

MR. WHEELER is assistant director of the Minnesota Historical Society and has for the past year been in charge of the society's underwater search program.

HISTORY below the *RAPIDS*

ROBERT C. WHEELER

THE DRAMA-PACKED story of the North American fur trade has until now been known largely through old journals, diaries, letters, and maps. Explorers, missionaries, and fur traders, writing of their experiences or reporting to superiors, have given us vivid, on-the-spot descriptions of one of the most exciting periods in Canadian and American history. Some records of the great fur companies have been preserved in various archives, and additional background comes to us from archaeologists, who, in exploring such sites as Michilimackinac and Grand Portage, have made significant contributions to our knowledge. Today, however, historians and archaeologists are seek-

ing further shreds of information in an attempt to fill gaps in the fur trade story.

A new phase of the search began in September, 1960, when Dr. Edward W. Davis, better known as the father of taconite, wrote the following letter to the Minnesota Historical Society: "I have just returned from a sort of reconnaissance trip at a few of the portages along the old fur trade route into Saganaga Lake. With me were three . . . scuba divers who work here in Silver Bay, Dennis L. Dalen, Curtis Anderson and Don Franklin. I had hoped that below some of the rapids and falls they would find some objects, probably of copper, that had been lost by the fur traders in accidents that must have occasionally occurred at the portages. We searched three such portages and at one, called Horsetail rapids just above Saganaga Falls, the boys found a collection of 18 thin nesting copper kettles. . . . If they are relics of the fur trade, it seems to us that they should be turned over to you."¹

This discovery was to touch off a full-scale search by the Minnesota Historical Society for early fur trade items. With Dr. Davis acting as adviser and the three divers volunteering their services, the society made plans to follow up the find the next spring.

In the meantime, as much information as possible was assembled about the kettles. They were carefully studied by Alan R.



¹ E. W. Davis to Russell W. Fridley, September 1, 1960, in the Minnesota Historical Society files.



RECOVERY of *brass kettles at Horsetail Falls in the summer of 1960*

Woolworth, curator of the society's museum. He found that the largest in the series measured 17 inches in diameter, was 8½ inches deep, and held approximately 28 quarts; while the smallest measured 6½ by 3½ inches and held 3 pints. Each kettle had on the inside a peculiar concentric marking or scoring and some of the rivet heads bore numbers. All appeared to be handmade of hammered brass. According to Mr. Woolworth, they were probably manufactured around 1790.

From the divers it was learned that the kettles were found in about fourteen feet of water and some fifty feet below the base of the rapids at the September or low-water stage. When discovered, eight or ten were "nested" and inverted. The rest were scattered within perhaps a dozen feet. It is believed that this was new merchandise on its way to the interior for the winter trade. Several facts indicate this: the holes in the lugs

where the handles would have been attached show no wear; we know it was standard practice to "nest" kettles without bails or handles in order to conserve valuable cargo space in canoes; and, lastly, the set would have been separated and traded to the Indians, kettle by kettle.

This remarkable find caused widespread interest and raised many questions. What led Dr. Davis — who is deeply interested in the fur trade and possesses a wide knowledge of it — to this method of search? According to his own account: "In my travels around Saganaga and Northern Light lakes I had come upon a few canoe accidents at portages, and in my reading about the fur trade, I knew that they occasionally occurred in the early days also." An old but well-preserved gun found in Saganaga Lake came to his attention, and "From all this I reasoned that at the foot of some of the rapids that could be run . . . along the old canoe route from Grand Portage west, there must be many things if we could just get in there and find them." He believed they would be mainly of copper and brass, as these metals would survive in water better than iron.²

²E. W. Davis to the author, n.d. [December, 1961], in the society files. For an account and picture of the gun found in Saganaga Lake, see Edward W. Davis, "Seegwin: A Legend of the Fur Trade," in *Minnesota History*, 37:254 (June, 1961).



SURVEYING *the first find*

Looking from the window of his Silver Bay home one day in 1960, Davis noticed a boat which held three men. It seemed to be anchored near a small island in Lake Superior just offshore from Silver Bay. When he looked again there appeared to be only two people in the boat. Training his telescope on it, he watched a diver climb over the side and disappear into the water, which at that point was about a hundred feet deep. The diver was evidently carrying an air supply, as he did not surface for several minutes. It immediately occurred to Davis that this was the way to search along the fur trade routes. He soon met one of the divers, Dennis Dalen, and interested him in the idea. Dalen persuaded Don Franklin and Curtis Anderson — the other two men seen in the boat — to accompany them.

