. He mentions a man named Bousquet
as having charge of the Company's Post on Sandy
Lake during the winter 1794-95 during which 1794
time the stockaded Post on Brown's Point on
Sandy Lake was built for the Co. by William
Morrisson. Perrault, however, make no mention
of this latter fact. At the opening of the season
of 1795-96, Perrault passed through L. S. on
his way to the upper valley and "lodged, with
Bousquet who had passed the summer there,"
contributive evidence as to the existence at that
time of the Post built by Morrisson. Bousquet
continued on L. S. in 1796-97 and Perrault
on Red Cedar Lake. Of the return journey,
Perrault records, "I descended to Lac des Sables
(Sandy Lake) with five men in two canoes
loaded with nineteen packs of furs and
eight Kegs of sugar. I slept that night
at Bousquet's, and the next day reached the
Portage de la Savanne where St. Louis, one
of my men, was poisoned. We buried him
at the Portage and I was compelled to
hire some Indians to help us across the Portage." (over)

So the old Savanna Portage has at least
this one known dedication of human life to add
to its historic interest.

The Fur Companies on Sandy Lake.

McGee
Sept. 1, 1932

(3)

In 1783 a partnership of Scotch merchants 1783
was formed with headquarters at Montreal which cul-
minated in 1787 in the formation of the famous 1787
M-W-C. This C-dominated the fur trade in the
land west of S-S- for thirty years and, as has
been suggested in a previous article, was the
source of such government as the region had
throughout this period. At first its principal dis-
tributing and collecting points were at Mackinac,
Grand Portage (at the mouth of Pigeon river), Green
Bay, and Prairie du Chien. From these as centers,
trade routes ran out through the entire fur country.
Various subsidiary stations and posts were
established in the interior. These were called
"jackknife" stations, from the fact that from them
trails radiated into the woods as blades
of a jackknife. Sandy Lake was the first of
such a "jackknife" station, occupied only
during the trading season and furnished with
more or less temporary shelters such as Perrault
built on Prairie Lake.

✓

Sept. 1, 1932

47

Investigations of the possibility of trade in the upper valley soon after the formation of the M-W-C - led them to establish a new permanent port at the head of S-S - for the control of the trade of the S-S-R-. This port was the one built in 1792 by Perrault. Fort 1792 St Louis at Ford du Lac was then and for several years thereafter the central port of this department. In 1794 another 1794

Fort

Permanent port of the company was built on S-S - and within a few years the headquarters of the department of Ford du Lac was transferred to this station. From this time on until (the final decline of the fur trade about 1840,) Sandy S - was the center 1790 of an area which included Grand Portage, Rainy Lake, Vermillion Lake, Red Lake, Pembina Lake, Red Cedar Lake (later called Cass Lake), Leech Lake, the Miss-vally, almost as far south as the Falls of St. Anthony, and the region westward to the upper reaches of Red River, an area imperial in extent.

Meyers
Sept. 1, 1932

(3)

The Post of the M.-W.-C.-on S.-S.- was
built in 1794, probably by William
Monism later for a time an opposition
trader and still an employee of the Co.
Its right to the distinction of being the first
permanent fur trading post built west of Lake
Superior cannot be successfully disputed.
The post stood on the so. shore of the bay
which forms the northernmost extension
of this beautiful lake, about midway of the
distance from the state highway to the end
of Brown's Point. The general location of the
post is indicated by an official marker
placed on Highway Number Five, opposite
the entrance to the road leading along
Brown's Point.

The post was one of the stopping places
of the surveyor and astronomer David Thom-
pkins who in the spring of 1797, entered the 1797
service of the M.-W.-C. and made a trek through
the fur country westward along the forty-
ninth parallel of latitude. He returned by
way of Red and Red Lake rivers to Red Lake,

when he returned to Turtle Lake and des- ⑥
cended the Miss - to S - F - Thompson. Visited the
northwest post here in 1798 and thence contin - 1798
ned his journey over the S - P - to Fort du Lac.
Thompsons route from R - R - V - to S. F. was
that used by the traders in their commerce
with the Indians of the fur west.

