

THE OLD CHICAGO PORTAGE
1673 - 1836

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By

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About 25,000 years ago a huge glacier crept forward from Canada into the Chicago region. As this ice sheet advanced southward, it carried with it the rocks and soil it found in its path. Further north this glacier presented a solid block of ice across the continent. Later the glacier receded in stages, leaving its accumulation behind. Each time it paused in its recession great quantities of debris piled up at its edge forming big land ridges when the ice disappeared. Thus the Valparaiso Moraine, a rim of land paralleling the margin of Lake Michigan, was formed in the northeastern corner of Illinois. Water collected in the gorge hollowed out by the ice between the glacier and the moraine until reaching a level of sixty feet above the present level of Lake Michigan. A massive glacial lake was now born, Lake Chicago. Draining through a gap in the Valparaiso Moraine called the Chicago or Des Plaines outlet, the flow of water from Lake Chicago traveled down the Des Plaines Valley to the Illinois River Valley. The recession of the glacier and the lowering of the floor of the Chicago Outlet removed the barrier that withheld the flow of water previously. Lake Chicago now receded into three separate stages. The Glenwood stage where the water level was fifty feet above the lake; the Calumet stage where the water was thirty-five feet above the lake; and the Tolleston stage which was twenty feet above the lake. All through these stages only the one outlet down the Des Plaines Valley existed, for the ice barrier still remained in the north.

With the lowering of the floor of the Chicago outlet the flow of water down the outlet grew lesser and finally stopped. During this lowering the Chicago River was formed and the Des Plaines River flowed easterly into this river and out into Lake Michigan. Then a barrier or ridge was formed east of Kedzie Avenue which was part of the Continental Divide. The crest of this

barrier, which was ten and one half feet above present Lake Michigan, was located where South Sacramento Avenue formally crossed the West Fork South Branch Chicago River directly north of the intersections of Thirty First Street and Sacramento Avenue. The entire barrier formed a mile and one half long strip of prairie extending from Albany Avenue and Thirty First Street to where South Leavitt Street crossed the river. This barrier separated the Mississippi and St. Lawrence basins so that water falling on the west side of the barrier backed up the waters of the Des Plaines River and turned its flow southwesterly down the Des Plaines Valley leaving a slough or small lake five miles in length. This was Mud or Portage Lake. The prairie on the west side of the barrier containing Mud Lake was eight feet above Lake Michigan.

The present day Des Plaines River exists in two parts, the upper and lower Des Plaines. The upper Des Plaines began its course forty miles north of the present Illinois-Wisconsin State Line near the boundry line separating Racine and Kenosha Counties in Wisconsin. The river continues directly south as far as Lyons, Illinois. The lower Des Plaines is a continuation of the upper Des Plaines at a point two miles south of Riverside in Lyons where presently a man made channel turns the river to flow southwest down the Des Plaines Valley. Formerly in the upper Des Plaines there existed an easterly channel through what is now Catherine Mitchell Lagoon and Portage Pond, and a large island, Prescotts Island, between the easterly and main westerly channels. The lower Des Plaines began directly south of this island where the easterly and main westerly channels of the Des Plaines River united with the two connecting channels from Mud Lake forming a small creek which reunited with the Des Plaines north of Lawndale Avenue and proceeded southwesterly down the Des Plaines Valley.

Mud Lake was from one and one half miles wide and from two to sixteen feet below the adjoining prairie formed by the Continental Divide. The east end of the lake was located at Albany and Thirty First Street. From the east and the

