

PIONEER ROADS CENTERING AT DULUTH

Travelers long relied upon canoe routes and portages or upon overland trails through the woods to make the passage between the upper Mississippi and the waters of the St. Lawrence system about the head of Lake Superior. Such navigable waterways, separated by a low divide, early looked inviting as terminals for a road over the watershed. As the desire to travel and transport goods between lake and river increased, portage routes and trails came to be considered too slow and antiquated for Minnesotans. The first plans for a road to western Lake Superior included an interior terminus on the Mississippi River.

The Minnesota territorial legislature of 1849 sent two memorials to Congress asking for such a roadway. First, it requested a road between the junction of the St. Croix and the Mississippi and the falls of the St. Louis, the head of the navigable St. Lawrence system. After a ten-day interval the legislature made a second request, asking for a mail route between the falls of the St. Croix and Fond du Lac, where lived a group of settlers entirely destitute of mail service. Mineral exploitation at Fond du Lac was expected by many people to follow the opening of the Sault canal.¹ Consequently, they advocated a road over which supplies might reach the copper towns that they anticipated would develop at the head of Lake Superior.

In 1851 Captain J. H. Simpson of the United States corps of topographical engineers surveyed the route between Point Douglas at the junction of the St. Croix and the Mississippi and the head of navigation on the St. Louis. Work

¹ John R. Carey, "History of Duluth, and of St. Louis County, to the Year 1870," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9: 245; J. W. Putnam, *Minnesota: A Description of the Natural, Political, Mechanical and Agricultural State of the Country*, 26 (Galena, 1849).

apparently ceased with the survey and no road had reached the head of the lake in 1854, for in that year an English traveler who wished to journey from Superior to St. Paul was informed that all trails were nearly hidden by vegetation and he therefore followed a canoe route. Construction work probably was started from the Point Douglas end of the route, since Congress appropriated twenty thousand dollars for the purpose in January, 1853, and a like sum in July, 1854.² Following the completion of the first twenty-four miles, contractors built a second division of nineteen miles, thus opening more of the lands along the right of way to lumberman and settler. One writer predicted that, upon the opening of the road, St. Paul would receive all its goods by way of Lake Superior and land lying north of St. Paul would be valued in proportion to its nearness to the lake.³

Pursuant to earlier Congressional legislation, about two-fifths of the route was opened, following the survey stakes leading to the falls of the St. Louis; but an act of July, 1854, made the mouth of the St. Louis River, in Wisconsin, the terminus. With parties working at either end of the route, Captain Simpson reported that the completion of the road by December 15, 1855, was likely. A volunteer company of seventeen men opened a winter road between Superior and Taylor's Falls in 1854, a fact that probably helped to fix the terminus of the federal road at Superior, rather than at the falls of the St. Louis, near Fond du Lac.

² "Sketch Indicating the Advancement of the Surveys of the Public Lands and the Military Topographical and Geographical Surveys West of the Mississippi," 1879, in George M. Wheeler, *Report upon United States Geographical Surveys West of the One Hundredth Meridian*, 412 (Washington, 1889); Edward V. Robinson, *Early Economic Conditions and the Development of Agriculture in Minnesota*, 33 (Minneapolis, 1915); Laurence Oliphant, *Minnesota and the Far West*, 164 (London, 1855); 34 Congress, 1 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 1, pt. 2, p. 482 (serial 841).

³ J. Wesley Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources*, 223 (Chicago, 1857); *Immigrants Guide to Minnesota in 1856*, 111 (St. Anthony, 1856).

Financial support was derived from Congress under guise of military necessity.⁴ Proponents of the road suggested that it would prove useful in case of an Indian uprising. Superior seemed more deserving of protection than Duluth because it had a decidedly more numerous population. In 1854-55 residents of Superior established a line of stages between their settlement and St. Paul.⁵ Boats and sleighs took travelers across the bay to and from Duluth. The Minnesota Stage Company, a St. Paul firm, soon absorbed the stage line.

