The Grand Portage Guide

Stunning Experiences

Superintendent Tim Cochrane

Welcome to Grand Portage, once the summer headquarters of the forceful and enterprising North West Company. New canoe men, clerks, and even partners of the company would arrive here in the summer months as do you and most of our visitors. Years ago 50 canoes would annually be built here for the next stage of voyaging westward. Called North Canoes, their birch bark was drawn from freshly peeled trees and stitched into place, the outside of the canoe had a rich golden brown hue that would darken with age, use, and sun.

Much like a rookie canoe man or voyageur arriving in this shelter harbor, this year you can experience many new things here at the monument. Please take the time to enjoy the many new experiences available. We are proud of our new high definition park film which debuts in surround sound for the first time. I am particularly proud that the film includes a version in Ojibwemowin, the original language of the Grand Portage people. We believe this is the first film done by the National Park Service fully narrated in an indigenous language.

Unlike the young canoe men who arrived here for the first time, you won't have to carry or portage four packs of 320 pounds eight and half miles to Fort Charlotte. Nor will you earn Grand Portage currency given to such human beasts of burden. But if you do hike to Fort Charlotte you would find a much improved campground, including a ramp leading down to the Pigeon River to constrain erosion. The new voyageur would be expected to walk into the river and carefully load goods into the canoe to protect that new bright canoe bark.

Check out the new things in the historic depot area. We have put up a new exhibit, Furs to Fashion, that recreates a London streetscape. We then tell the story of how furs once collected in Grand Portage were made into fashionable objects and sold to Europeans. Or, go out to the front porch of the Great Hall and enjoy the new flooring and stairs leading from the porch. But the view remains the same, a view that fur traders would resort to looking for North West Company sailing vessels and canoe brigades

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Boozhoo *Bonjour*

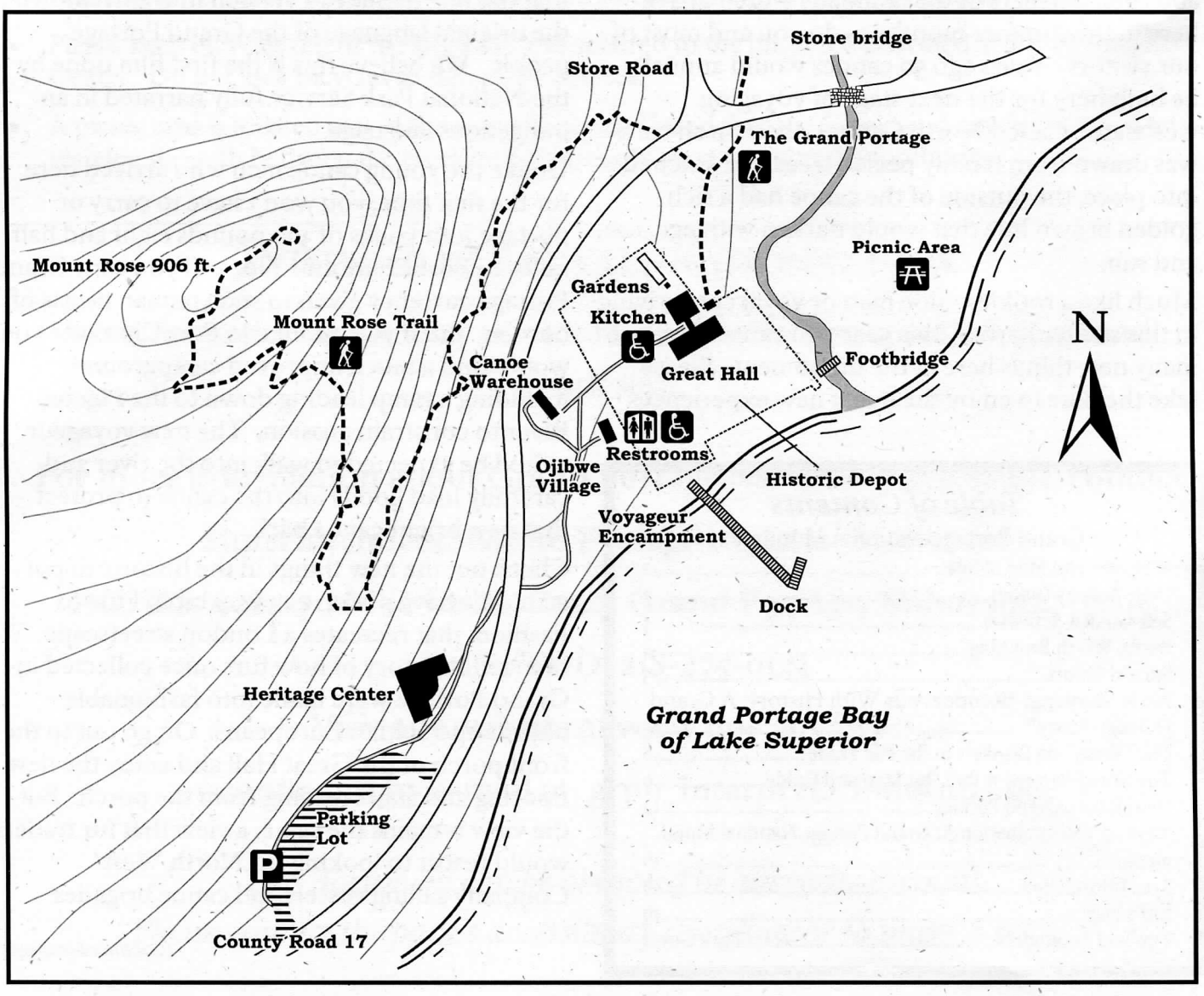
Welcome

Welcome to Grand Portage. We are pleased you are here and exploring "Portage" with us. There is much to see and do. Please join our interpreters and participate in the past. Please ask us about the fur trade and its ingenious technology, or its novel customs. Or come and learn about the intrinsic links between the fur traders and the nearby residents, the Grand Portage Ojibwe.

The Staff of Grand Portage National Monument

A GUIDE TO HELP YOU FIND YOUR WAY AT GRAND PORTAGE NATIONAL MONUMENT

More than 200 years ago, the North West Company concentrated its business activities in and around the stockade. Four of the most important structures have been reconstructed on their original foundations: The Great Hall, kitchen, warehouse, and gatehouse. National Park Service employees and Volunteers-In-Parks (VIPs) staff these buildings. You will find rangers and VIPs wearing dress appropriate to the period, or in the NPS uniform.



ACTIVITIES & RANGER-CONDUCTED PROGRAMS

LIVING HISTORY DEMONSTRATIONS

Come to the Voyageur Encampment and Ojibwe Village, where you will see demonstrations of Ojibwe and voyageur life in the late 1700s. While there, see our American Indian Three Sisters garden, and view a North West Company trade gun.

Visit the Great Hall, historically furnished circa 1790s. Also in the Great Hall, there is a Try-It-On historic clothing exhibit where *you* can fit into history!

Follow your nose to the kitchen, where you can see period cooking and baking demonstrations from mid-June through early September. Don't miss our historic heirloom garden and outdoor bake oven located just behind the kitchen.

Carrying water to camp.

RANGER-CONDUCTED INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS

History comes alive when you take part in an interpretive program here at Grand Portage. Park rangers will transport you back in time, where you can become part of the story that unfolds before you!

These programs range in length from 20 minutes to 60 minutes. Be sure and check the "Program" sign in the Heritage Center or ask information desk staff for program topics, locations, and starting times. *Please note: Our program schedule is subject to change without notice due to staffing or weather conditions.*

VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

Video programs are offered regularly in the Heritage Center classroom. There are several to choose from. *Please see "Notes" below - Schedule subject to change.*

- "Rendezvous With History: A Grand Portage Story" – Running time is 23 minutes. - *Note: Shown on the hour.*
- Short Subjects: "Our Home: The Grand Portage Ojibwe," "The Men of the North West Company," "The Gift of the Birch Bark Canoe," "A Gap in the Hills: Geography of Grand Portage" - Running time 24 minutes—*Note: Shown on the half hour.*

SELF-GUIDED ACTIVITIES

HIKING TRAILS

The Grand Portage: The 8½-mile *Grand Portage* is open for hiking. Two campsites are available for primitive camping at Fort Charlotte. A free permit is required, and can be obtained at the Heritage Center or at one of three registration boxes located along the Grand Portage.

Mt. Rose Trail: The Mt. Rose trail, located across from the historic depot, is a paved ½-mile-long nature trail which climbs 300 feet for a spectacular vista of the depot and Lake Superior. Approximate hiking time is 1 hour. A self-guiding trail brochure is available at the trail head.