THE CANOE ROUTE along the Minnesota-Ontario border which they proposed to investigate was one of the main thoroughfares of the fur trade and had been known to the Indians for centuries. It was an Indian named Auchagah who in 1729 drew a map for the French trader and explorer, Sieur de

la Vérendrye, showing the three rivers which flow into Lake Superior from the northwest — now known as the St. Louis, the Pigeon, and the Kaministiquia. As early as 1731 the Frenchman sent his nephew, La Jemeraye, over the “grande portage,” which bypassed the falls and rapids of the Pigeon River, along the inland waterway to Rainy Lake. In a report written in 1729 La Vérendrye compared the two possible routes inland — that which follows the Pigeon River and the one by way of the Kaministiquia. Even though he said the Grand Portage route had over forty carrying places and the Kaministiquia only twenty-two, La Vérendrye preferred the former. “It has no rapids,” he wrote, “while the other has twelve, two of which are long and very shallow. Besides, the road is straight and one third shorter.”³

Although the French used the Grand Portage route to conduct trade with the Indians of the Northwest until the dying days of their regime, the greatest volume of traffic in merchandise and fur moved over it during the heyday of England’s North West Company.

From about 1765 until 1803 the North West Company, its predecessors, and its rivals transported thousands of tons of goods and fur, much of it routed over the Grand Portage. In the single year 1786 there were 67 licenses granted for 163 canoes; 163 bateaux; 2,139 men; 56,324 gallons of rum; 8,950 gallons of wine; 2,010 fusils; 66,207 pounds of powder; and 899½ hundredweight of ball and shot; worth all together 144,880 English pounds. Licensed to Grand Portage that year were 41 canoes; 2 bateaux; 422 men; 4,800 gallons of rum; 584 gallons of wine; 624 fusils; 12,600 pounds of powder; and 181 hundredweight of shot; worth 8,500 English pounds.⁴

At the height of its prosperity the North West Company employed over five hundred men in transportation alone. About half of

³ Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., *Journals and Letters of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes de la Vérendrye and His Sons*, 43, 53 (Toronto, 1927).

⁴ Gordon C. Davidson, *The North West Company*, 25 (Berkeley, 1918).

them were needed to manage the great canoes of about four tons burden in which goods were brought from Montreal to Grand Portage. The others were employed in transporting the goods inland along the border lakes in vessels carrying about one and a half tons each. All supplies had to be at Grand Portage early in July, and fifteen days were usually consumed in making the nine-mile crossing. Parties heading inland generally left Fort Charlotte at the west end of the portage between July 15 and August 1. About one-third of their load consisted of provisions and two-thirds of trading goods.⁵

Some notion of the type of trade goods can be formed from the following North West Company bill of lading for "Canoe No. 17," dated 1806. Its contents were listed as follows: "4 Bales Goods, 1 Bale Twist [*tobacco*], 1 Bale Kettles, 1 Keg Powder, 1 Keg Spirits, 3 Kegs High Wines, 1 Keg Butter, 2 Cases Iron [*axes, chisels, spears, knives*], 1 Case Guns, 2 Bags Shot, and 2 Bags Balls." The provisions listed were: "¼ Keg Grease, 3 Bushels Corn, and ½ Bushel Oats." Equipment included: "1 Kettle, 1 Oil Cloth, 1 sponge [*sic*], 1 line, 1 ax, 1 Sail, 6 lbs. gum, 1 Bunch Wattoop, and 1 Fm. Bark." (The last three items were for patching the canoe in case of accident.) Early merchandise lists reveal other items used in the Indian trade, including tin looking glasses, beads, gun-flints, blankets, and other dry goods. It is hoped that when the society's search of the rapids ends, the list of known items can be expanded.⁶

PACKING of merchandise for shipment from Montreal to the Indian country was done with considerable care. All goods were

put up in bales or "pieces" of about ninety pounds each for convenient handling on portages. Liquor and ammunition were carried in kegs, while the bales of dry merchandise were wrapped with great care to keep them from getting wet in accidents and bad weather. Commodities were distributed among the various pieces and canoes to minimize loss of any one type of goods in case of accident.⁷

The early records also show that traders and explorers — both French and British — often took the shortest and fastest route through the country at the risk of possible loss of men and goods. The French governor, Marquis de Beauharnois, in a letter dated in Quebec on October 8, 1734, wrote: "I have conferred with Sieur de la Vérendrye respecting the route which he had decided to take. . . . on which there were forty-one portages, which however by the measures he took were reduced to thirty-two."⁸

What measures could he have taken to reduce them? Confronted by some obstacles — waterfalls, for instance — voyageurs had no choice but to make a portage, carrying both goods and canoes. Sometimes they found it possible, however, to make their way through rapids, for these vary from season to season. A stretch which would be impossible in the spring might be maneuvered safely later on, though low water sometimes created risks also, when submerged boulders came dangerously near the surface.