A Minnesota publicist wrote in 1856 that the "Saint Louis River and Point Douglas Road" had been completed to within about fifty miles of Lake Superior. He did not refer to the status of a road designated on his map as the "St. Paul & Superior" and located some miles west of the "Pt. Douglass & Superior" road.⁶ Planners hoped to build a road for all-season use over this second route, which roughly paralleled the first. A memorial sent to Congress about this time asked for fifteen thousand dollars for a road from St. Paul to intersect the Point Douglas and Lake Superior road near the eighty-first mile post.⁷

Little seems to have been done on the eastern road in February, 1856, when a missionary and his party spent nine days in traveling from St. Paul to Duluth. They made the best speed on the St. Croix River ice, encountered temperatures as low as twenty-eight degrees below zero, and were obliged to thaw provisions before using them and to melt

⁴ 33 Congress, 2 session, *House Executive Documents*, no. 1, pt. 2, p. 345 (serial 778); Dwight E. Woodbridge and John S. Pardee, eds., *History of Duluth and St. Louis County*, 1: 229 (Chicago, 1910); Frank A. Flower, *Eye of the Northwest*, 54 (Milwaukee, 1890).

⁵ Frank R. Holmes, *Minnesota in Three Centuries*, 4: 312 (New York, 1908).

⁶ Bond, *Minnesota*, 224. Parts of these and other early roads are shown on township survey plats in the office of the Minnesota secretary of state, St. Paul.

⁷ Nathan H. Parker, *The Minnesota Handbook for 1856-7*, 133 (Boston, 1857); *Session Laws*, 1856, p. 373; 35 Congress, 2 session, *House Reports*, no. 183 (serial 1018).

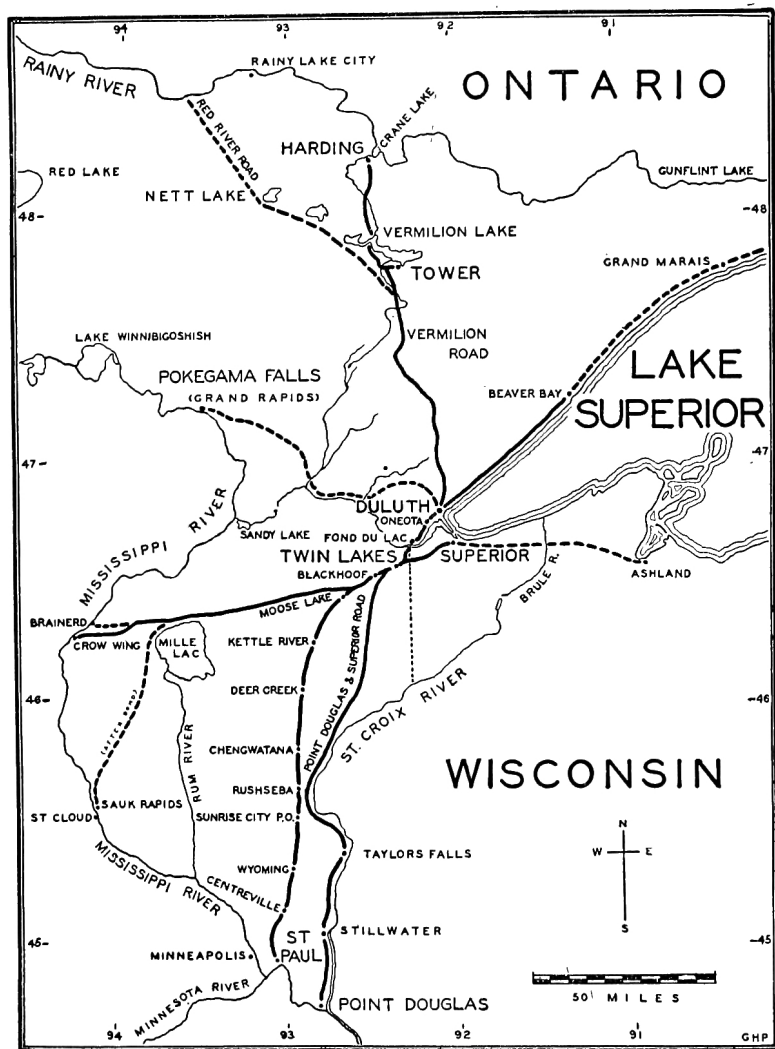
snow in order to provide water for their horses.⁸ Part of the western road, the St. Paul and Superior, existed in 1858, for the state legislature provided at that time for a road, in the vicinity of Wyoming, to connect it with the old road to the eastward. Residents of early Superior and Duluth refer to traffic on the eastern route as moving over the "winter road" or the "summer trail," and to that on the western route as using what they always considered the "Military Road." The later western road apparently received financial support from three sources—Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the federal government. The road was authorized "to facilitate the transportation of soldiers and supplies in case of Indian uprisings."⁹