main channel of the lake proceeded southwesterly for four miles to Austin Avenue where it divided into two channels containing an island a mile long and a half mile wide. The two shallow channels are known as the North and South Arms of Mud Lake and both connected at the West end of the Island. The west end of Mud Lake was somewhat of a low ridge extending from the north line of Old Tolleston Beach at West Forty-Fourth Street to the south line of the beach at Summit and separated Mud Lake from the Des Plaines River where Mud Lake was bounded by Harlem Avenue. The confluence of the North and South Arms of Mud Lake, the two connecting channels of the Des Plaines below Prescotts Island, and a notch in the ridge that separated Mud Lake from the Des Plaines River formed a small creek called Portage Creek. Portage Creek entered the Des Plaines River just north of the Lawndale Avenue Bridge where before entering the river it proceeded northwesterly flowing close to Lawndale. The confluence of the North and South Arms of Mud Lake forming Portage Creek occurred between 400 and 500 feet east of Harlem Avenue and about 300 feet north of the line of West Forty-Ninth Street produced west. Prescotts Island was located about 800 feet northwest of the mouth of Portage Creek. The island was about one half of a mile in length and at its widest part less than one fourth of a mile across. The northern end of Prescotts Island is situated just south of where Old Tolleston Beach crosses the upper Des Plaines River.

The Chicago River consisted of two branches, the North and South Branch. The North Branch had two tributaries, the West Fork and Skokie River, which flowed southward to the main trunk of the river into Lake Michigan. The South Branch entered into two forks, the West Fork and South Fork. While the South Fork headed into swampy prairie, the West Fork either headed into Mud Lake or ended at South Leavitt Street depending on the season and flowed northeastward.

The Chicago River lay at an average depth of twelve feet and varying to twenty six feet below the surface of Lake Michigan. The present day mouth of the Chicago River is a man made channel. Strong winds from the northeast

piled up sand obstructing the mouth of the river. Formerly the river turned southward after reaching Michigan Avenue and flowed into Lake Michigan over a large sandbar a little south of East Lake Street. This was the only point in the river where the water of the river reached a depth of two feet.

The Des Plaines River midway between the present villages of Riverside and Summit along with its adjoining territory was one of the most important and strategic locations in early North America. The French called the area "Le Portage de Checagou", meaning land over which it is necessary to carry boats and canoes when passing from one navigatable body of water to another. "Le Portage" was a favorite meeting place of the Indians who were the first to discover and use it centuries before the discovery of America and arrival of the white man. A highly central location for the prehistoric mound-builders from the South to meet those of the North and trade for copper. Only then to be followed by the mighty Illini, Miami, Iroquois, the Sioux, and other once strong and mighty Indian nations who recognized the value of the location and fought each other to obtain control of it leaving their burial grounds as a reminder of their existence. The area was later settled by three main tribes which were the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomi. Then the white man came to establish forts, missions, and trading posts. Furs were brought from this area to the magnificent courts of Europe and the population and wealth of the small village of "Checagou" on the shores of Lake Michigan and banks of the Chicago River grew to its present day importance as the terminal and connection point of the countries greatest railroads and other means of travel than any other place in the world.

There were also two other portages besides the one located at Chicago, but none became as famous as the Chicago Portage. There was the Green Bay Portage which began at the mouth of the Fox River and proceeded by way of Lake Winnebago and a series of small lakes and rivers to the Wisconsin River

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and then into the Mississippi. And also the St. Joseph-Kankakee Portage which began at the St. Joseph River about two miles north of present South Bend, Indiana. It then extended five miles due west to the Kankakee River joining the Des Plaines to form the Illinois and then on to the Mississippi.

There is no doubt that the city of Chicago owes its very existence to the Chicago Portage and location on the banks of the Chicago River. It opened the route to commercial wealth by moving cargoes of grain and manufactured goods to its consumers. Transportation of raw and finished goods thrived on its banks and made Chicago grow as a city in wealth and worldly goods.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PORTAGE

Father Jacques Marquette was born in 1637 at Laon in Northern France. At age seventeen he joined the Jesuits and in 1666 was sent to the missions of Canada. Teaching the religion in time he learned to speak six Indian languages and became one of the Indians most beloved friends. Marquette's favorite tribe were the Illinois. He thought more of these people than any other for they were of stronger mind, will, and body than the other tribes. The Illinois were also the ones who had told him about the "Great River" (Mississippi) and appealed to Marquette to come and visit them in their villages in order to teach the white mans religion.