If they were headed upstream, voyageurs would often half unload the canoes ("demicharge") or wholly empty them ("decharge"). Thus lightened, the vessels might be paddled or poled through the dangerous water, or if that was impossible, they were often towed with a rope or line ("cordelle") pulled from the shore. Going downstream the boatmen might elect to shoot ("sault") the rapids with or without making a decharge beforehand. It was here that the foreman in the north country canoe earned his special wages. He was responsible for directing the steersman through the difficult passages.⁹

⁵ Davidson, *North West Company*, 23.

⁶ The original bill of lading is in the David Ross McCord National Museum, Montreal. The Minnesota Historical Society has a copy.

⁷ Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 213 (New Haven, 1930).

⁸ Burpee, ed., *Journals and Letters of la Vérendrye*, 114.

⁹ Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur*, 48, 67-69 (St. Paul, 1955); Grace Lee Nute, *The Voyageur's Highway*, 53 (St. Paul, 1941).

David Thompson, explorer and map maker of the Northwest, describes descending a rapid "with careless gaiety" when suddenly a huge butt of a tree rose to the foaming surface only a few inches from the canoe "which gave us a fright that put an end to our cheerfulness." Such a blow would have dashed the canoe to pieces and would probably have added to the number of wooden crosses which marked graves along many a dangerous stretch of rapids.¹⁰

That accidents often happened along the fur trade routes is shown by the records as well as the society's discoveries to date. Charles Grant, a prominent Nor'Wester, reported in a letter to the governor of Quebec written in 1780 that "The Indian Trade by every communication is carried on at great expense, labour and risk of both men and property; every year furnishes instances of the loss of men and goods by accidents or otherwise."¹¹

Alexander Henry, the younger, another well-known fur trader, left us a vivid description of an accident which happened to him in the year 1800: "I perceived the canoe on the N. side coming off to sault the rapids. She had not gone many yards when, by some mismanagement of the foreman, the current bore down her bow full upon the shore, against a rock. . . . The canoe we found flat upon the water, broken in many places. . . . The loss amounted to five bales merchandise, two bales new tobacco, one bale canal tobacco, one bale kettles, one bale balls, one bale shot, one case guns. I was surprised that a keg of sugar drifted down about half a mile below the rapid, as its weight was 87 lbs; it proved to be but little damaged. The kegs of gunpowder also floated a great distance, and did not leak."¹²

Several other accounts also indicate that the voyageurs tried to retrieve the trade goods. Duncan McGillivray, a North West Company trader, noted in his journal that "About 3 o'clock P.M. a Roll of Tobacco fell into the water & F Lussier dived to the bottom to recover it." Later he mentions a second accident: "La Frances Canoe struck

against a stump and sunk to the Bottom in 7 feet Water, but by timely assistance every thing was recovered, except 2 Pieces which were afterwards dived for, but one of them happening to be a Keg of Powder was entirely damaged."¹³

MUCH INFORMATION on the border lakes route and the trade goods carried along it was assembled and carefully studied before the three divers again set out on their quest. Thus with a thorough knowledge of what to look for, Franklin, Anderson, and Dalen approached their first assignment of the summer on June 10, 1961. Assisted by Dr. Davis and the writer, acting as director of the program, they explored much of the bottom of Grand Portage Bay on the North Shore of Lake Superior.

Hopes were high that fur trade material would be found there, since Grand Portage had served as one of the continent's great fur depots. But after two days of painstaking search along the shore off the stockade site and along the lee side of the island, we temporarily abandoned that location. Working in water so cold that they could stand it for no more than fifteen or twenty minutes at a time, the divers brought up a number of artifacts associated with early twentieth-century logging operations, but no fur trade objects were discovered. Grand Portage Bay, however, has not been completely written off. Undoubtedly wave action and other eroding forces have brought about certain changes both on the bottom and along the shore line. Just how much sanding and silting has taken place is unknown. It is hoped that an underwater metal detector now being developed for the society by the Ramsey Engineering

¹⁰ J. B. Tyrrell, ed., *David Thompson's Narrative of His Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812*. 431 (Toronto, 1916).