In 1806 the post was visited by 1806
Lieut. M. Pike, who left a detailed des-
cription of it in the report of his expedition
to the headwaters of the Miss.

Pike describes the post as follows:

"It consisted of) stockade 100 feet square
with bastions (blockhouses) at the S.E. and
N.W. angles, pierced for small arms. The
sockets (of the stockade) are squared on the
outside, round within, about one foot in
diameter, and 13 feet above the ground. There are
three gates: the principal one fronts the lake
on the N. and is 10 x 9 feet; the one on the W.
is 6 x 4 feet; and the one on the E. 6 x 5 feet."

"On the W. and N.W. is a picketed en-
closure of about five acres in which last
year they raised about 400 bushels of
Irish Potatoes, cultivating no other veg-
etables. In this enclosure is a very ingeniously

constructed round to contain potatoes, and 7
which likewise has secret apartments to
conceal liquors dry goods, etc.

— Schoolcraft in his narrative journal of
the Cass expedition of 1820, which visited S. S. 1820
en route and stopped at the Post, describes
it almost in Pike's words, but adds the
information that the pickets of the main stockade
were "pinned together with stout plates of
the same material."

Here in the Post on Pinnock Point,
surrounded by a strong stockade, the
factors of the N-W-C exercised their sway
for more than twenty years. It is some-
what surprising that the activities of this
British company should have continued
within U.S. territory as long as they did.
By the Treaty of 1793, at the end of the Rev-
olutionary War, the northern boundary of the
U.S. was fixed as a line running from
the head of S. S. - by the most practicable
water route to the Lake of the Woods and thence
to the headwaters of the Miss- . There was
opportunity for question and dispute as to what
was meant by the most practicable water
route referred to in the Treaty. The U-S-

McGregor
Sept. 8
1932

8
Claimed that it was the chain of rivers
and lakes, forming the present northern boundary
of Minn.; but naturally the British preferred
a more southern location of the boundary.
The question was not settled until after the
war of 1812 when the Joint Commissioners 1812
of the two countries met at Ghent in Belgium
for the conclusion of a treaty of peace.

In 1816 the Am-F-C took over all (1816)
the holdings of the M-W-C within the treaty
limits of the U-S together with the rights of
trade. The A-F-C was a corporation controlled by
John Jacob Astor, who, previous to his purchase of
the rights and holdings of the M-W-C, had been
successful in obtaining from Congress the enactment
of a law prohibiting trade in furs within the
U-S by any foreign company. Armed with
this advantage, Astor bought out the holdings
of the M-W-C at his own price.

The post on Brainerd Point continued
to be the headquarters of the fur trade of this
vast region, under the control now of the American
Fur Co., until after 1820. Sometime between 1820
and 1830, the Astor company built a new station
at the mouth of Sandy river where it empties
into the Miss. The exact date of this construction
is uncertain, as no records of this ten-year
period have yet come to light.

For a time after the abandonment of the old post, it ⑨
was occupied by representatives of an opposition co.
Eventually the stockade and the buildings which
it enclosed were destroyed by fire, as the unmistak-
able evidence on the site prove. The Indians re-
occupied the site as the location of one of their
villages. Here again they erected their tepees and
wigwams, dug their rice holes, buried their dead,
and used the clearing for their gardens thus
giving to the point the name "Indian Gardens" by
which it was known to the early white settlers.
Second growth timber sprang up, and with the
gradual depletion and removal of the Indian pop-
ulation, it became an abandoned waste. About
1900 the point was purchased by T. C. Breun, who
erected a long cabin at the western end and
farmed the cleared land for some years. Later
the site was subdivided into lots which were
sold for cabin sites and today it has the appear-
ance of the unusual tourist resort.

Sept. 15,
1932

The new location for the A. F. C. Post was
even more strategically located for control of the
river trade than the older one. The post stood
on a narrow ridge between the two rivers,
Miss - and Sandy, just to the north of their junction.

Allen Morrison, brother of W - M, in
a manuscript in the possession of H. M. H. S.
says of this post; "The Sandy Lake establishment

Sept. 15
1932

consisted of one store 50 ft sq., $1\frac{1}{2}$ story pro- vision store 25 ft sq. on posts 9 ft. from the ground, one ice house, one dwelling house 50' x 30', $1\frac{1}{2}$ story mens house 40' x 30', blacksmith shop, barn, and stables.