Louis Joliet had been born in Quebec in 1645, his fathers occupation was a wagon maker. Educated by the Jesuits and first intending to become a priest he loved adventure much more and became a fur trader. In 1669, under the direction of Talon, Intendant of Canada, Joliet explored the Lake Superior region for the copper ore of which the Indians had spoken of, but was unsuccessful. In 1672 Joliet, recommended by Talon, was commissioned by Governor of New France Frontenac to explore the Mississippi River and plot its course. The Indians had spoken much about this "Great River to the West" and France was eager to discover an easy water route across the North American Continent in order to obtain the rich trade coming from the Orient. Accompanying him on this journey would be that young Jesuit priest, Father Marquette.

Lake in the fall of 1672 Joliet started out to reach Marquette's mission at St. Ignace. Reaching the mission in early December Marquette and Joliet set out to make their plans, draw maps from the information given to them by the Indians, and collect their food which consisted of smoked meat and Indian corn. Leaving St. Ignace on May 17, 1673, with five French companions and two birchbark canoes, they traversed down the northern shore of Lake Michigan to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

at Green Bay they visited the Menominee or Wild Rice Indians. These Indians tried to prevent Marquette and Joliet from going any farther. They claimed there were savage tribes who would put them to death, a terrible roaring deamon would swallow them, and also the heat would be so great in the south they would surely die. Marquette then taught the Indians a prayer and proceeded with two Indian guides up the Fox River, made the portage across to the Wisconsin River, and arrived at the Mississippi River on June 17. Upon their arrival at the "Great River" Marquette named the Mississippi, Conception, in honor of the Blessed Virgin Mary. After about a weeks voyage on the river and seeing only great herds of Buffalo they spotted what appeared to be a man made path on the west side of the river. Leaving their men with the canoes Joliet and Marquette decided to follow this path for they could see moccasin tracks. After six miles through forest and prairie they came upon an Indian Village. Not being noticed they shouted to attract attention. Four of the chief men came out to greet them holding up two peace pipes covered with feathers. The chief awaited them at the door of his wigwam and as they smoked peace pipes and entered the chief proclaimed, "Frenchmen, how bright the sun shines when you come to visit us. All our village awaits you; and you shall enter our wigwams in peace?. This tribe of Indians were the friendly Illinois who Father Marquette had so longed to visit and preach the religion. The next day while visiting another great Illinois chief at a village not far away, they were greeted with a peace pipe and given a great feast of four courses; corn meal boiled with grease, fish, roast dog, and buffalo meat.

Further down the river at Alton they passed a huge rock bluff on which was carved and painted two figures of a horrible monster. This was the terrible Piasa Bird, a mythical character with a large scaly body covered somewhat by its enormous tail; it had four webbed feet, the face of a bearded creature, and two big horns resting on the top of its head. According to the Indians mythology the Piasa Bird had lived for many years in a cave among the cliffs

of Alton and had feasted on the flesh and blood of the Indians. A brave Illinois chief appealed to the Great Spirit to help him kill the monster. With only a few braves he killed the creature with his poison arrows and an invisible shield provided by the Great Spirit. Even in Marquette's time as the Indians would pass this painted carving they would shoot poison arrows at it or just turn hurriedly away. Marquette thought to preserve a sketch of the monster though he himself had been scared along with Joliet and the Frenchmen.

Joliet and Marquette soon passed the waters of the Missouri River and came to the mouth of the Arkansas. Here they saw another Indian Village on the west bank. The young savages of the tribe soon spotted them and paddled out their canoes in order to attack them. Marquette held the peace pipe above his head. The older men of the village soon spotted the pipe and welcomed the Frenchmen to land. After a long conversation and feast, the Frenchmen spent the night with the Indians. They were the Mitchigamis, one of the Illinois tribes. A few miles farther down the river, Marquette and Joliet arrived at the village of the Arkansas Indians. They told the Frenchmen that farther south the Mississippi was controlled by hostile Indians who were armed with weapons from the Spaniards. It was here they all decided to return. They had now learned the Great River Mississippi emptied into the Gulf of Mexico and not the Gulf of California.