Mail service to Duluth and Superior, especially in the fifties, proved unreliable and unsatisfactory. Even under favorable weather conditions, Superior received mail from St. Paul but once a week. In the spring and fall, contractors carried the mail bags on their backs. In seasons when the roadway froze or thawed they carried only letters, and sometimes travel was so difficult that they missed a mail date. When newspapers arrived at the head of the lake they were sometimes a month or more old. Mail service was extended by contract across the bay from Superior to Oneota in 1856 and to Duluth the next year, the contractor using a boat in summer and a dog team in winter.¹⁰ In the fall of 1856 the service became disorganized and after the close of navigation no mail arrived by overland routes for about six weeks. Late in the same season half-breeds carried flour and pork from camps on the St. Croix to the settlements at the head of the lake in order to keep them

⁸ Walter Van Brunt, *Duluth and St. Louis County*, 1: 107 (Chicago, 1921).

⁹ *Special Laws*, 1858, p. 112; John A. Bardon, "Superior's Military Road." The latter is a manuscript in the possession of the Superior Public Library.

¹⁰ Woodbridge and Pardee, *Duluth*, 1: 212; *Commemorative Biographical Record of the Upper Lake Region*, 72 (Chicago, 1905).



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supplied with food until teams could get through on the winter road from Hudson and Stillwater.

Passengers who went by lake boat from the East to the northern end of the route and found the road to St. Paul impassable were obliged in some instances to return to the East by boat. Others remained permanently and became citizens of Duluth. Travelers found the eastern road usable to some degree in summer and better after it was frozen in winter. At times they described it as excellent, with many teams passing over it each day. By 1857 hundreds had used this older "military road" as a connecting link between the more satisfactory travel routes terminating at Superior and St. Paul. Twin Lakes, a station near which the western road joined the eastern and where stage drivers changed teams, was made the seat of Carlton County on its organization in 1856—a fact that suggests the importance of this travel route. As Twin Lakes was but a few miles southwest of Fond du Lac, contractors received there north-bound mail destined for the Lake Superior settlements of Minnesota. They carried this mail to Fond du Lac and from there to Oneota and Duluth by water, ice, or land.¹¹ In the winter of 1858–59, mail and passenger sleighs traversed the route between Superior and St. Paul in each direction three times a week. Passengers paid ten dollars for one-way transportation, and at times they made the trip in as few as thirty-six hours. Later, mail reached Superior but once weekly. The Minnesota legislature in a memorial to the president pleaded that this service was insufficient and asked that the triweekly trips be re-established.¹²

Expenditures by the federal government on the eastern route seem altogether disproportionate to the usability of

¹¹ Woodbridge and Pardee, *Duluth*, 1: 196, 256; James S. Ritchie, *Wisconsin and Its Resources*, 230, 240 (Chicago, 1858); William H. C. Folsom, *Fifty Years in the Northwest*, 484 (St. Paul, 1888); Carey, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 9: 268.

¹² James S. Ritchie, *City of Superior*, 16 (Philadelphia, 1859); *Laws*, 1861, p. 351.

the road built there. During the years from 1850 to 1857 appropriations for the road between Point Douglas and the mouth of the St. Louis River averaged nearly seven hundred dollars a mile, totaling more than a hundred and twenty thousand dollars. Even at the close of this period vehicles could not use the road at all seasons. At times mail was delayed for weeks along the way. Government officials sent by way of Chicago communications between St. Paul and Duluth. Persons of experience suggested the use of a similar roundabout route for passengers. A family that left Duluth in 1860 for Red Wing and St. Paul took passage on the lake propeller "Ogantz" bound for Milwaukee, thence traveled overland, largely by stage, to La Crosse, and from there by Mississippi steamer to its destination. In the same year a resident of Duluth advised a friend not to try to bring his wife and children overland from St. Paul, since the connecting road offered a trying journey even for a strong man.¹⁸