BROCHURES AVAILABLE

We offer several brochures for your use and enjoyment:

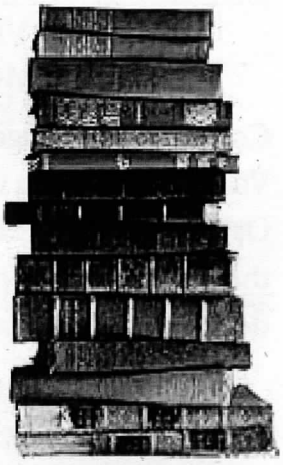
- NPS Grand Portage Official Map and Guide
- Ojibwe Lifeways
- Historic Garden
- Bird Checklist
- Mt. Rose Trail

JUNIOR RANGER PROGRAM

Become a Grand Portage Junior Ranger! This program, for kids ages 7 to 13, is free. Activity guides can be picked up at the Heritage Center and Great Hall. You should allow at least 1½ hours to complete this activity. When finished, kids are awarded a Junior Ranger badge and a voyageur's contract. This is a family activity and we encourage parents to get involved and enjoy the program with their kids! Children under the age of 7, or those with special needs, will require the assistance of an adult.

BOOKS WORTH BROWSING

To help alleviate the isolation of winter posts, the North West Company provided reading materials. Daniel Harmon, a North West Company clerk wrote,



> *"Most of our leisure moments (and which is nearly nine tenths of our time) will be spent reading, and conversing on what we have read."*

The following titles may be found in *your* local library:

"Star Songs and Water Spirits" edited by Victoria Brehm, 2011. Ladyslipper Press, Tustin, MI, 524 pg.

"Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories" edited by Carolyn Podruchny & Laura Peers, 2010. University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver, B.C., 324 pg.

"Everything You Wanted to Know About Indians But Were Afraid to Ask" by Anton Treuer, 2012. Minnesota Historical Society Press , St. Paul, MN, 184 pg.

"The Boundary Waters Wilderness Ecosystem" by Miron Heinselman, 1996. University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, MN, 334 pg.

"Ancient Earth and the First Ancestors: A Cultural and Geological Journey" by Ron Morton & Carl Gawboy, 2011. Rockflower Press, Duluth, MN, 213 pg.

"Ojibwe *Waasa Inaabidaa*: We Look In All Directions" by Thomas Peacock & Marlene Wisuri, 2002. Afton Historical Society Press, Afton, MN, 159 pg.

"Lake Superior Profiles: People on the Big Lake" by John Gagnon, 2012. Wayne State University Press, Detroit, MI, 272 pg.

"The Four Hills of Life" by Thomas Peacock & Marlene Wisuri, 2006. Minnesota Historical Society Press, St. Paul, MN, 119 pg.

"Ogimaag: Anshinaabeg Leadership, 1760-1845" by Cary Miller, 2010. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE, 328 pg.

These books are also available at the Eastern National bookstore in the Grand Portage National Monument Heritage Center.

The Grand Rendezvous

Ranger Karl Koster

The hustle and bustle of summer activity peaked with the North West Company Rendezvous held here at Grand Portage. This was the time when furs from wintering posts, which reached into Canada, were delivered down the historic *Grand Portage*. The annual Rendezvous is still celebrated here during the second full weekend of August. The event is held in conjunction with the Rendezvous Days and Powwow, sponsored by the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. The annual gathering is our biggest and grandest celebration of the year, a time when Grand Portage comes alive and reflects on its rich heritage. Re-enactors from across the country and Canada gather to camp and challenge each other. This is one event you do not want to miss! Music, dancing, craft demonstrations, and hands-on workshops ensure an exciting weekend at the national monument.

Now Showing! "Rendezvous With History: A Grand Portage Story"

Chief of Interpretation Pam Neil

This year, visitors to Grand Portage have the opportunity for an exciting new interpretive experience! Grand Portage National Monument, in partnership with the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, is very proud to announce the debut of a new park orientation film at the monument's Heritage Center.

The film, entitled "Rendezvous with History: A Grand Portage Story," is produced by Great Divide Pictures of Denver, Colorado. Shown in high definition format on a BIG screen, the new film features absolutely stunning footage of the scenic beauty within the Grand Portage Indian Reservation. The film also features an original music soundtrack, composed by Peter Kater and is presented in 5.1 Surround Sound. Audiences might recognize the voice of the film's narrator, well-known Ojibwe actor Adam Beach. Adam has starred in feature films like "Wind Talkers" in 2002; "Flags of Our Fathers" in 2006; and most recently, he co-starred with Harrison Ford in "Cowboys and Aliens" in 2011.

Many Grand Portage community members also have prominent roles in the film.

The film's narrator gives voice to a contemporary Ojibwe man recalling his family's and his peoples' enduring culture, and brings to life a story of a time when the Grand Portage Ojibwe

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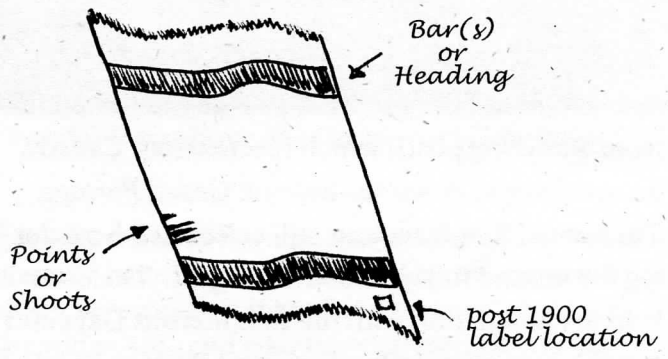
The "Wrap" on Blankets in the Fur Trade

Ranger Karl Koster

Most of us fortunate enough to live in the 21st century take our "creature comforts" for granted. In fact some things, including a warm blanket, are so basic to our everyday lives that we don't even give them a second thought. For just a minute though, imagine living in a time when owning more than a few blankets signified a level of wealth, a time when blankets were important enough to list separately on estate inventories. Now, imagine a time when hearty young voyageurs risked their very lives to transport blankets and other trade goods from Montreal to Grand Portage for The North West Company. In fact, the North West Company as well as other trading companies offered extra blankets as "perks" for re-signing with the company. Contrary to popular legends, it was cloth and blankets, not guns and whiskey that were traded most during the fur trade era and blankets soon became as synonymous with the trade as the beaver.

In historical accounts and journals of the fur trade era, it is not unusual to discover that any right-angled piece of fabric easily gains the moniker of "blanket." Largely speaking, blankets used and traded in the fur trade era were made of wool. Those traded by Hudson's Bay Company, and also by the North West Company right here at Grand Portage, were all coming from Europe, primarily England. The majority of "factory made" wool blankets in use during the fur trade era were actually hand-woven on looms by talented weavers, as the power loom was not generally in use until after 1850. It is interesting to note that hand weavers continued to work in the large woolen factories until the early 1900s. It was often they who decided the dimensions of a blanket unless otherwise dictated by the companies themselves.

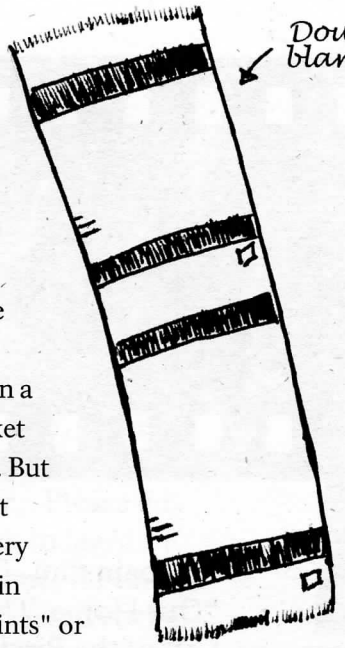
Trade blankets became a popular and valuable trade item early on with the Dutch and French traders in North America (1600-1760), and they were very common around the Great Lakes. This was evident as early as the 1600s when sailors, who accompanied the French traders, were reprimanded for selling their personal blankets to the native people. For the natives, blankets were a great improvement over buffalo/bear hides and rabbit strip blankets. Though blankets were not generally adorned for trade, there is evidence that some trading companies may have provided blankets decorated with ribbons, intricate appliqué and/or fine borders that made them very appealing. Natives also decorated their blankets with gartering and ferreting (a narrow cotton, wool or silk tape) supplied by the trading companies. Frequently mentioned in Jesuit papers of the time period, these early "laced" or "gartered" blankets slowly lost popularity as blanket function prevailed over fashion. In general, there were two types of blankets being traded: "Duffields" and "Kerseys".



"Duffields" (*also called duffels*) were named after the region in England where many were produced. Duffels were common during the early colonial period (mid-1700s), yet as early as the mid-1600s, we find Dutch merchants trading and using Duffels. These coarse, heavy blankets were also the first blankets offered in trade by Hudson's Bay Company. This particular blanket, with a plain weave and thick texture, was produced in large rolls. A Duffel was commonly 54 by 48 inches in size, weighed 2 ¾ pounds, and was sometimes used to create clothing. This wool's unique raised nap on both sides sheds water which made it popular for use in making mittens, moccasin liners, and coats. The blankets were produced in different colors with red and blue being preferred by the traders' Native American customers. This wool is hard to come by today.