There are still several cellar excavations here which give evidence of white occupancy of this site, but the present owner of the land on which they are located has not wished to have any detailed investigations made such as would be necessary to determine whether these traces date back to the fur-trading days or not.

Jacob V. Brewer who in the early 1890's visited the site of the post at the mouth of S.R. says of it in an article in the M.H.C.:

"The old Post and stockade was situated upon the east bank of the river, and the well preserved extremities of the timbers used can be excavated from below the surface of the earth, innumerate reminders of the activities of the eighteenth century in maintaining traffic facilities with the tribes of the Far West."

Brewer's mention of a stockade is the only one yet found referring to this feature of the Post, although the fact that the Post was called Fort Benton suggests

Sept. 15, 1932 such a surrounding defense. The identification
of this post as Fort Benton is based upon a statement made by Jean Sibby, son of Joseph Sibby, one of the earliest German-
X ent white settlers on D. & . and the first German of the region. It is further supported by an article written by E. D. Maell and published by the Minn. - H. & . about 1892 in which it is stated that the A - F - C - Post at D. & . in 1862 was called Fort Benton. The name was doubtless chosen by Astor in honor of his close political friend, Senator Thomas H. Benton of Missouri who was for many years the consistent champion of the Astor interests in Congress. The date given is a clue to the time of construction of the new post.

When Schoolcraft visited D. & . in 1832 on his way to the headwaters of the Miss - (the journey which resulted in his discovery of Lake Itasca) he made the post at the mouth of Sand river a stopping place. At that time the agent in charge of the post and department was William A. Atkinson, for whom Atkinson County was later named. Atkinson continued in charge of the post for some years thereafter, possibly

Sept. 15, until its abandonment by the company. (1.2)
1932

What the circumstances were which led to the abandonment of the Post is unknown. Doubtless it was due to the depletion of the fur supply to the point where the further maintenance of the trade in this region was unprofitable. Possibly the Post was destroyed by fire accidentally. Whatever the cause, its abandonment marked the fall of Aitkin from his position of leadership to one of increasing loss of prestige and ultimate poverty. A friend of Aitkin's in a letter written in about 1842 speaks of having revisited the site of the Post and having camped there over night with Aitkin. He speaks of Aitkin sitting beside the dying campfire, lost in silent thought. The inference is the Post was at this time entirely in ruins, thus suggesting destruction by some such sudden calamity as fire.

McC Gregor, Aitkin County.
Palat
Reverend

and the "Portage la Savanna" respectively. The location of the "Portage la Prairie" is further confirmed by the mark of a "zero apostrophe" (0) by which the site of a log cabin built by Perrault in 1785 is shown near the lake of which Prairie River flows.

maps

From Perrault's reference by name to the various physical features on the map, it would seem that they were known and named previous to his first visit to the country and that the trails were already well defined. The fact that the map does not show the West Savanna River at all casts some doubt upon the identity of Perrault's "Portage la Savanna" and the Savanna Portage of later days, but the physiography of the region between the East Savanna and the Prairie rivers would seem to preclude the practicability of the use during the summer months of any other route between these two streams. (5)

(5) Michigan Pioneer & Hist. Col. 37:521

"Poses." A French term applied to the placing or depositing of a load on the portage.

Passing over into English "Pose" became by a process of folk etymology, "Pause" referring to the rest taken by the carrier at this point.

M. P. H. Letter from Trade - 172

enormous boulders, derived principally from granitic gneissoid, and schistose rocks. Among these hills the stream expands into small ponds, connected by a mere rivulet, barely wide enough to let a canoe pass. The distance from the mouth of the river to the beginning of the portage, is about ten miles. The Portage is but miles long and leads over the highlands which divide the waters of the Mississippi from those of Lake Superior. East Savanna river, where the portage strikes it, is about five yards wide. It comes from the northwest, and turning a short distance below the portage, pursues a general northeasterly direction to its junction with the St Louis River.