¹¹ W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *Documents Relating to the North West Company*, 63 (Toronto, 1934).

¹² Elliott Coues, ed., *The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and of David Thompson, 1799-1814*, 1:29 (New York, 1897).

¹³ Arthur S. Morton, ed., *The Journal of Duncan McGillivray*, 2, 23 (Toronto, 1929).

Company of St. Paul will make a more productive search possible.

With the disappointment of Grand Portage still fresh in our minds, we planned a second trip, this time to the Basswood Lake country northeast of Ely. All agreed that the Basswood River with its many rapids and falls was a most likely place for accidents.

We used the Quetico-Superior Wilderness Research Center on Basswood Lake as a base for our operations.¹⁴ Another diver, Louis Zgonc, was added to the party, and we were also joined by Sigurd F. Olson, author and twentieth-century voyageur, William J. Trygg of Ely, an experienced forester and canoeist, and Frank B. Hubachek of Chicago, owner of the research center. Assisting in the complicated logistics of getting the party from Winton to the Basswood search area was Joseph Kerntz of Ely.

On Friday night, June 30, several small boats were loaded with diving equipment — suits, air tanks, a compressor, and other gear. After crossing Fall Lake the baggage was moved over a four-mile portage by truck to the shore of Basswood Lake. There we were met by boats from the research center which carried us across the bay to our destination. Next morning the entire party headed for the northeast end of the lake and spent much of the day diving near the Basswood end of Prairie Portage.

Once more items associated with early logging operations were brought up, but nothing remotely connected with the days of the fur trade. Of the several artifacts found, the most interesting were two ceramic snuff jars, probably tossed into the water off a logging camp site by some lumberjack. Again our search looked disappointing until one of the divers came up with a battered and broken copper trade kettle, and the day ended on a hopeful note.

¹⁴ This center, established in 1937, is an individually sponsored project dedicated to research concerning the maintenance and preservation of wilderness areas. It is located on Basswood Lake near the international border between Quetico Provincial Park and the Superior National Forest.

RETURNING to the research center, we made detailed plans for Sunday's operations. Kerntz was to send three men ahead of the main party. They would take with them three canoes which would be carried over Horse Portage (1,815 yards) past the falls and rapids in the upper Basswood River. By ten o'clock the main party, coming fifteen miles by boat from our base camp, would arrive at the head of Horse Portage by Basswood Falls. From that point the divers would work their way down the river. They would be accompanied by the air compressor loaded on a wheelbarrow following along on the portage trail. At the end of Horse Portage the three canoes would be picked up for use farther downstream.

The plan worked well. Dalen began working the pools below Basswood Falls, finding only the usual assortment of fishing lures, tackle, and camping gear. Then he and Anderson moved downstream to the pool below Wheelbarrow Falls while Franklin and Zgonc remained at a mild-mannered rapid above. Disappearing into the fast water below the falls, Dalen and Anderson worked their way along the rock-strewn bottom. Air bubbles rising every few seconds marked their location. Now and then the divers would surface and swim to shore to deposit miscellaneous bits of salvage — part of a canoe yoke, a tackle box, sun glasses, a billfold, a knife and fork set, or a badly damaged camera.

This can be a disappointing business — and a dangerous one. Though in the border waters our divers are working at depths of from only three to thirty feet, the water is fast, with numerous eddies and whirlpools, and sometimes there are sunken logs and other underwater obstacles. They carry knives strapped to their legs as a precaution against entanglement below the surface. Half crawling and half swimming, they move forward in the current, pulling themselves along from rock to rock. Now and then a rush of water, buffeting their bodies, sweeps them downward or sends them spiraling upward at the mercy of the current.



RAPIDS in the Basswood River, near the site of two important discoveries

Too soon, it seemed, the hour was reached when we must head back. We had met only disappointment at Wheelbarrow Falls, and we wondered whether Franklin and Zgone, who had been working upstream, had anything to report. When we reached them the two divers and their companions, Hubachek and Kerntz, were beaming. In the bottom of their canoe lay thirty-six axes of the type traded by the Hudson's Bay Company and an assortment of twenty-four iron chisels and spears. Truly a remarkable find and cause to celebrate! The eagle-eyed Franklin had spotted them in about ten feet of water below the rapids. With the treasure carefully loaded in our packs, the rocks on the mile-long portage grew smaller, the distance shrunk, and the steep inclines seemed to flatten out.