Realizing the Mississippi River still held some importance for France in the way of communication, transportation, and trade, Marquette and Joliet attempted to find a shorter water route to Green Bay. Coming upon the mouth of the Illinois River they entered the stream with the knowledge of what the Indians had told them about a much quicker passage to Lake Michigan. On their way they came upon the Indian Village of Kaskaskia near Starved Rock where Marquette preached religion and promised he would return to them to establish a church there. To show their gratitude one of the chiefs with a band of warriors

guided the party up the Illinois and Des Plaines Rivers and across the Chicago Portage to the Chicago River.

In September, 1673, Father Marquette and Louis Joliet became the first white men to discover and pass over the Chicago Portage. Turning from the Des Plaines River at Summit they entered Portage Creek. Traveling along the North Arm of Mud Lake, Marquette and Joliet began their actual portage on the east end of Mud Lake at Albany and Thirty First Street and carried their canoes and belongings over a mile and a half strip of prairie, launching in the West Fork South Branch Chicago River at South Leavitt Street and out into Lake Michigan.

Even at that early stage in history, Joliet thought to dig a canal through that "half a league of prairie" as he described it, separating the Chicago River from Mud Lake for easy navigation from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico.

Late in the fall of 1673 the two weary travelers and their French companions arrived at Marquette's new mission at Green Bay. Both Joliet and Marquette spent the winter there. Joliet prepared his report to Governor Frontenac and Marquette nursed his ills and carried on the duties of his new mission while writing his own reports to his superiors. In the spring as Joliet was returning to Montreal his canoe upset in the rapids outside the city. Two of Joliet's men were drowned and all his reports and maps were lost. Joliet never returned to the Illinois country again but was an important figure of French affairs in Canada. He explored Hudsons Bay and coasts of Labrador and Governor Frontenac appointed him royal pilot for the St. Lawrence. He died in 1700.

Father Marquette, in order to fulfill his promise to the Illinois Indians, returned with two companions a year later during the winter of 1674-75 and because of bad health could not proceed on until late in March. To withstand the bitter cold, Marquette and his companions built a log cabin near the eastern end of Mud Lake. The site of the cabin can be located just north of Damen

Avenue where it crosses the South Branch Chicago River. The cabin was built upon a hill but the overflow of water and extreme flooding from Mud Lake forced the party to climb trees in order to avoid drowning. The Indians brought food for the hungry men and a French surgeon who began trading furs, fifty miles further south, assisted with his help.

On March 30, Marquette feeling better, the party decided to go and they reached the Indian Village of Kaskaskia soon after. After teaching the red men his religion he left a few days after Easter for he knew he was to die.

Marquette died on the way back to his old mission at St. Ignace and was buried near Ludington, Michigan. After two years, however, a party of Indians dug up his bones and took them back to his old mission home where they were buried beneath the floor of the home.

In 1682, on their way to explore and claim the Mississippi Valley for France, Rene-Robert Cavalier, Sieur de la Salle, and his trusted lieutenant, Henri de Tonty, re-discovered the Chicago Portage as it now became attractive to the French Fur traders and missionaries. At that time fur trade was the greatest commercial activity and main source of income for the French in Canada. Control of the Chicago Portage meant control of all fur trade being carried on in the Great Northwest and Mississippi Valley. The Portage definitely played the most important part in this trade because it was the only link between the St. Lawrence and Mississippi rivers with the center of fur trade, Montreal, located directly on the St. Lawrence.

The French quickly allied themselves with the Illinois Indians and soon gained control of all fur trade being carried on in the Great Northwest by their holding of the Chicago Portage. The English, angered at this alliance, formed their own with the Iroquois Indians. The Iroquois had long been fierce enemies of the Illinois and the English forced the Iroquois to make war upon the French in order to obtain the immense fur trade of the Great Northwest by their capturing of the Portage. For twelve years after La Salles death in 1687 Tonty succeeded

in keeping the French and Indian Alliance together until 1700, when the Iroquois finally succeeded in barring the French from the Portage and Northern Illinois region. Thus the Chicago Portage once more fell under the possession of hostile Indians.