In 1861 tree stumps remained along the roadway, turnouts wide enough for teams to pass occurred only at places where trees had been felled, and marshy spots were bridged with a curduroy surface of the trunks. Under such conditions the first woman to travel by stage from St. Paul to Superior made the journey. From Superior she and her family took a ferry across the bay to Duluth, where they joined about a dozen families huddled about the base of Minnesota Point in a settlement that did not persist far into the Civil War period. A proprietor of the Duluth townsite, who wished to volunteer for service in the Civil War, lacked the thirty-five dollars needed for stage fare to St. Paul, where the recruiting office was located, so he traveled, accompanied by his wife and daughter, by canoe, following the St. Louis River system and the Savanna portage to the waters of the upper Mississippi. In the fall of 1868 an

¹⁸ Minnesota Commissioner of Statistics, *Reports*, 1860, p. 169; Woodbridge and Pardee, *Duluth*, 1: 83, 245.

early settler at the head of the lakes moved a family from there to St. Paul, taking four weeks for the round trip. The next summer an Oneota teamster swam his oxen from Rice's Point, Duluth, to Connor's Point, Wisconsin, to begin a similar journey. News of the ending of the Civil War was taken from St. Paul to the head of Lake Superior by a carrier who reached his destination about a week after the event.¹⁴

For fifteen years roads connecting the Mississippi River with the head of Lake Superior gave direct service to Superior and did much to keep it growing faster than Duluth. Dwellers on the Wisconsin side of the common harbor realized fully the importance of such a connection. Until 1868 Douglas County, Wisconsin, which included Superior, annually levied taxes for the maintenance of the road over the western route to St. Paul and financed work not only on the fifteen miles of the road lying within the county, but also on eighty-five miles in Minnesota.¹⁵ Such expenditures apparently ceased only when citizens of Douglas County became convinced that the first railroad between the Mississippi and Lake Superior would terminate, not on the Superior, but on the Duluth side of the harbor at the mouth of the St. Louis River.

The assistant to the chief engineer for the railroad rode a stage from St. Paul over the western route in 1868, presumably in the spring. He describes vividly the mud and rain and tells that he was four days in making the journey. A time table printed for that year indicates that the hundred-and-sixty-mile trip normally required but two and a half days, and that the stage fare was sixteen dollars. About a year later a traveler designated the western route, over which he journeyed from the rail head at Wyoming, as a

¹⁴ Manuscript by Richard E. Carey, in the possession of the St. Louis County Historical Society; Irving H. Hart, "The Old Savanna Portage," *ante*, 8: 117-139.

¹⁵ James Bardon, "Douglas County's History," in *Wisconsin Municipality*, 14: 1061 (July, 1914).

mud canal, explaining that the forest prevented it from drying between rains. Nevertheless, on the fourth morning out of St. Paul, his party approached Fond du Lac from a point beyond Twin Lakes. Winter conditions provided a much more comfortable passage over the route. Though travelers might suffer from cold, there were no mosquitoes, deer flies, or mud to make the journey unpleasant. The family of Judge Solon H. Clough removed from St. Paul to the head of the lakes in January, 1868, riding in a cutter behind two ponies, while two strong horses pulled an immense sleighload of household goods, and a shepherd dog trotted alongside. The trip required but four days.¹⁶

In the winter preceding the building of a railroad the stage fare from St. Paul to the hamlet at Minnesota Point was fifteen dollars. Some made the trip in two days and three nights, finishing the journey in sleighs over the bay from Superior. In March, 1869, the editor of a Duluth newspaper advised those going to Duluth from St. Paul to send their baggage by way of Lake Michigan, while they themselves should take the train north to Wyoming and walk from there. He implied that even if they paid the regular stage fare they would be required to walk much of the way. In May two former residents of Duluth hired a "two-horse conveyance" at St. Paul, drove to Twin Lakes in three and a half days, walked the seven miles to Fond du Lac, and continued by boat to Duluth. They chose this route from Twin Lakes in preference to traveling twenty-three miles through heavy clay and over thirty-two bridges to Superior, and then crossing the bay seven miles by ferry. In the spring of 1869 friends of the village of Duluth promised to arrange, before the summer ended, for a better boat