That night we found in the *Voyages* of Alexander Mackenzie a passage in which he refers to this section of the Basswood River as a channel "intercepted by very dangerous

rapids."¹⁵ Had he been warned of this stretch, or did he himself, perhaps, meet with difficulty there? This and other questions came to our minds. Was our find the result of more than one accident? How many years ago did the canoe, or canoes, overturn? What caused the mishap? Had we found all that lay hidden beneath the waters?

A second expedition to the site was planned for late August. In the meantime the axes and other items were treated with an emergency coating of oil to stop further rusting and turned over to the society's museum curator. A close examination revealed that the axes were all of the same general type, ranging in length from five to eight inches. The chisels were also of different sizes, but unlike the axes, they were of several distinct kinds and were obviously intended for a variety of uses.

¹⁵ Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal Through the Continent of North America*, 1:90 (New York, 1903).



A diver surfacing with a handful of trade knives

ON THE MORNING of Saturday, August 26, the second Basswood expedition headed out of the wilderness research center. The group included three divers — Franklin, Anderson, and Zgonc — Kerntz, Hubachek, myself, and two St. Paul newspapermen. This time we planned to concentrate our search at the rapids where we had made our earlier find, on the theory that there might

be other objects on the bottom. The divers intended to look below the rapids and in deeper water for cargo which might have floated downstream before sinking.

With the compressor set up at a convenient distance from the site, the divers began changing into their rubber suits. Before they had fastened on their air tanks and adjusted the valves, Hubachek and Kerntz had taken

DR. Davis and the three divers examine results of the first Basswood trip





DON Franklin with musket balls found on the second Basswood expedition

me in a canoe toward the opposite bank, where I was able to watch and record the search with my camera. In a few minutes Franklin, using his flippers, swam to a point below me and dived to the bottom. His bubbles rose and several minutes passed. Soon he surfaced and between his thumb and forefinger held up a small round object about half an inch in diameter. It was heavy — a musket ball.

"Are there any more down there?" I asked.

"Lots of them," he replied, and sank below the surface before I had time to ask another question. For four or five minutes we waited, watching the indefinite form, motionless in the ten feet of river water. Then he surfaced again, and with a wide grin, handed up a fistful of musket balls.

"Do you want more?" he asked.

"Get every last one," I replied.

Within a short time we noticed that Anderson had surfaced some fifty yards downstream and was waving for us to come. Putting Zgonc to mining the musket balls, Franklin joined us at the spot from which

Anderson had signaled. Soon a hand appeared above the surface, holding some pieces of black and white glass. Trade beads! The second diver handed over the side of the canoe several pieces of flat, bright metal, which we later fitted together in jigsaw fashion, making a circular plate-like object that has not to date been identified. Both submerged once more, and we watched the bubbles rise in rhythm to the top. Finally Anderson came up holding a small piece of metal, which had all of us guessing until his partner emerged with the rest of it — the bowl of a rare pipe. Anderson had found the stem. The jagged edges of the two pieces fitted perfectly together. It was an outstanding discovery. With a call for lunch, operations were halted temporarily.

When work was resumed, two canoes were lashed together catamaran fashion for stability and anchored over the new site. The afternoon's work there produced a half-dozen trade knives, brass buttons and thimbles, gunflints, several large masses of of vermilion war paint — which colored the

water a bright red when touched — and a piece of heavy fabric, possibly from the bale covering. In the meantime Zgonc continued to bring up the musket balls handful after handful. We carefully packed everything in sacks and containers, transported it back to camp, and returned the next day to continue the search. Once more Zgonc took his underwater post, dredging up musket balls, while the rest of us concentrated on the site in deeper water.

Wanting to see some of the objects while they were still in place on the bottom of the river, I borrowed a suit and tank, and with the aid of the lead belt sank into the semidark waters. My first dive was an eerie, almost frightening experience, but the excitement of seeing trade goods unmoved from their two-century resting place was more than compensation. I could see surprising distances, and once I was over my initial fright at the awesome noise of air rushing into my lungs, my heart beat less swiftly and I began to explore my fascinating surroundings. A quick arm and flipper action took me downward between the huge dark boulders which rose from the river bottom. I could see in the crevices patches of white sand. Half buried in it were scores of little round lead musket balls, visible only to divers and to the many curious bass and pike, which moved in close to watch my strange invasion with casual interest. I did not stay down long, for on such expeditions every minute of diving time is important. There is probably only one hour of diving for every five hours of preparation.