The English "Kersey" blanket, also named after the region in England where it was produced, began to grow in significance during the mid-1700s. Kerseys grew in popularity because they were a tighter-woven blanket than the Duffel, were made from longer, tighter wool fibers and were always twilled (a textile weave that gives the appearance of diagonal lines). Kersey blankets were woven together in pairs and sold whole, or sometimes torn/cut into single blankets. Kersey "double blankets" were still in production in the 20th century. It is the Ker-

sey blanket that has evolved into the well-known and often coveted "Point blanket." The points on a blanket are truly a French innovation. The term "point" came to us in the 1690s, derived from the French verb empointer which means *the act of stitching a mark.* In the early days of the fur trade, when most of the trade was centered on the east coast, the points on a blanket designated its price (i.e. a blanket with two points cost two beaver hides). But once the fur trade spread into the Great Lakes region, transportation and delivery costs pushed the blanket prices higher in more remote areas. As a result, the "points" or "shoots" were then used to allow traders/customers to easily identify the *size* of a blanket, not necessarily its worth in beaver hides. Although the oldest surviving point blankets show points as short as one inch, over time, the length of blanket points has been increased to the size commonly seen on these blankets today. Kersey blankets were in use by several trading outfits, prior to use by the Hudson's Bay Company, but it was Hudson's Bay Company that began using the point system on the Kersey blankets in 1779. This famed rival of the North West Company began using points on blankets at the suggestion of a new employee, Germain Maugenest. Maugenest was a former Montreal trader who was already familiar with the point system. Incidentally, it was several of these independent traders who would form the North West Company in 1779.



The main producer of Duffield and Kersey blankets for trading was Thomas Empson's Woolen Mills of Witney in Oxfordshire, England. Witney supplied the Hudson's Bay Company with blankets as early as 1737 and continued for at least the next 140 years. The date Witney stopped supplying Hudson's Bay Company with blankets is debatable, though by the 1930s other makers included Womald and Walker Ltd. as well as Lee & Sons Ltd. Ironically, what has become commonly known as a "Hudson's Bay Blanket" was never produced directly by Hudson's Bay Company.

Witney was also the main supplier of blankets for the North West Company from 1779-1821. Additionally, Astor's American Fur Company, a successor to the North West Company located in Grand Portage in the 1800s, ordered their blankets from mills in France, Germany, and even Buffalo, New York and Lowell, Massachusetts. Blanket colors varied during the 18th and 19th centuries with off-white/cream being the most common color traded. Hues such as red, blue and green were also standard during this time period. The familiar dark blue or black bar on the ends of blankets is relevant to this time as well. Blankets with many bars were also available. White blankets with several colored bars known as "Chief's Blankets," "Candy-Striped," "Duffle" (not to be confused with Duffield), "Hudson's Bay," or "Multi-Stripe" were made beginning in 1798 and after. Modern pastel colors are a Hudson's Bay Company innovation from the late 1920s.

The practice of adding tags/labels to blankets started sometime between 1865 and 1890, with American produced blankets being the first to carry labels. Blankets of this time also lacked the whip stitching and binding found on later blankets. The most common sizes and weights of pointed blankets today differ from those of fur trading times. One- to three-point blankets were very common around the Great Lakes while four-point (double bed size) and larger sizes were available, but rare. The most common size during the fur trade era seems to have been the three-point (single bed size). Not until the 1960s did the four-point and larger blankets surpass the three-point blanket in popularity.

Wool blankets remain as popular now as they were 200 years ago. Most of us can count ourselves among those who have owned or used a "Trade Blanket," "Hudson's Bay Blanket," "Point Blanket." The history of blankets in trade is certainly a curious one, with many of the names, places, and makers of these coveted warmers of days gone by still in business today! While you are visiting the park, feel free to take a close look at our blankets. Many of them were made by the historic Witney Company. Of special interest will be our "double three-point blanket" on display in the trade shop of the Great Hall. Cozy up to history by trying on a capot (a blanket coat) in our "Try It On" clothing area, also located in the Great Hall. Here at Grand Portage, where the climate can be harsh, you are surrounded by warm wool! Could it be the sheep in England were as important to the fur trade as the beaver in the North Country?

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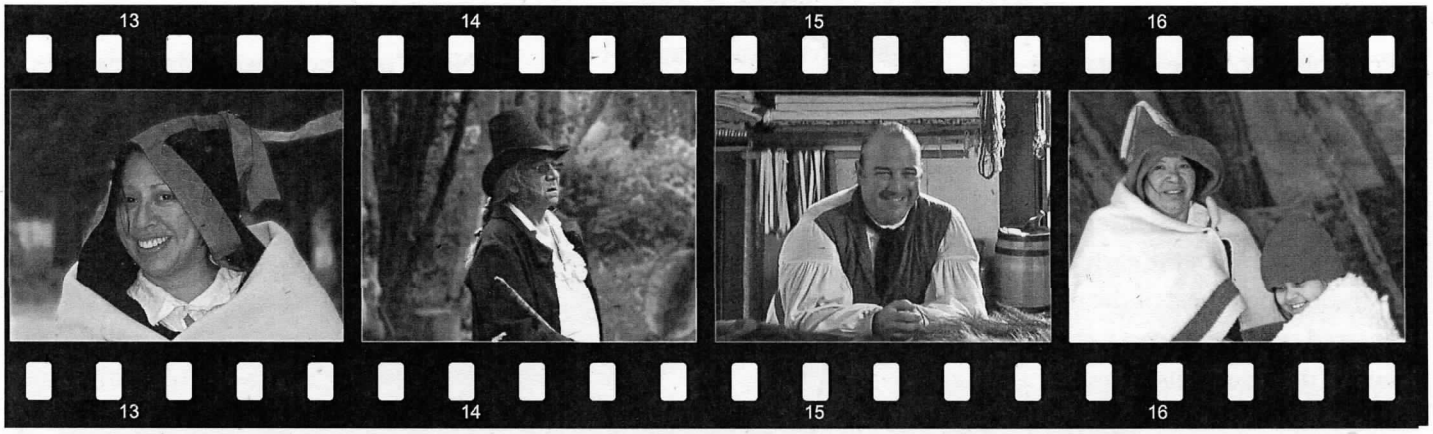
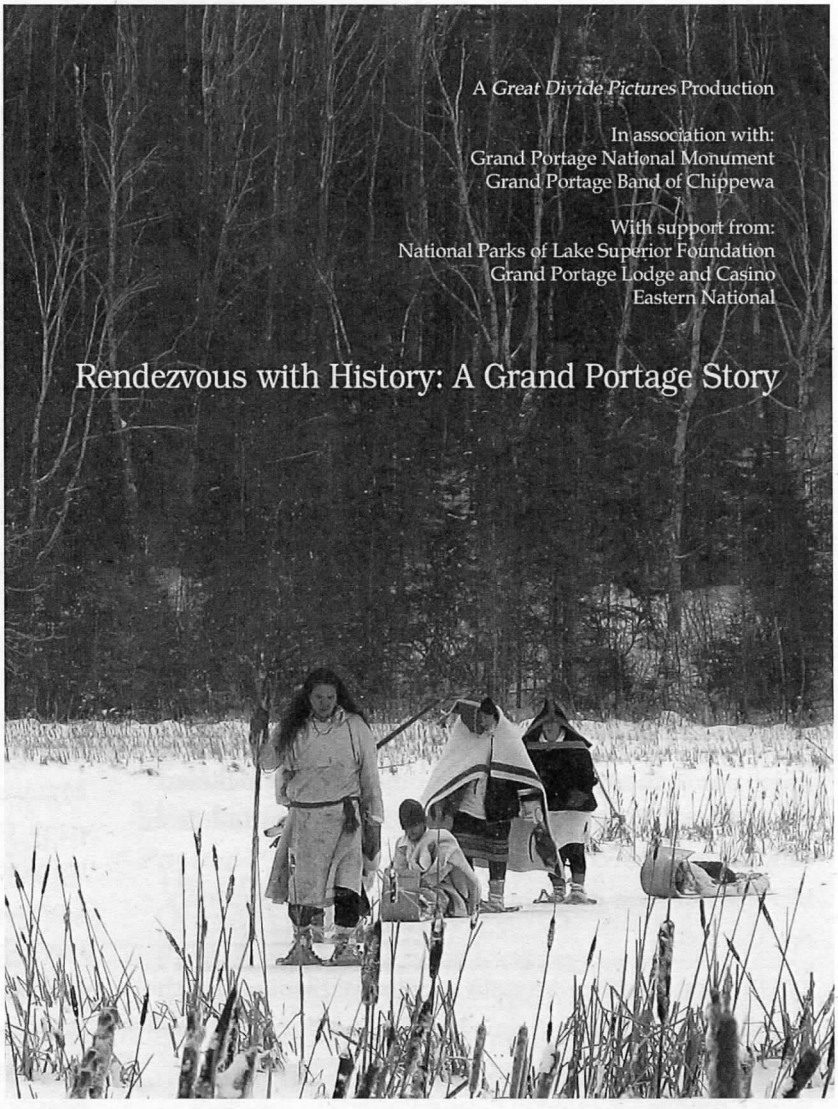


Graphic Design by Beth Drost

were one of the most powerful tribes on the Great Lakes and vital trading partners with the storied North West Company. Ojibwe actress Gloria Ranger portrays our storyteller's great grandmother *Adaawaweikwe*. During the fur trade era, hers was a position of power and influence. She used her skills as a guide and translator to advocate for her people. She and other Ojibwe women were influential in creating successful trading agreements between the Ojibwe and the North West Company.