The word Savanna more frequently used in Georgia and Florida, is of American Indian origin, meaning a treeless area, and it is here applied to tracts of partly marshy grassland,

Savanna Portage - fur trade

Hunt

L. Lake

McGregor

9.9.1932

In the early days before and during the period of the Revolutionary War, the fur trade was in the hands of the "free traders" who themselves both trapped and traded with the Indians for furs. These traders established themselves at various places along the shores of the lake in temporary or more or less permanent camps. Later, after the organization of the fur companies, several permanent trading posts were established.

In the period of "free trade," as contrasted with that of the organized trade with the companies, the furs were often collected at a "packing point" where the miscellaneous bundles of skins of all sorts and conditions were opened, sorted, and repacked in smaller bundles or packs, each one weighing from fifty to one hundred pounds and each representing a single load for one man to carry on the portages (see typed sheet).

One of these packing points is said to have been located on the west bank of Prairie River, a short distance above the place where it

McGowan empties into Billhorn Bay (on the old
June 9/1932 J.E. Murphy farm). Excavations on this
site have revealed many evidences
of white occupancy both during the
fur trading and the lumbering periods
of industry (see page one of typed sheet)

At length, however, the weary caravan
came to the end of the hardest part of the journey,
an opening in the forest where another per-
manent camp was located near the banks
of the C-S-R-, where weary and worn,
they could rest for their day of toil. On
the third morning, the canoes filled with
picks, were launched on the little stream,
flowing northward to join the St. Louis.
The difficulties of the journey were by
no means over although the part immedi-
ately ahead was easy. The St. Louis however,
ran down through a series of rapids
to dangerous and difficult to be passed in
canoes. Around these rapids the packs
canoes had to be carried, although the
distance was not great. One of these portages
was extremely troublesome, however, from the
fact that it was covered with innum-
erable sharp rocks, with knifelike edges
which tore the moccasins and cut the feet
of the carriers and hence derived its name
Knife Portage (see typed page 4) Some-
times with a favorable stage of water
and good weather some of the portages
could be passed without unloading
or carrying the packs and canoes.

McGowan
July 16 1932

IV

McCoy
J 16, 1932

Under such circumstances the downstream journey might be accomplished in two days, but usually it took three. The journey from west to the east took even longer, for the canoes, laden with trade goods rather than furs, had to breast the adverse current of the St. Louis and the east Savanna all the way from Ford du Sac (Munn) to the eastern end of the S-P-

IV

At Ford du Sac the furs were delivered to the representative of the trading company and repacked for shipment in larger canoes by the lakes and the St. Lawrence to Montreal or Quebec, then the great outlets to the world at large.

There is no other place in the whole north-east where the waters of the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence river systems approach each other so closely as they do here between the two Savannas. It is this fact that accounts for the historical importance to the Sandy Lake region. ✓

Newton H. Winchell - 1878
Minn. Geo. Surv.

Minn. Geological
and Natural Hist. Surv.
(1839) 1

David Dale Owen
Geological
Report of a
Survey of Part
of Minn. W. S.
Journ. P. 300

The report made by me (David Dale Owen)
June, 24 1839, from Sandy Lake to Fond du Lac.

1839
Prairie River, one of the largest tributaries
of Sandy Lake, is about twenty-five yards wide
at its mouth, and enters the lake between
drift hills sixty-nine feet in height, and
covered with small pine, aspen, and birch.
In winter and occasionally in summer,
the Indians, passing from Sandy Lake to Fond
du Lac, follow this river to its source, and
then, by a portage of twelve miles, reach
St. Louis River, a few miles below the mouth
of the East Savanna River. The distance to Fond
du Lac by this route is considerably less than
by the Savanna River. In summer,
however, the swamps about the head of Prairie
River are almost impassable, and then
the line of travel is the same as the one pur-
sued by us.

West Savanna River enters Prairie
River about a mile and a half above Sandy
Lake. It is twenty feet wide at its mouth,
but soon contracts to ten or twelve feet,
which general width it retains throughout

David D. Owen.

its course. It is extremely crooked, and winds through extensive swamps covered with aquatic grasses. It is very shallow, becomes rapid towards its source, with a pebbly bottom, and, as the Portage is approached is obstructed by boulders.