To speed up our work, men at the wilderness research center had helped us devise pry bars and scoops for the divers. The latter were made by removing the bottoms from two-pound coffee cans and soldering in screen and hardware cloth. With these the divers scooped up load after load of sand, which contained hundreds of trade beads and a quantity of fine lead shot. This was sacked and separated at a later date. Before we left, the immediate area was thoroughly combed and crisscrossed, until we were convinced that nothing remained, unless it

lay buried in the sand and mud. Back at camp that evening the items were prepared for transfer to the Minnesota Historical Society.

FOR OUR LAST search of the summer, Dr. Davis engaged John (“Jock”) Richardson, a Canadian resort owner on Saganaga, to accompany us as a guide. Richardson had been with the group that found the kettles in 1960, so he had a special interest in the trip, which took us to the Granite River in the Gunflint area.

On the morning of September 23, the party, consisting of Franklin, Anderson, Dalen, Richardson, myself, and three members of the KSTP-TV staff, pulled away from Gunflint Lodge in two twelve-foot aluminum boats and a nineteen-foot square-stern canoe. All were loaded with men and diving gear, plus enough camera equipment to do a thirty-minute color documentary on the expedition. It proved to be a real problem in logistics to maneuver all this — boats, motors, underwater cameras, food, tents, and other gear — to the diving locations. The voyageurs had traveled light in comparison!

It took most of the morning to reach our camp site on the Granite River, for several portages had to be made on the way in. On arrival we quickly prepared lunch, pitched the tents, and spent the rest of the afternoon working the rapids, which we thought might be promising. Here only one item was found — an ancient piece of Indian pottery, perhaps six inches in width. When work was done, a supper of freshly caught walleyes lightened our spirits and we planned the next day with renewed optimism.

One boat had been dropped off several portages back, and the second had been left on the upstream end of the final portage. This meant we had only the canoe for our work downstream. Bypassing the usual portage, we followed the narrow, winding channel of the Granite River. It was our hope that the early voyageurs had sometimes gambled with the rapids there and lost.

Franklin and Anderson got the equipment



COMPARISON of the pipe
found by the divers
with the kind ordinarily
used by voyageurs

through the first rapids with no difficulty, and spent a little time diving in the pool below. Nothing was found there, nor did anything appear below the second rapids. To avoid the job of making his way through the dense underbrush, Dalen floated into the current and was pushed through the boiling and churning chute of the third rapids at a speed he had not anticipated. Fortunately, he was discharged in one piece some two hundred feet downstream. The rest of us took to the land and headed through swamp and hill country to the foot of the third rapids.

We checked the time—two o'clock. Twilight comes early at that season in the north country, and we had seven portages to make with heavy equipment. This gave us no more than forty-five minutes to look and then head back to camp. In that time we found the lid for a copper kettle and an object which was later identified as a metal shoe buckle of British military origin, probably dating from about 1775. Thus our guess that the fur traders may have run these rapids was confirmed.

IN THE YEARS to come the Minnesota Historical Society's search along the old fur trade routes will continue. Plans are already under way for the 1962 season. It is our hope that all the likely spots between Grand Portage and Lake of the Woods can be checked. The results thus far have been unusually reward-

ing, and the three divers, Franklin, Dalen, and Anderson, deserve the major credit. They are the ones who are taking the risks.

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the risks are great. This past summer we were saddened to learn that a diver working independently of us had lost his life below Silver Falls in the Saganaga area. He had been looking for similar historical material, and no doubt had been spurred on by our successes. This is no business for the inexperienced, or even for the experienced working alone. It should be further pointed out that individuals not properly licensed to search for historical materials are prohibited by Minnesota, Canadian, and federal statute from doing so.

What the next two or three years will produce is anyone's guess. There is no question that the search will extend our knowledge of the fur trade—the type of trade goods carried, the routes used, and the navigational obstacles encountered. We may also learn about the ability of various materials to survive under water. But perhaps the most important benefit will be the finding of the artifacts themselves. When placed on exhibit in the museum at Grand Portage National Monument, they will bring to life as nothing else could the fascinating story of the fur trade.

ALL PICTURES used in this article are owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.



Copyright of **Minnesota History** is the property of the Minnesota Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles, however, for individual use.

To request permission for educational or commercial use, [contact us](#).