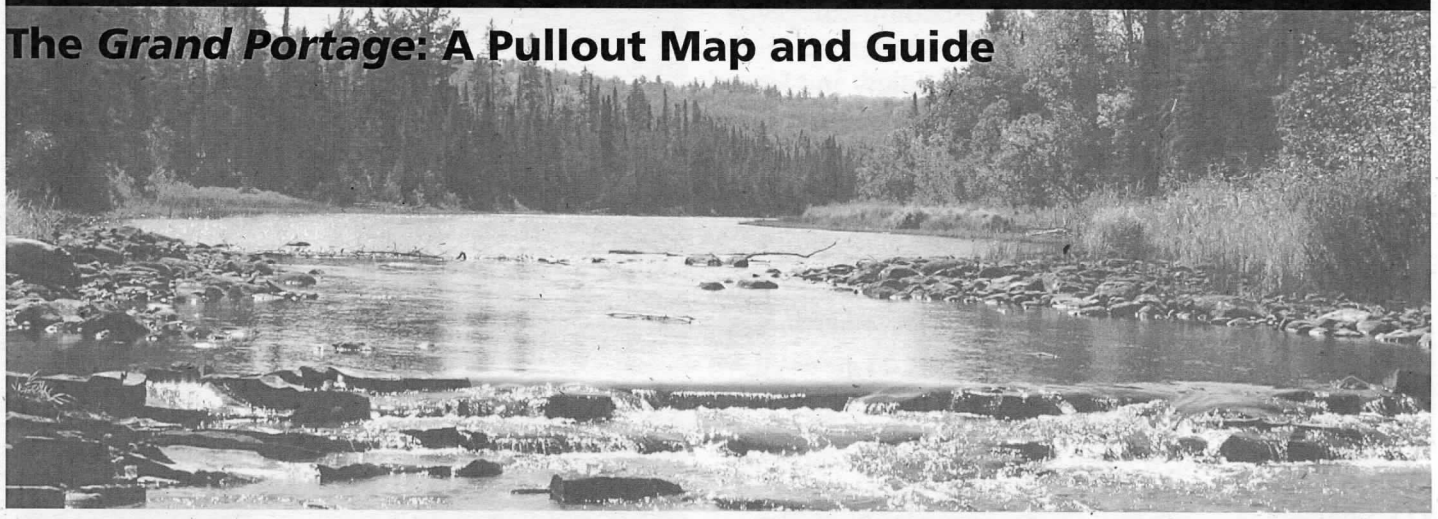
"Rendezvous with History: A Grand Portage Story" is also available in *Ojibwemowin*, the traditional language of the Grand Portage people. "Gaa-Izhinagishkodaading Gichi-Onigamiing Dibaajimowin" narrated by *Maajiigwaneyaash* (Mr. Gordan Jourdain), is likely the first film produced by the National Park Service narrated, in its entirety, in an aboriginal language.

Please, enjoy the new film! There are bonus features as well for those interested in additional information about our unique place! We offer an additional series of "mini-features" to provide more insight to the stories of Grand Portage. Each film "short" is approximately six minutes in length and provides a more in-depth perspective on story elements of the main film. The film shorts available include: "Our Home: The Grand Portage Ojibwe," "The Gift of the Birch Bark Canoe," "A Gap in the Hills: Geography of Grand Portage," and "The Men of the North West Company."



Graphic Design by Beth Drost

The *Grand Portage*: A Pullout Map and Guide



History

Indian people have traveled this footpath between the Pigeon river and Lake Superior for centuries. The Ojibwe called the *Portage* "*Kitchi Onigaming*," The Great Carrying Place. *Kitchi Onigaming* or the *Grand Portage*, to those from Montréal in the colony of New France, enabled Ojibwe and other Indian peoples to conduct trade with neighboring tribes and to access local hunting and gathering areas. Ojibwe people frequently traveled the *Portage* carrying birchbark canoes and baskets, fish from Lake Superior, garden seed, wild rice, copper ingots from Isle Royale and flint from Gunflint Lake.

In the late 17th century, as French trade with woodland peoples expanded, explorers such as Daniel Greysolon, *Sieur Du Lhut*, may have learned about the *Grand Portage* through contacts with Ojibwe, Cree or Assiniboine families. Explorers possibly traveled across the portage with Indian guides but no written account of such use has been uncovered.

The first documented travel along the *Grand Portage* was made in 1731. Explorer and trader Pierre Gaultier, *Sieur de la Vérendrye*, sent a son and nephew across the *portage* with instructions to establish a post on Rainy Lake. *La Vérendyre's* account indicated that the *Portage* was well known by native people. He described it as being from three to three and a quarter *lieues* (7.5-8.1 miles). He also noted, *"all our people, in dismay at the length of the portage... mutinied and loudly demanded that I should turn back."*

After *La Vérendrye*, other explorers and traders traveled the Grand Portage to access the *pays d'en haut*, the vast unknown "up country" of the northwest. By 1763, after conclusion of the French and Indian War, the British had wrested control of the fur trade from the French, and trade with Ojibwe and other woodland and plains Indians continued to expand. The North West Company, in 1784, began building its summer headquarters at the eastern terminus of the *Portage*. For the next 25 years, voyageurs, clerks, guides, interpreters, wintering partners and agents of the NWC, the fractious XY Company and smaller firms routinely used the *Grand Portage*.

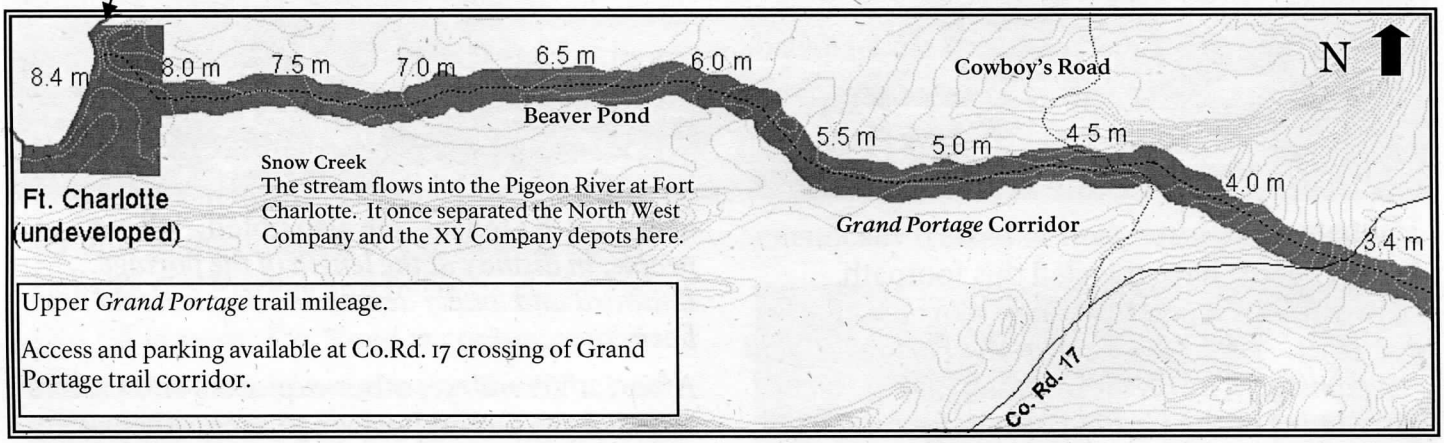
The Grand Portage goes through a gap in the hills