Toward the head of the stream, the swamps through which it flows are surrounded by high drift-hills on the sides and tops of which are many enormous boulders, derived principally from granitic gneissoid, and schistose rocks. Among these hills the stream expands into small ponds, connected by a mere rivulet, barely wide enough to let a canoe pass. On the summit of a high hill, immediately south of the first pond, is a boulder of syenite, sixty-eight feet in circumference. It is circular, flat on the top, and exposed above ground three and a half feet.

David Dale Owen

P 300

W. Savanna

River

Geological

Report of a

Survey of Patuxent

W. Savanna

P 300

Portage

/

It is twenty feet at its mouth, but soon³ contracts to ten or twelve feet, which general width it retains throughout its course. It is extremely crooked, and winds through extensive swamps covered with aquatic grasses. It is very shallow, becomes rapid towards its source, with a pebbly bottom, and, as the portage is approached, is obstructed by boulders.

The distance from the mouth of the river to the beginning of the portage, is about ten miles. The portage is six miles long, and leads over the highlands which divide the waters of the Miss - from those of Lake Superior. The dividing ridge is composed of ranges of drift-hills the highest of which, on the portage, is, by barometrical measurement, one hundred and thirty-nine feet above the level of Sandy Lake. The observations were made at the end of the fourth "Pause" one hundred paces northeast of a small pond.

301

For the first four and a half miles the portage is dry, and passes over ridges covered with young birch, maple, and pine. ... The east end of the portage, for the distance of a mile and a half, runs through a

David Dale Owen

301

4
tamarack swamp, which was flooded with water, and next to impossible. It is generally considered the worst "caning place" in the Northwest, and judging from the great number of canoes which lie decaying along this part of it having been abandoned in consequence of the difficulty experienced in getting them over, its reputation is well deserved.

East Savannah River, where the portage strikes it, is about five yards wide. It comes from the northwest, and turning a short distance below the portage, pursues a general northeasterly direction to its junction with St Louis River.-----

The distance between Sandy Lake and the Trading Post, (Fort du Sac) by the way of the Savannah River, is, according to my estimate ninety-six miles.

New Trail.

M. H. B. 130

Sub M. M. (see p. 45)
The most serviceable map, proved to be the United States Engineer's map of Sandy Lake basin and the township maps based upon the government surveys. From the latter, it appeared probable that the

Sept 19.

1833

Chyopsis

Through which the little stream, in which we 6
embarked, meanders are broad . . and thousands
of tons of grass might be cut from two to 3 feet
in length, and as thick as it can grow.

Sandy region was definitely established. This³¹
Treaty and the passage by Congress in 1816¹⁸¹⁶
of an act restricting the Indian trade to
American citizens brought to an end the
activities of the M - W - C - here. The Com-
pany sold all its posts and outfits south
of the Canadian boundary to John Jacob Astor,
who had previously organized the American
Fur Co.

Feb Fawell, minor - 1:132

In 1820, when the Cass expedition¹⁸²⁰
passed through Sandy Lake on its way to
the headwaters of the Miss - The agents of
the American Fur Company was found established
in the old fort, which Schoolcraft describes
in almost the exact words used by Pike
between 1820 and 1832 when Schoolcraft
for the second time visited Sandy Lake, the
American Fur Company's post was moved
to a point just north of the mouth of Sandy
River, where it flows into the Miss - ,
later the location of the Sibley Post Office

Feb. Henry R. Schoolcraft, Narrative Journal of Travels
through the Northwestern Regions of the United
States to the source of the Miss - River 218
Caves in the Expeditions 1:128

material

Complete

(only)
H. H. Hart
H. H. 8:117
Cheek Arthur

River

Savanna Portage.

In N.E. Part of Aitkin County, Minn. —
lie two small lakes, Savanne and Wolf,
distinguished in no other way from thousands
of other lakes which make this part of the
Country a paradise for hunters, fishermen
and tourists; but significant beyond all
others because of the physiographic fact
that here the waters of the Miss — and
the St. Lawrence systems approach each
other more closely than at any other
place in Minn. — It was this fact
which rendered it inevitable in the days
when transportation was largely by canoe
and portage, that this particular region
should become the site of one of the most
important portage routes in the Northwest.