¹⁶ Interview with George G. Barnum, in *Duluth Herald*, April 10, 1933; J. Disturnell, comp., *The Great Lakes*, 210 (New York, 1863); J. T. Trowbridge, "Through the Woods to Lake Superior," in *Atlantic Monthly*, 25; 417 (April, 1870); Clara C. Lenroot, *Long, Long Ago*, 35 (n. p., 1929).

than the one then operating on the St. Louis River between that place and Fond du Lac.¹⁷

For some years Minnesota legislation had pointed toward making Duluth, rather than Superior, the terminus of the stage route from St. Paul. An act of 1858 provided for a survey from Twin Lakes, via Fond du Lac, through Portland, now included in the business section of Duluth. Four years later the legislature appropriated five hundred dollars for a winter road between Twin Lakes and Duluth, provided that the counties through which it passed would spend a like sum. An act of 1865 empowered St. Louis County to expend a sum not to exceed ten thousand dollars for opening, working, and repairing the road from Duluth to Twin Lakes. The route had been established as a post road in March, 1869, when St. Louis County was authorized to issue as much as eight thousand dollars in scrip to finish locating and surveying a state road which would intersect the military road in Carlton County.¹⁸

Throughout the summer of 1869 much effort went into finishing the independent road into Duluth from Twin Lakes. The St. Louis County commissioners, upon being strongly importuned, provided for the improvement of the road between Duluth and Oneota, where bridges had been so low and slopes on either side of them so steep that teams could draw but half a load over them. A short time later the route was selected along which to extend the road from Oneota to Fond du Lac. It was far enough from the St. Louis River to avoid the necessity of building long and expensive bridges across tributaries near their mouths, where they were widest, and to take advantage of the better natural drainage offered by a somewhat higher level. With the fourteen miles of road between Duluth and Fond du Lac

¹⁷ Woodbridge and Pardee, *Duluth*, 1:252; *Duluth Minnesotian*, March 8, May 8, 1869.

¹⁸ *Special Laws*, 1858, p. 120-122; 1862, p. 305; 1865, p. 191; 1869, p. 324; United States, *Statutes at Large*, 15: 188-190.

built or arranged for, the commissioners expended approximately three hundred dollars to put into proper condition for stage travel the seven miles between Fond du Lac and Twin Lakes. Pending the completion of the north shore stage road, residents of Duluth planned to have the steamer "Keyes" call at Fond du Lac on stage days, and this made it much more convenient to go to Duluth than to Superior.¹⁹

Some passengers, however, still preferred to go to Superior. In the spring of 1870, a stage loaded with nine passengers, one of whom occupied the seat with the driver, traveled from St. Paul to Superior. The party included the president of a railroad which then was approaching the lake head, the vice president of a railroad soon to extend westward toward the Pacific, and two Congressmen — all bouncing about democratically among their fellow passengers as the stage progressed over corduroy or lurched in and out of chuck holes. As the stage entered the outskirts of Superior in the gathering dusk, its chronicler noted an owl on the ridgepole of a deserted house. To him the view seemed emblematic of the slump in the population of Superior, which was emphasized by contrast with the rapid growth of Duluth as the railroad from St. Paul approached its water front. Trains were running as far as Rush City late in July, 1869, and as the railroad neared the lake head the service on the stage route apparently degenerated. A Duluth editor described the road leading to Superior as the most damnable ever built in the universe, the overnight stopping place at Moose Lake as too abominable for human occupancy, and the quarters at Chengwatana as only a trifle more comfortable and but little cleaner.²⁰ The beginning of through railroad service in August, 1870, meant the abandonment of stage schedules, and for a time there was

¹⁹ *Duluth Minnesotian*, May 1, June 12, July 10, 1869.