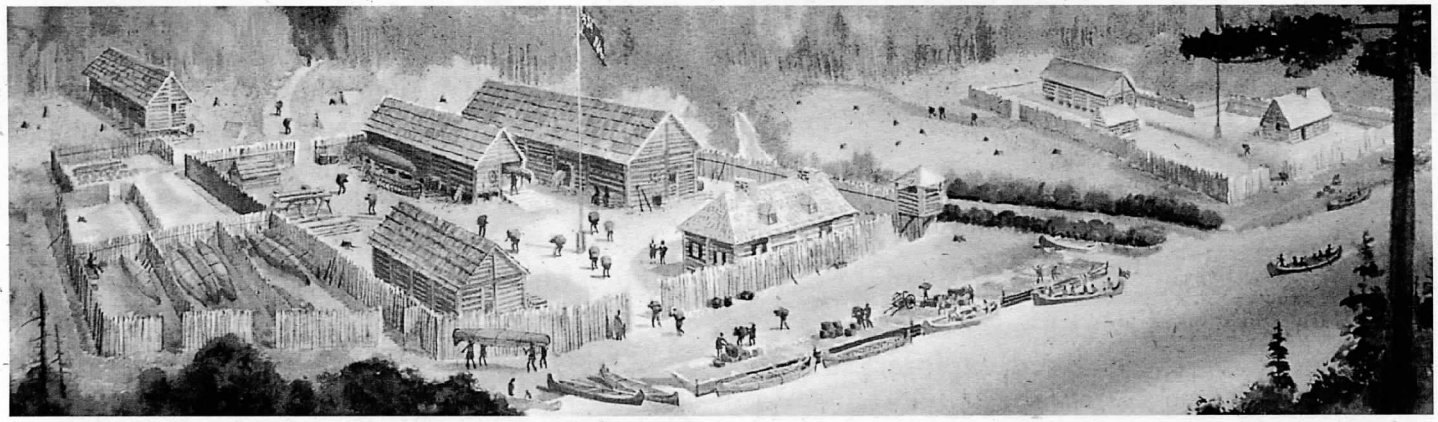
Pigeon River

The Pigeon River is the western terminus of the *Grand Portage* and forms part of the international border between the United States and Canada. From Fort Charlotte the river flows 22 miles east over hazardous rapids, cascades and waterfalls finally emptying into Lake Superior. To avoid these obstacles, Indian people portaged their canoes across the *Grand Portage* between the river and Lake Superior long before Europeans arrived.

Fort Charlotte

The North West Company and later the XY Company built stockade depots here. They enclosed warehouses and support buildings to temporarily store and secure trade items and furs being transported across the Grand Portage. Fort Charlotte was named after the wife of King George III.





During the 1790s, Fort Charlotte was such a busy depot that winterer Mr. Donald Ross was called "the governor," due to his long tenure there. *Fort Charlotte watercolor by Howard Sivertson (View original in Heritage Center at top of stairs)*

Distances

Distances along the *Grand Portage* are indicated in miles by travel in both directions on the Grand Portage is shown below.

From Fort Charlotte to Lake Superior		From Lake Superior to Fort Charlotte
0	Fort Charlotte	8.5
2.5	Beaver Pond	6.5
4.4	Co. Rd 17	3.4
7.8	MN Hwy 61	.6
8.5	Lake Superior	0

Parking

Portage users may park vehicles at the Heritage Center parking lot or at the County Road 17 crossing. If your plans include camping at Fort Charlotte, please obtain your free permit at the information desk in the Heritage Center. Please inform a park ranger if you intend to leave vehicle(s) overnight in the parking lot.

What is a Portage?

A portage is an overland trail or pathway which permits the transport of materials such as canoes, supplies and cargo from one body of water to another.

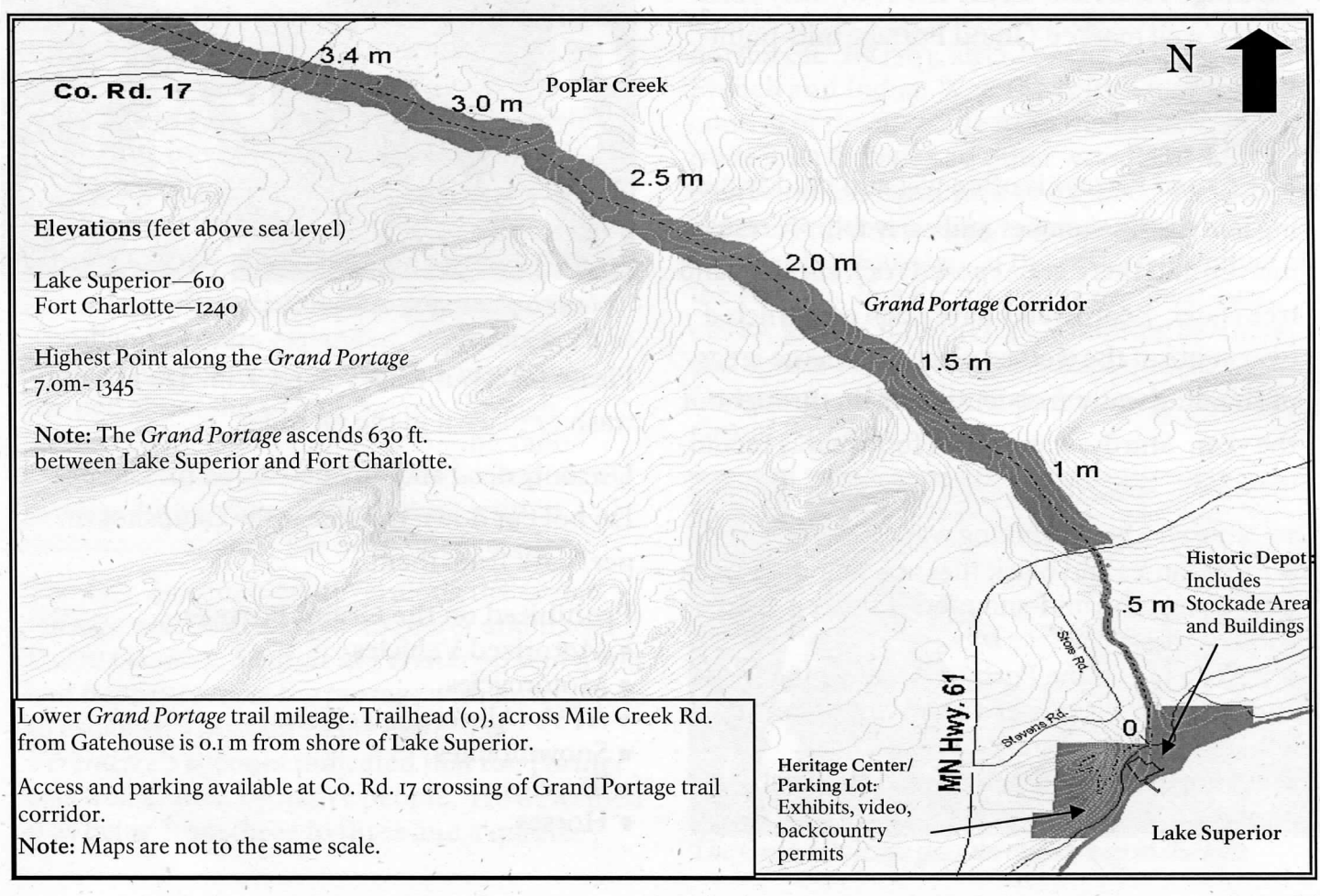
Majestic old growth eastern white pine along the Grand Portage.

Poses

During fur trade times the *Grand Portage* was divided between 16 to 18 *poses* or resting places. Such rest stops were usually located near a difficult section of a portage such as a hill or marshy area and frequently near sources of fresh water. Here voyageurs unloaded their heavy packs, waited for their strength to return and enjoyed a drink or brief smoke of their pipe before continuing.

Poses also served as temporary collection points for packs of valuable merchandise. All packs and materials being carried across a portage were assembled together before moving to the next *pose*. By moving the packs in this organized way, any loss was minimized.

The length of a portage was frequently defined by the number of *poses* it contained. They were generally one-third to one-half mile apart depending on the difficulty of the terrain. The location of a *pose* probably changed over time as the conditions in that particular area changed.



Camping/Hiking and Skiing

The *Grand Portage* is open year round for hiking, cross country skiing and snowshoeing. You may access the *Portage* from the Heritage Center parking lot overlooking Lake Superior, MN Hwy 61, Co. Road 17 or from Fort Charlotte on the Pigeon River.

The *Grand Portage* climbs 630 feet between lake Superior and the Pigeon River. Round-trip hiking time from the depot is approximately 10 to 12 hours.

Co. Road 17 crosses the *Grand Portage* at its approximate mid-point and is about 11.5 miles from the Heritage Center parking lot. Take MN Hwy 61 south from Casino Road, travel about a quarter mile to the junction of Co. Road 17. Turn right on Co. Road 17 and follow it until it meets Old US Hwy 61. Co. Road 17 continues to the right, passes Mt. Maud road on the right, and Partridge Falls road on the left eventually crossing the well marked Grand Portage mid-point trailhead.

Safety

The *Grand Portage* is often wet and muddy during late spring, summer and early fall. Terrain is uneven and there are exposed rock surfaces and tree roots. Boardwalks have been constructed over some of the wettest places, but large areas of standing water frequently remain throughout the year. Sturdy, waterproof footwear is recommended.