From a time far back beyond the
dawn of historical knowledge, there was
probably a portage route between the
two streams which drain Savanne
and Wolf lakes. During the days of
the fur trade, this route was one of the
most important avenues of communication
between the upper Miss — Valley and the
Great Lakes, as attested by the Journals

abandonment

V

117

of Traders, travelers, and missionaries² who penetrated this region between 1763 1763 and 1850. After the middle of the nineteenth century, however, a silence falls about it, which may be explained by the decay of the fur trade, the changing routes of transportation, the development of new markets down the great river to the south, and the beginnings of lumber industry, which found no place in its cosmos for such things as portages. The trail fell into gradual disuse, until so far as the general public was concerned, it was forgotten. Few, even among the residents of the region, knew its location, and of these none realized its former importance. It existed only in the pages of the chroniclers of the past and promised soon to become little more than a dem tradition. ✓

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V

The relocation of this historic route of trade and transportation was a challenge, and, under the guidance of Mr William P. Ingersoll, without whose woodcraft and intimate knowledge of the region the successful conclusion of the undertaking

118

would have been impossible, the attempt was made in the early fall of 1926.

introduced by
Jacob V. Brower
"Prehistoric
man at the
Headwaters of
the Miss-
River
M.H.C. 8:238
Reuben G.
Thurrites.

Trail

see

Indian

It is Brower's opinion that this portage had been used by the Indians and their predecessors for centuries before the first white man set foot upon the trail. It seems reasonable to assume that it was by this route that Du Suth made his epochal journey to the upper Miss-
Country in 1679. And it is an equally reasonable assumption that it was along this trail that the first Chippewa pushed westward from their homes on Lake Superior into the territory then occupied by the Sioux around Sandy Lake. Jacob V. Brower, Prehistoric man at the Headwaters of the Miss river (in M.H.C. 8:238) ✓

The story of the coming of the first Chippewa to Sandy Lake has, down to the present, remained a matter of oral tradition; but derived as it is from several separate and independent sources, it seems to be of sufficient significance to be recorded. The tale runs thus;

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M. H. 8:120
River

4

Many years ago, when the Chippewa had their homes on Lake Superior, a brave warrior of this tribe, accompanied only by his squaw, ascended the St. Louis and East Savanna rivers, and passed westward to the West Savanna Valley, seeking new hunting grounds. Crossing the West Savanna river, the Indians continued their journey until nightfall. Within a short time he came to an opening in the forest, across which he saw two loons swoot down in the long plunging flight which these birds make only when settling into the water. A few steps in advance, he came to the brow of a cliff, from which he looked down upon a village of the Sioux. --- Apparently the Chippewa warrior had been unaware either of the existence of the lake or of the imminent proximity of so large a body of enemies. --- Thus beginning the long period of conflict was now to result in the expulsion of the Sioux from the whole region, and in the permanent establishment of the Chippewa on the islands and along the

120

120

shores of Sandy Lake. This story was⁵
told to Mr Ingersoll by Mr Charles
Wakefield a half-breed Chippewa.
William Warren, History of the Ojibways
M. H. C. 5: 157-162

121

Route

Map

That by the middle of the eighteenth
century the existence of a portage route
from The St. Louis to The Miss -
was known to The French is evidenced
by Bellin's map of North America,
Published in 1755, which shows the
'R. du Fond du Sac,' or St. Louis River
and a portage from its source to
"Sac Rouge" which is evidently con-
founded with Mille Sacs. In common
with all early maps of this region,
Bellin's is extremely inaccurate; but
the physiography of the region makes
it seem probable that the reference
is to the Savanna Portage. ✓
M. H. C. 8: 121

P. route.

W. H. C.

12: 43

Other than a somewhat obscure
reference in an English military
memorandum, apparently written
in 1777, the earliest reference to the

1777

6

portage routes between Lake Superior
and Sandy Lake thus far discovered
are those of Jean Baptiste Perrault. X
Perrault wrote his narrative about
1830 evidently basing it upon diaries 1830
kept during the years of his active
participation in the fur trade of the
Northwest. Between 1784-1797, he 1784
made comparatively frequent trips 1797
back and forth from Lake Superior
to Sandy Lake, of some of which he
has left more or less detailed accounts.
In these accounts he makes mention
of two portages between the St Sains
and Sandy Lake, which he calls the
'portage de la Prairie' and the 'portage
de la Savanne'. From the dates given
it is evident that the former was used
in the winter months and the latter
in the summer.