²⁰ Charles C. Coffin, *The Seat of Empire*, 141-150 (Boston, 1870); *Duluth Minnesotian*, July 31, 1869.

but little road traffic of any kind over the full length of the route between the Mississippi and Lake Superior.

A St. Paul group interested in the Superior townsite and others living in the interior of Minnesota sponsored the first road to the head of Lake Superior. Its inception and use both show it to have been less a connection of the lake villages with the interior than an outlet to the lake for inland points. Perhaps Duluth had a greater share in the building of other roads between the head of the lake and the interior areas than in this instance. Even for the later roads, however, much of the motivating force came from people who did not live at the head of the lake, or who had not permanently located there. Western Lake Superior constituted, for many, but a station on the route to more inviting areas in the interior.

Lands in the upper Mississippi Valley had greater attractions for potential agriculturalists than those nearer the head of Lake Superior. Since emigrants could not always reach the upper river by boat, and no other cheap and speedy means of travel existed for their use, settlement near the upper Mississippi proceeded slowly. In 1857, after a road from the west end of Lake Superior to the upper Mississippi was built, government officials expected a large influx of immigrants to the Sauk Rapids land district by way of this road and the lake. The road diverged somewhat from a straight line, its length between Fond du Lac and Sauk Rapids measuring a hundred and twenty miles. An act of 1856 made territorial roads of the routes between St. Cloud and the head of Mille Lacs and between Mille Lacs and the head of Lake Superior, already "explored out." Later a memorial to Congress asked for a mail route with semiweekly service between St. Cloud and the lake head.²¹

In 1858 the Minnesota legislature appointed commissioners to mark a roadway between the Red River and some

²¹ Bond, *Minnesota*, 400; *Laws*, 1856, p. 136; 1861, p. 352.

eligible point on the Minnesota shore of Lake Superior. Three years later a memorial was sent to Congress requesting a weekly mail between Lake Superior and Georgetown, on the Red River, by way of Crow Wing. Settlers along the route had opened and continued to improve a direct line of road.²² In the winter of 1858-59 a resident of Superior built under contract the westernmost twenty miles of a road between the head of Lake Superior and Mille Lacs. Apparently he had made previous use of roads leading lakeward from the interior of Minnesota when he drove a herd of cattle from the vicinity of Anoka to Superior and shipped them to the Michigan mines. A herd of his cattle constituted the first consignment of livestock shipped east from the head of Lake Superior.²³

Residents of Superior financed the road that passed Mille Lacs in the hope of attracting another type of commerce. They expended great sums for clearing, grading, corduroying, and bridging a course of a hundred miles extending from a point north of Moose Lake, on the "military road," to Crow Wing on the Mississippi. They did this because the Hudson's Bay Company had agreed to establish a depot at the head of the lakes and to transport its goods through Superior instead of through St. Paul. Plans were made to provide a warehouse at Superior for the fur company, which was offered a substantial cash bonus. Though the road was available, the Hudson's Bay Company never used it to take furs to Lake Superior.²⁴

Another route that was considered in connection with road projects extended northwest from the head of Lake Superior. During the fifties a townsite promoter offered to take Indian supplies from Duluth at actual cost over a road to be laid out to the reservation above the Knife Falls of

²² *Special Laws*, 1858, p. 128; *Laws*, 1855, p. 111; 1856, p. 136, 350;

²³ *Upper Lake Region*, 32.

²⁴ Bardon, in *Wisconsin Municipality*, 14:1061; Woodbridge and Pardee, *Duluth*, 1:283.

the St. Louis. He thought that Indian payments, if made farther from Duluth, would result in greater benefit to the natives. If he actually built such a road, it failed of continuous use, for some years later agents made the Indian payment at Fond du Lac because no road existed over which to transport goods to the reservation. The agents did this in violation of the treaty of 1854, which designated the reservation as the place of payment, and the Indians had to transport the goods for themselves.²⁵