- Carry plenty of drinking water.
- Mosquitoes and black flies are abundant from late spring until mid-summer. Take repellent with you.
- Please stay on the *Portage*. Old logging roads and animal trails crisscross the *Grand Portage* and may lead you astray.
- Do not disturb wildlife or archeological remains.

Primitive Camping

Two primitive campsites are located at Fort Charlotte. Each site will accommodate up to 10 persons. A group campsite is available by reservation of a free permit. A permit can be obtained at the information desk in the Heritage Center. A family campsite is available on a first come first served basis. Please inform a park ranger if you plan to leave your car overnight or longer in the parking lot.

Fire grates are located at each site, carrying a backpacking stove is recommended. Campfires are permitted only in fire grates . A pit toilet is located nearby. There is no safe drinking water at Fort Charlotte, so water must be filtered, chemically treated or boiled before drinking.

Ojibwe people carrying at Kitchi Onigaming.

Please pack out what you pack in. Do not bury trash or place it in the pit toilet.

Use only dead and downed wood for campfires. Do not cut down trees near the campsites or peel bark from them.

Prohibited on the Grand Portage:

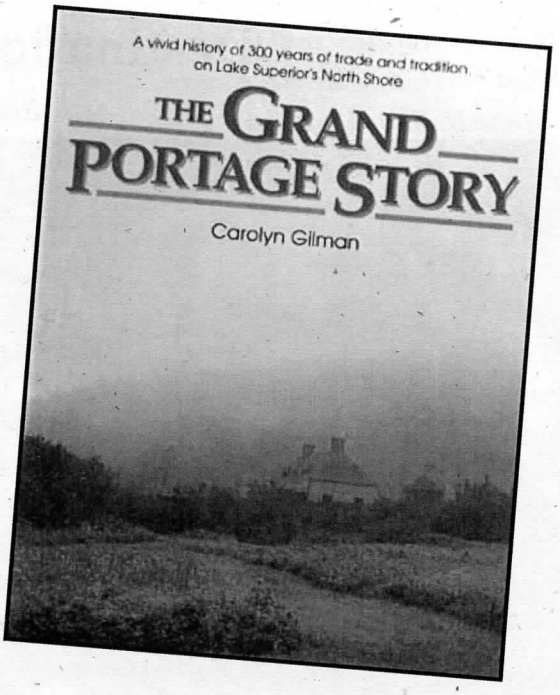
- Motorized Vehicles
- Motorcycles
- ATVs (All-terrain vehicles)
- Snowmobiles
- Bicycles
- Horses

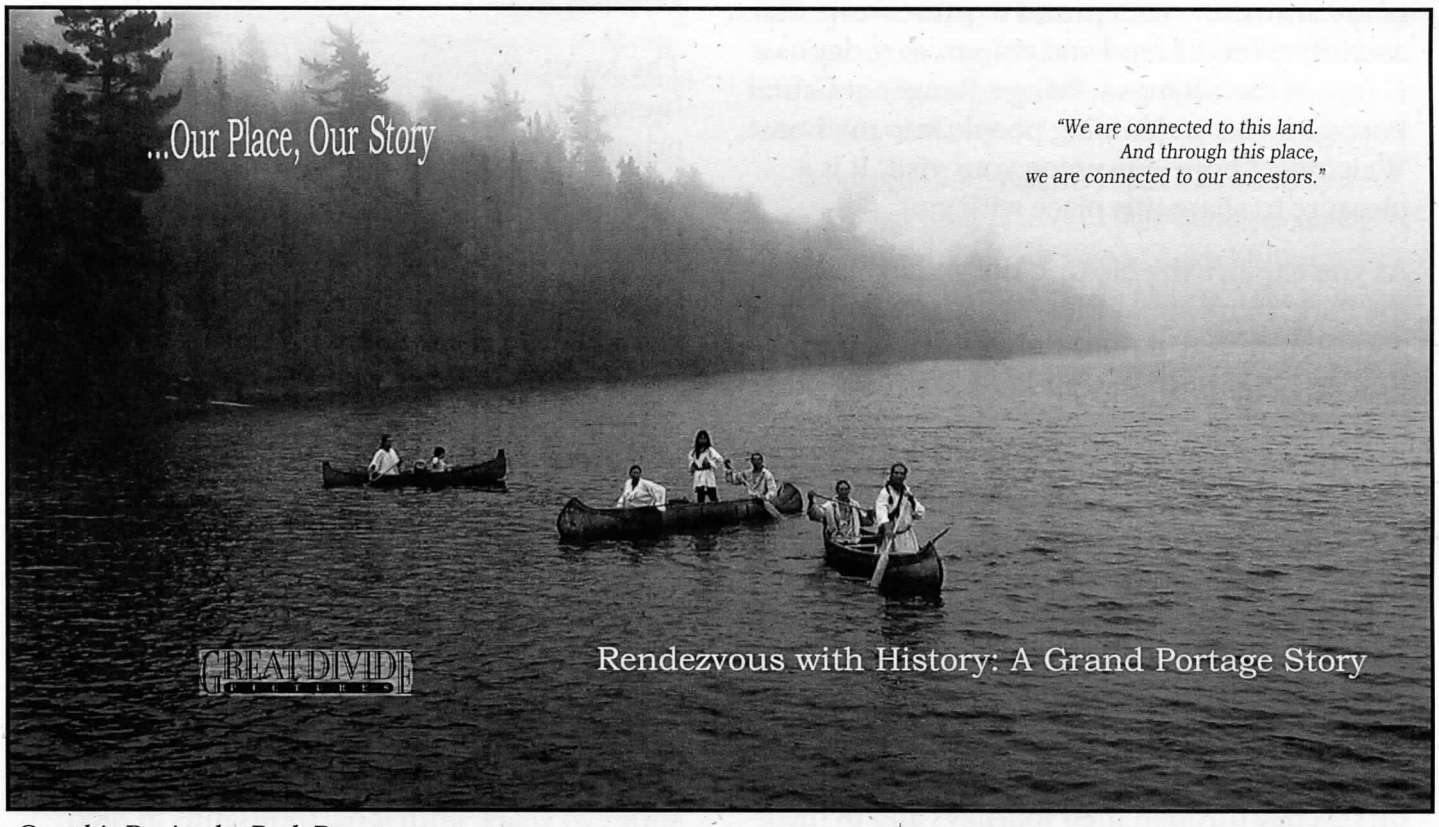
(Continued from page 1)

rounding Hat Point.

Young voyageurs paddling canoes into the interior did not have much opportunity to use electronic devices such as computers, cell phones, and iPods. The closest he might come to a memorable electronic experience would be the harrowing time of paddling on one of many lakes when lightning is scorching a tree on the lakeshore. This year we have a more tame electronic experience for you of a new, greatly updated webpage: www.nps.gov/grpo and a presence on Facebook and Twitter. Please go ahead and "friend us" on Facebook to learn of new things at the national monument. Or on our webpage take a look at our newly posted virtual tour of the historic buildings, valuable museum collections, or a new "kids" page. And our well written classic The Grand Portage Story is now available on line at http://www.nps.gov/grpo/forteachers/suggestedreading.htm

We also are working on our next round of projects. Sometimes they take a while. This summer we will begin on a new trail segment that will make a hike to Mt. Rose, behind the Heritage Center, a loop trail. We will also add a small picnic area at the trailhead. Mt. Rose was used historically as a lookout for ships and canoes on Lake Superior. We will add more lookout locations, more views of the Big Lake. We will be adding something new to what had been done frequently in the past. Come and enjoy history here and compare our time and experiences with the voyageurs of more than 200 years ago. Welcome to Grand Portage.

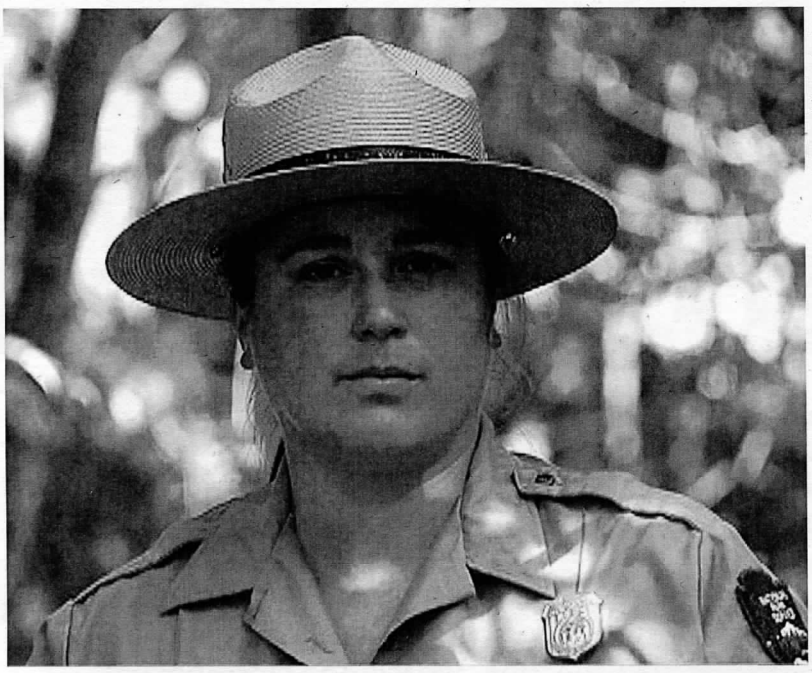




Graphic Design by Beth Drost

Destination: Grand Portage

Ranger Beth Drost



Do you have a national park in your back yard? Growing up in Grand Portage, I did! My name is Beth Drost; I am a Park Ranger at Grand Portage National Monument. I am a member of the Grand Portage Band of Ojibwe. This place is more than a great place to work; it is the home of my ancestors. I am proud to preserve, protect, and interpret the land and resources today as a National Park Ranger. Being a Ranger at Grand Portage is like welcoming people into my home. Welcome, I hope you enjoy your visit. It is a pleasure to share this place with you.