Accompanying the narrative of Perrault
are a number of maps of the regions
traversed by him, sketched by himself.

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one of which is probably the oldest detailed map of the country between Lake Superior and Sandy Lake. This map Perrault has entitled in crude French, "Sketch map of the country from the entrance of the river Fond du Lac Superior to penetrate to the entrance of the discharge to Lac des Sables (Sandy Lake) where it flows into the Miss - and where the ports are marked with a zero apostrophe." This map is not drawn to scale and is materially inaccurate in many details. It shows the St Louis River, which Perrault styles the "Fond du Lac," with a tributary, the "riviere de la Savanne Prairie Lake, unnamed on the map, but called "Lac de la Puisse" in the narrative; Prairie River, which is likewise unnamed on the map, though Perrault calls it "riviere des prairie" in one account of the portage; and "Lac des Sables," with an unnamed stream by which the lake empties into the Miss - . The most interesting feature of the map is the fact that the two portage routes from river to river

122

unnamed on the map, though Perrault calls it "riviere des prairie" in one account of the portage; and "Lac des Sables," with an unnamed stream by which the lake empties into the Miss - . The most interesting feature of the map is the fact that the two portage routes from river to river

are marked by dotted lines; one from ⁸ the St Louis River directly to Prairie River just below its discharge from Prairie Lake, and the other from the East Savanna to the Prairie Lake, and ~~the other from the East Savanna to the Prairie River further down on its~~ course to Sandy Lake. These two portages are marked as the 'portage la prairie' and the 'portage la savanna' respectively.

~~IV~~ The location of the 'portage la prairie' is further confirmed by the mark of a 'zero apostrophe' (0) by which the site of a log cabin built by Perrault in 1785 is shown near the lake out of which Prairie River flows. 1785 ✓

~~IV~~ From Perrault's references by name to the various physical features on the map, it would seem that they were known and named previous to his first visit to the country and that the trails were already well defined. ✓

122

9

His errors in the direction of stream flow are no more serious than those of later travelers through the region, whose opportunities for exact observation and record were at least equal to his. The fact that the map does not show the west Savanna River at all casts some doubt upon the identity of Perrault's 'Portage la Savanne' and the Savanna Portage of later days; but the physiography of the region between the East Savanna and the Prairie rivers would seem to preclude the practicability of the use during the summer months of any other route between these two streams.

See Mich
Perry H.C.
37:521

~~Narrative of the travels and adventures of a merchant voyage~~
This belongs close together

123

Another traveler who left a record of the use of this Portage route was David Thompson, a Scotch surveyor in the service of the North West Company, who in May 1798 des- 1798 ended the river to Sand Lake River and thence over

Crossed the divide to Lake Superior.

David Thompson, Narrative of his Explorations
in western America 1784-1812. M. H. 8:123

Tyrell

a Brief Sketch of The Journeys
David Thompson, the well known

A Brief Nar-
rative of The
Journeys of
David Thompson.

Page-10.

geographer and astronomer, had visited
Northern men - in 1798 May 3, struck
across to the head of the Miss-River, down
which he traveled, through "Winnipegosis"
Lake to the mouth of Sandy Lake River, where
he left the main stream and turned up
Sandy Lake River to Sandy Lake, on which
was a House of the M. W. C. O., S 14° E. $1\frac{1}{4}$ mile
from the head of the river, and in Lat. $46^{\circ}46'39''$.

From this House he crossed the Lake to
the mouth of Savannah Brook, which he
followed up to the Savannah carrying
place, a deep bog four miles across.
Crossing this portage to a small creek
that flows into the St Louis River, he
descended the latter stream to Fond du
Sac House, two miles and a half up the
river from Lake Superior. ✓

M.H. 5132

not here.