In 1858 commissioners were appointed "to locate, survey, and establish a State road" between Pokegama Falls, on the Mississippi River, and a point on the north shore near the western extremity of Lake Superior. In 1869 a Duluth newspaper urged the construction of a road over a similar, or possibly the same, route. It proposed building a road "from Duluth via the mouth of the Cloquet branch of the St. Louis River and thence along the St. Louis to the Floodwood branch, following which to its head the route would then strike directly across to the Mississippi at the Falls," where Grand Rapids now is located. Lake Superior, the editor argued, would serve Indian agents, traders, and lumbermen better than any route by way of Chicago. He contended that the savings to the federal government in transporting supplies to the Chippewa would pay for the road in a few years and that it would prove invaluable if it were ever needed in suppressing the savages.²⁶

The most famous of the early roads from Duluth to the interior extended north to Lake Vermilion, where gold was discovered in 1865. Eight prospectors, interested in Gold Island, left Superior for Lake Vermilion in September of that year, cutting a trail north from Duluth as they proceeded. Several routes to the area received legal sanction

²⁵ *Upper Lake Region*, 13; Newton H. Winchell, *The Aborigines of Minnesota*, 657 (St. Paul, 1911). A road running west from Duluth to the boundary of the reservation is shown on a map in A. T. Andreas, *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Minnesota*, 183 (Chicago, 1874).

²⁶ *Special Laws*, 1858, p. 116; *Duluth Minnesotian*, May 1, 1869.

in 1866; the legislature authorized a toll road for stages from Beaver Bay, a road from Crow Wing, and a road from Twin Lakes that would connect with another from Duluth. A St. Paul company interested in mining gold widened the trail between Duluth and the gold area to road proportions in 1866. In 1868 and 1869 appropriations from the state totaling six thousand dollars resulted in a great improvement of the road.²⁷

From July to late October, 1869, the work progressed under federal appropriation. The government engineer at St. Paul ordered a Duluth contractor to use the road built in 1868 nearly in its entirety to the second crossing of the Vermilion River; to adopt from there the nearest practicable route to Nett Lake, some forty miles northwest of Lake Vermilion; and to survey the route, clear a minimum width of twelve feet, bridge streams, and improve swamp crossings for the use of wagons in all seasons. Senator Alexander Ramsey helped to procure a federal appropriation of ten thousand dollars for this road, ostensibly on the ground that the government needed it for making Indian payments at Nett Lake. A delegation of Bois Fort Indians from that area went to Duluth a few months after the road got under way to inquire about a deferred payment for that year.²⁸

Duluth merchants expected to develop, over the Nett Lake branch of the road, trade far more valuable than that associated with supplying Indians. Only forty miles intervened between the Nett Lake reservation and the Rainy River, from which place a short and easy route led to the Red River settlements. Canadians began to build a road

²⁷ Horace Johnson, *Gold Rush to the Vermilion and Rainy Lake Districts of Minnesota and Ontario in 1865 and 1894*, 11 (Duluth, 1926); *Special Laws*, 1866, p. 251, 253, 254; 1868, p. 446; William E. Culkin, "The Old Vermilion Trail," 8, 15; certified copy of a special law of February 23, 1869, appropriating a thousand dollars for work on the Vermilion road. The two latter items are manuscripts in the possession of the St. Louis County Historical Society; the law is a copy of the original in the secretary of state's office.

²⁸ *Duluth Minnesotian*, July 10, 17, October 2, 1869.

that would connect the Red River with Lake Superior. They planned to construct a wagon route to the Rainy River, which would be connected along a ridge with the Nett Lake terminus of the Duluth road, thus completing an all-land, all-season road between Duluth and the Red River settlements.²⁹ An expedition sent from Toronto to Fort Garry in 1870 to quell the Riel rebellion used an old canoe and portage route over Canadian soil, "the passage of troops through the United States territory being of course out of the question."³⁰ Its commander may have preferred traveling over the route between Duluth and the Red River settlements, but by going through Canada, he and his party reached Fort Garry without violation of neutrality.