As you explore the historic site and exhibits at the Park, think about those who have come and gone before you. Grand Portage was a destination far before Minnesota was a state, even far before the line between the United States and Canada was drawn. This place has been travelled to and through for centuries. The Ojibwe have called this region home for "time beyond memory." For generations, the Grand Portage Ojibwe have survived on what the land and water provide; we have lived here for over 400 years. For thousands of years, First Nations groups gathered here. More recently, the Cree, Assiniboine, and Christenaux tribes each settled on this bay through their journeys and in their histories. We have accounts of the most recent European visitors from ledger books, diaries, and company letters from fur traders, explorers, and priests. They give us some descriptions of the land and people, but we may never know how many have come before us or who they were. Below, learn about some of these recent visitors to Grand Portage.

Coureur de Bois

Independent fur traders were some of the first European visitors to this area. Known as *coureur de bois*, they traded with the Ojibwe and other native groups. These traders were non-licensed and often gave no documentation of their travels. We know little of who these traders were, where they travelled, or who they traded with. The *coureur de bois* may have been trading in the Grand Portage area as early as the mid-seventeenth century.

Missionaries

The Jesuits wanted to bring Christianity to the Indians. Jesuit missionaries who had been priests were some of the first Europeans to encounter the Ojibwe around Lake Superior. One of the first missions among the Ojibwe was at La Pointe, (near Ashland, Wisconsin) it was established in 1665. It was difficult to establish a permanent mission at Grand Portage because it is so isolated. Also, the priests found the Ojibwe parishioners were hard to track down because they were never in one place for very long.

Explorers and Fur Traders

The first European to write down being at Grand Portage was in 1731. The party, led by French explorers, was looking for a waterway to the great North West. Explorers such as Alexander Mackenzie and David Thompson traveled the Grand Portage trail on their expeditions. For about 70 years, until 1802, thousands of men

Mercury Contamination
At Grand Portage National Monument

Biological Science Technician Brandon Seitz

Research indicates the southern boreal ecosystem of Grand Portage is highly sensitive to mercury deposition.

Grand Portage is Sensitive?

The landscape encountered along the eight and a half miles of the Grand Portage trail is often perceived as a pristine forest ecosystem- a forest not unlike the one that would have been encountered by 18th century Euro-American fur traders and Ojibwe alike. However, upon closer investigation it has been revealed that methylmercury, a severely toxic form of mercury, is present in the water, soil, and aquatic organisms. While the landscape from Voyageurs National Park, through the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness to Grand Portage and beyond to Isle Royale may have similar amounts of mercury deposition, the amount of methylmercury at Grand Portage is substantially higher than many other lakes and streams of the western Great Lakes region. One main reason methylmercury is more prevalent at Grand Portage is because there are more wetlands contributing methylmercury and dissolved soil humus to the water. Mercury is deposited on land and water in dust and precipitation (Figure 1). Wetlands provide the necessary environment to chemically change inorganic mercury to toxic methylmercury. The dissolved humic substances bind to mercury in the water and sediment and transport it through our watersheds. The unique character of this interface between water, soil, and wetlands makes the southern boreal ecosystem of Grand Portage highly sensitive to mercury deposition. One indication of mercury sensitivity is the color of the water. Deeply stained waters the color of tea are more likely to be sensitive to mercury deposition, while sky blue waters are likely less sensitive.

What Harm Can Methylmercury Do?

Methylmercury biomagnifies in organisms, increasing in concentration as it moves up the food chain (Figure 1). Therefore, methylmercury becomes very toxic to high-level predators such as eagles, loons, and even people. What is not well known is that there are many other organisms at risk. Songbirds, for example, accumulate high levels of methylmercury simply by feeding on spiders and insects with aquatic larval stages. Recently it has been found that dragonfly larvae at Grand Portage harbor high enough concentrations of methylmercury to put these birds at risk. Like people, the diet of pregnant songbirds is transferred to the developing embryo, which is the most sensitive life stage. This is why human fish consumption guidelines are so important and why they are more restrictive for child-bearing women. When it comes to environmental pollution, fish, wildlife and people are all critically linked. Unfortunately, fish and wildlife cannot protect themselves from mercury poisoning. However, by following federal, tribal, and/or state fish consumption guidelines, the people in Grand Portage and across the country are protected from foodborne mercury poisoning due to eating fish.

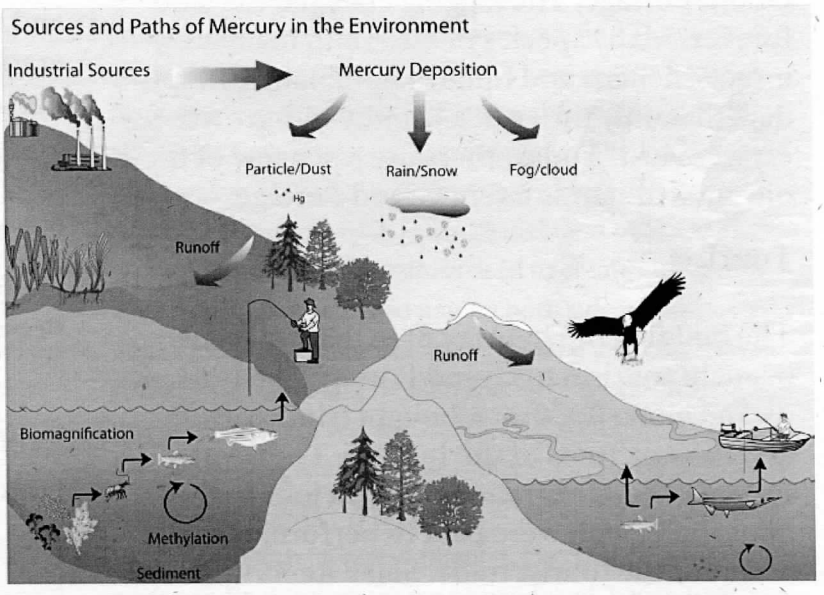


Figure 1. A very small amount of mercury can contaminate an ecosystem and become a significant health threat to humans and wildlife. Through a process called methylation, naturally occurring bacteria act on mercury to create methylmercury, which bioaccumulates in organisms, magnifying in concentration as it rises through each level of the food chain.

What is the Source of Mercury Deposition?

Mercury has natural sources in the environment, but they are very small. The dominant source of mercury in the Great Lakes region is deposition from industrial emissions such as taconite production and coal burning power plants. While these emissions sources can be very local and have local impacts, often their mercury air pollutants can traverse the globe before being deposited as many as two years later.

Are Mercury Emissions Increasing?

The Clean Air and Clean Water Acts created pollution control laws in the United States that were implemented by the Environmental Protection Agency and carried out by individual states and tribes. As a result, substantial reductions in mercury emissions and environmental contamination were recorded across the United States from about 1977 to 2000. While this was great progress, it may be relatively short-lived. Researchers are again finding upward trends in mercury contamination.

What Will the National Park Service do to Help Protect People and the Environment From Mercury?

The National Park Service (NPS) employs scientists across the country to inventory and monitor natural resource conditions. Scientists working in parks, and in networks of parks, collaborate with universities and other agencies to gather information on mercury pollution. This scientific information tracks trends in environmental degradation that the NPS can share with the public as well as other federal, state, and tribal agencies in charge of regulating air pollution.

What Will the Monument do to Help Protect People and the Environment from Mercury?

The Monument has planned a number of new research projects that will help to reveal the nature of mercury pollution. Right now, our goal is increase our knowledge of mercury contamination in order to learn what may be at risk. To that end, we plan to: 1) evaluate changes in air pollution deposition by using lichens as passive air monitors, 2) investigate the risk mercury contaminated browse poses to beavers and moose, 3) identify sources of mercury pollution by analyzing characteristic mercury variants found in the soil and water, and 4) analyze seasonal changes of mercury concentrations in stream water. You can look forward to the results of these and other scientific investigations in newsletters to come.