David Thompson, the well-known geographer and astronomer, had visited Northern Minn. - nine years before Monk wrote. Presumably he submitted a report of his journey to the company, for Monk later mentions his description of Red Lake. It would be interesting to know more about this report, which seems to have vanished.

See: David Thompson's "Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812. By Tynell. 1798-No. 12.

Fort.

IV

River

See M.H. 5132

Monk writes: ^{from} Fort William to the River St Louis boats are more commodious, safer, and cheaper conveyance than large birch canoes. River St Louis disemboques itself into Lake Superior in 47° N. Latitude 92° 40' west. Longitude proceeding four miles against the current, the Channel 1½ miles wide the river shallow and the bank sandy, we come to a shallow muddy lake, 3 miles wide five long. Now the channel contracts gradually to the foot of the Grand Portage, in low water about 200 paces wide.

This map is not drawn to scale and is naturally inaccurate in many

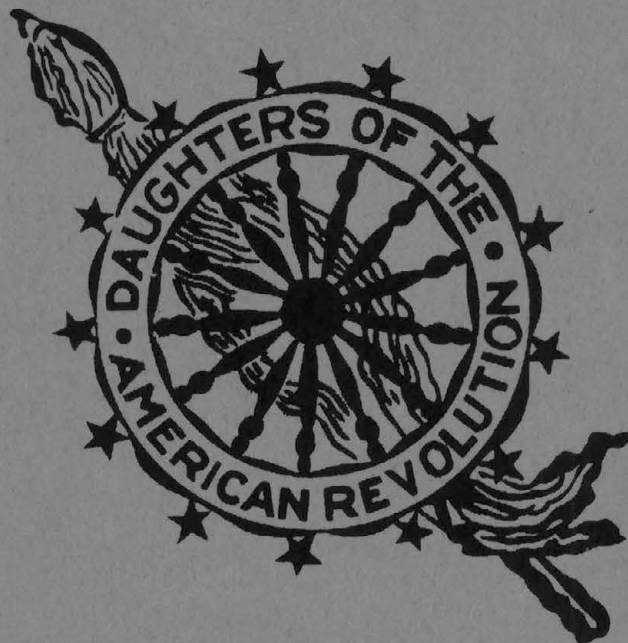
details. ~~It~~ shows the St. Louis River, which Perrault styles the "Fond du Lac" with a tributary, the "riverede la Savanna" Prairie Lake, unnamed on the map, but called "Lac de la Puisse" in the narrative; Prairie River, which is likewise unnamed on the map, though Perrault calls it "Riviere des Prairie" in one account of the Portage; and Lac des Sables, with an unnamed stream by which the lake empties into the Mississippi. The most interesting feature of the map is the fact that the two Portage routes from river to river are marked by dotted lines; one from the St. Louis River directly to Prairie River, just below its discharge from Prairie Lake, and the other from the East Savanna to the Prairie River further down on its course to Sandy Lake. These two portages are marked as the "Portage la Prairie" and the "Portage la Savanna" respectively. The location of the "Portage la Prairie" is further confirmed by the mark of a "zero apostrophe" (0) by which the site of a log cabin built by Perrault in 1785 is shown near the lake of which Prairie River flows. On his return in July 1797 one of his men, St. Louis was poisoned and was buried on the portage. So the old Savanna Portage has at least this one known dedication of human life to add to its historic interest.

From Perrault's reference by name to the various physical features on the map, it would seem that they were known and named previous to his first visit to the county and that the trails were already well defined. The fact that the map does not show the West Savanna River at all casts some doubt upon the identity of Perrault's "Portage la Savanna" and the Savanna Portage of later days, but the physiography of the region between the East Savanna and the Prairie rivers would seem to preclude the practicability of the use during the summer months of any other route between these two streams (5)

Perrault Narrative, "Michigan Pioneer" Historical Col. V37:521 (over)

Perrault Narrative, Michigan Pioneer and
Historical Society. pp 513-619. Lansing 1909-10

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