After the discovery of gold some fifty miles north of Lake Vermilion in 1893-94 an extension of the Vermilion road furnished a way to the gold fields. Gold seekers going from Duluth took a train to Tower, a steamer across Lake Vermilion, and a stage from the Vermilion River dam to Harding on Crane Lake, from which numerous gold areas were easily accessible. Because traders who took supplies to the gold camps over Lake Vermilion were handicapped by bad cracks in the ice in winter and by tedious transition periods in the spring and the fall, when both sledge and boat traffic were impossible, an eight-mile, all-season road skirting Lake Vermilion was built between Tower and a point near the Vermilion River dam. The project was financed by merchants at Tower and the railroad which terminated there.³¹

²⁹ *Duluth Minnesotian*, July 10, 17, 1869; Simon J. Dawson, *Report on the Line of Route between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement*, 3 (Ottawa, 1868); 41 Congress, 2 session, *Senate Executive Documents*, no. 104, p. 34 (serial 1407); *Morning Call* (Duluth), January 4, 1871.

³⁰ G. L. Huyshe, *The Red River Expedition*, 27 (London and New York, 1871); 42 Congress, 2 session, *House Miscellaneous Documents*, no. 150 (serial 1526).

³¹ "A Short Route to the New Gold-fields," in *Northwest Magazine*, vol. 15, no. 7, p. 37 (July, 1897); Johnson, *Gold Rush*, 17, 23.

The legislature of 1857 incorporated a company to build a plank road between the lighthouse reserve on Minnesota Point at Duluth and the mouth of the Knife River on the north shore of Lake Superior. The next year several residents of the head-of-the-lakes area received commissions to lay out a road through "Fond du Lac, Oneota, Portland, Clifton, Montezuma, Buchanan, Burlington, to Beaver Bay, in Lake County." The expenses were to be met by the counties along the route and supervisors of roads of the several precincts were empowered immediately to open the route as a cartway.³² St. Louis County built the first county road out of Duluth when it began construction of the road along the north shore of Lake Superior. Although the road was authorized in 1858, boats were still the usual means used in reaching Buchanan and other places along the north shore in 1861. Presumably the north shore road did not yet extend into Lake County in 1873, when the state appropriated fifteen hundred dollars to aid Lake and St. Louis counties in building a wagon road from Duluth to the Pigeon River.³³ On the south shore a stage line operated at an early date between the lake head and Ashland, with a midway station on the Brule River.³⁴

The early road pattern of the northeast closely resembled that of the present in its essential characteristics. In 1927 Superior dedicated a tablet marking the lake terminus of the famous "military road." A modern road from the vicinity leads to the Twin Cities on the Mississippi by way of Taylor's Falls on the St. Croix, approximately along the route of the early winter road. A better and more frequently used road lies altogether in Minnesota, following roughly the route of the "western" stage road, except that it terminates in Duluth rather than in Superior. This mod-

³² *Laws*, extra session, 1857, p. 195-197; *Special Laws*, 1858, p. 120-122.

³³ Van Brunt, *Duluth*, 1: 149; *Special Laws*, 1873, p. 314.

³⁴ Harry Ashton, "Traditions of the Pioneer Days," in *Superior Telegram*, July 23, 1910; *Morning Call*, January 17, 1871.

ern successor of the "military road," which is designated as United States Highway Number 61, carries the heaviest traffic of all the lines focusing at the head of Lake Superior.³⁵ Several railway lines assist the first, which follows closely the western stage route, in carrying freight and passengers, and until recently an air line transported passengers and mail between Duluth and Superior and the Twin Cities.

The present north shore road extends to the international boundary and its Canadian extension continues to the Nipigon River. On the south shore, United States Highway Number 2 leads through Brule to Ashland, Wisconsin. The Vermilion road, designated in part as county highway number 4, still leads to Vermilion Lake. In Minnesota, highway number 2 follows essentially the route recommended from Duluth to Pokegama Falls. Between it and the Vermilion road, United States Highway Number 53 branches off some twenty miles from Duluth as the main route to the Mesabi Range, a place to which no one planned roads in the sixties. The ancient route westward parallels United States Highway Number 210, which takes off southwest of Duluth for Brainerd, slightly north of Crow Wing on the Mississippi; and well to the south of Mille Lacs, Minnesota Highway Number 23 reaches the Mississippi at St. Cloud, just south of, and across the river from, Sauk Rapids.

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³⁵ *Wisconsin Magazine of History*, 11: 355-357 (March, 1928); Minnesota Commissioner of Highways, *Biennial Reports*, 1929-30, p. 114.



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