What Can I Do?

READ and follow federal, state, and tribal fish consumption guidelines—especially women and children.

REDUCE the amount of energy you use, both electricity and fuel.

REUSE energy-expensive consumer products; give a second thought to disposable items.

RECYCLE everything, including electronics, steel, fluorescent bulbs, and thermometers.

and SHARE your new knowledge of mercury with others.

Where Can I Find More Information?

Biodiversity Research Institute, The Extent and Effects of Mercury Pollution in the Great Lakes Region

http://www.briloon.org/mercuryconnections/greatlakes

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Basic Information on Mercury

http://www.epa.gov/hg/about.htm

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Fish Consumption Guidelines

http://www.epa.gov/hg/advisories.htm

Grand Portage Environmental Department, Guide to Eating Fish

-Send inquiries to: Grand Portage Environmental Department
27 Store Road, PO Box 428
Grand Portage, MN 55605

Minnesota Department of Health, Fish Consumption Guidelines

http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/fish/

AREA INFORMATION:

There are a few places nearby to purchase light meals, snacks, gas, and other necessities.
The food and lodging information provided here is for the convenience of our visitors, and is not an endorsement by the National Park Service.

SERVICES:

Grand Portage Trading Post, & Rendezvous Grill, Post Office & SPUR Gas – Drive about 1/2 mile west (a right hand turn out of Heritage Center parking lot) on Mile Creek Road. The Trading Post, Post Office and SPUR gas station are on the right between Mile Creek Road and Highway 61. Phone: 218-475-2282

Grand Portage Lodge/Gift Shop/ Island View Dining Room – Drive about 1/2 mile west on Mile Creek Road. The Grand Portage Lodge 100-room facility is on the left at the stop sign. Phone: 218-475-2401

Ryden's Border Store, Cafe Hotel & Phillips 66 Gas – Located 3 miles north of Grand Portage National Monument on Highway 61. At any junction to Highway 61 in Grand Portage, turn right (east) on Highway 61. Follow Highway 61 to Ryden's on your left. Phone: 218-475-2330

Voyageurs Marina – Located about 1½ miles from the monument. Follow Mile Creek Road east over stone bridge. Follow County Road 17 to your left, up over the hill and past the church and school. Continue to follow County Road 17 1½ miles, to the east side of the bay. The marina will be on your right. Under new management. Phone 218-475-2476

CAMPGROUNDS:

Grand Portage Marina & Campground – Marina Rd. (adjacent to Grand Portage Lodge & Casino), Grand Portage, MN, 55605. Phone 218-475-2476

Judge Magney State Park – 4051 E Hwy 61, Grand Marais, MN, 55604. Phone: 218-387-3039

Grand Marais Recreation Area – Highway 61, Grand Marais, MN, 55604. Phone: 218-387-1712

LOCAL STATE PARKS:

Grand Portage State Park – 9393 E Hwy 61, 5 miles east of Grand Portage. Offers a scenic trail to the spectacular Pigeon Falls. The park has a visitor contact station and sales area. There are no camping facilities. Phone: 218-475-2360

Judge C.R. Magney State Park – 4051 E Hwy 61, 14 miles west of Grand Portage. Offers trout fishing and white-water kayaking on the Brule River. There are 6 miles of summer hiking trails and 5 miles of winter ski trails. A well-maintained trail winds along the river to the Upper and Lower Falls and the Devil's Kettle, a large pothole into which half of the river disappears. Phone: 218-387-3039

Cascade River State Park – 3481 W Hwy 61, 45 miles west of Grand Portage. Offers spectacular waterfalls along the Cascade River. There are also scenic overlooks of Lake Superior. There are 18 miles of trails through a birch and spruce forest. The park has a 40-site campground, picnic facilities, and plenty of lake and river fishing. Phone: 218-387-3053

Need Special Assistance?

For help or questions concerning accessibility at the park, please contact any park ranger, or Chief of Interpretation, Pam Neil.

218-475-0123 Voice/TDD

GRPO_interpretation@nps.gov

KIDS PAGE: FUR TRADE BINGO

Circle objects you see in the Heritage Center, Ojibwe Village, Voyageur's Encampment, Warehouse, Kitchen and Great Hall as you tour Grand Portage National Monument. Find five objects in a row vertically, horizontally or diagonally and you win!

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	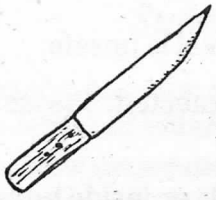	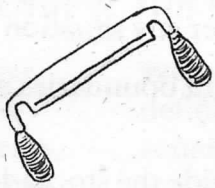		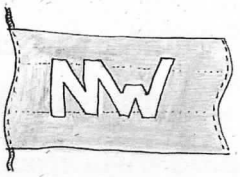
	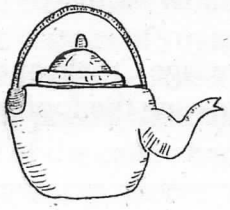			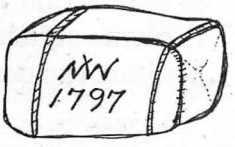
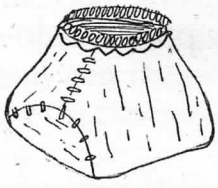	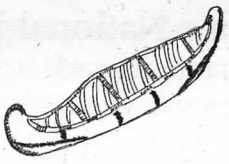	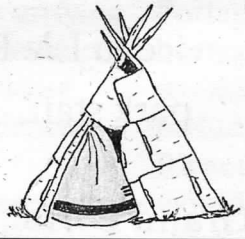	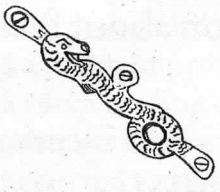	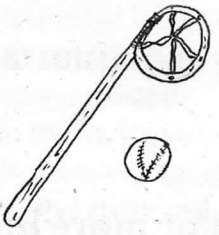
	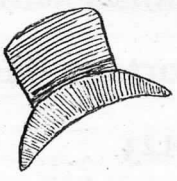	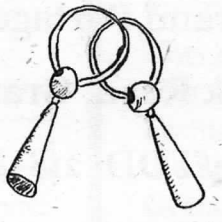	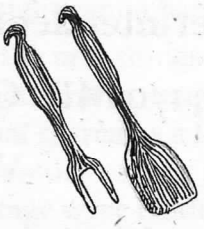	
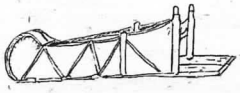	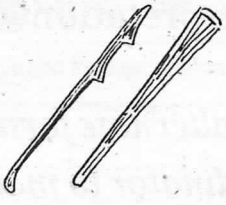	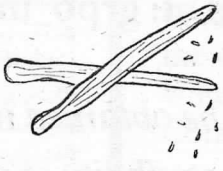	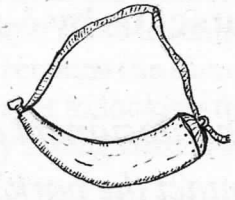	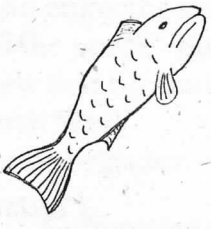

A FEW TIPS TO HELP YOU ENJOY YOUR VISIT

Safety Officer Sharon Walker

- Wear sturdy footwear when walking on Monument trails. Please stay on the trails. Watch closely for roots and uneven ground to avoid tripping.
- Do not drink water from streams or lakes unless you first boil or treat it.
- Never hike alone. Always tell a friend/relative where you are going, and when you plan to return.
- When hiking in the backcountry during summer months, the use of insect repellent and/or head nets is strongly recommended.

REMINDERS AND HELPFUL INFORMATION

- Notify a park employee if you encounter any situation you feel is unsafe.
- All plants and animals within Monument boundaries are protected. Please help us protect them by not feeding animals or picking plants.
- Pets and smoking are not permitted inside the stockade walls or inside buildings.
- Please keep bicycles out of the stockade and secured to the bike rack provided at the Heritage Center. Do not lock bicycles to sign posts or trees.
- A picnic area is located east of the palisade across Grand Portage Creek, and may be reached by walking the path between the creek and the palisade and crossing the footbridge.

VISITING ISLE ROYALE NATIONAL PARK

For information about ferry service to Isle Royale National Park please ask park staff.

For more information about Grand Portage National Monument, contact:

Superintendent, Grand Portage National Monument

P.O. Box 426, 170 Mile Creek Road, Grand Portage, Minnesota, 55605.

Voice/TDD: 218-475-0123

Visit our website at www.nps.gov/grpo,

or contact us by e-mail at: grpo_interpretation@nps.gov

This document can be obtained in alternate formats.
Please contact the park's accessibility coordinator to make a request.