During this period the value of the Chicago Portage as a trade route never ceased. Many attempts were made to obtain control of it once more from the Indians. The French remained steadfast in their possession of the Green Bay region and also Fort Cahokia and Chartres near present day St. Louis. Another French settlement and fort was located at Quatanon where presently exists LaFayette, Indiana. In 1730 a large group of Frenchmen met about two miles south of Plano, Illinois at Maramock Hill where they trapped and destroyed a large number of Fox Indians in another attempt to gain control of the Portage. Though the French won many concisive victories, they never succeeded in permanently re-establishing themselves in the Illinois Valley or gaining re-possession of the Chicago Portage. By 1763 the British had gained control of all of Frances possessions in North America and until 1778 the English controlled almost all trade coming from the Portage and Northwest as far as the Mississippi River.

At the opening of the Revolutionary War the Chicago Portage was used by both the British and American colonists in their various maneuvers and became the most important crossing place in a highly disputed zone. It was one of the principal reasons for the military expedition of George Rodgers Clark in the Revolutionary War which led to the capture of the British at Vincennes, Indiana. The Treaty of Paris ending the Revolutionary War in 1783 gave the American Colonists all land east of the Mississippi from the Great Lakes to Louisiana. The Chicago Portage was implied in the "Ordinance of Virginia" passed on July 13, 1787 which formed the Northwest Territory comprising the states of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Michigan. It preceeded our present constitution and formed a stronger union of our victorious colonies. It reads --- "The

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navigable waters leading into the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, and the carrying places between the same, shall be common highways, and forever free, as well to the inhabitants of the said territory as to the citizens of the United States, and those of any other state that may be admitted into the Confederacy, without any tax, impost, or duty therefore."

The British gave no sign that they would give up the Northwest Territory and finally openly refused to surrender it. Their aim was to keep the great fur trade and maintain control over Indians of the region. Even though the Treaty of Paris gave the United States sovereignty of the Northwest Territory it required the government to extinguish the Indians title to the land and remove them before the territory could be settled. The Indians, though aroused by the British, refused all attempts made to settle the territory and finally attacked a party of settlers on the Ohio River.

The power of the Indians was finally broken on August 20, 1794, at the "Battle of Fallen Timbers", on the Maumee River near Toledo. Here General Anthony Wayne succeeded in driving the Indians northward from their positions near Fort Recovery and Defiance and making a treaty with them. The Treaty of Greenville, concluded August 10, 1795, extinguished the Indians title to all land east and south of a line drawn from the Ohio River, at a point opposite the mouth of the Kentucky River to Fort Recovery, in Ohio, and from this point east to the Muskingum River, about fifty miles south of Cleveland, then north along the river and Cuyahoga River to Cleveland.

The importance of this treaty in relation to the Chicago Portage is that a provision of that treaty specified the cession of "one piece of land six miles square at the mouth of the Chicago River emptying into the Southwest end of Lake Michigan where a fort formerly stood", a similar piece at the site of Peoria and a piece twelve miles square at the mouth of the Illinois River emptying into the Mississippi and the "free passages of the portages and rivers connecting these grants."

This cession was obtained through the foresight of General Anthony Wayne who saw through a plan being made by British officer Simcoe to the Lords of Trade to establish British depots along the portages leading to the Mississippi Valley, especially at the Chicago Portage, with the purpose of shutting the American traders out of the valley.

In 1803 the erection of a fort on the square of land ceded by the Treaty of Greenville went into effect. The erection of the first Fort Dearborn was ordered by President Thomas Jefferson and completed in 1804. During this period fur trade was carried on in ever increasing amounts and the Chicago Portage became the greatest highway for travel and trade with the protection that Fort Dearborn offered. After the Chicago Massacre and burning of Fort Dearborn on August 15, 1812, the region again fell into the possession of the Indians and fur trade ceased. The burning and massacre by the Indian allies of Great Britain was actually a consequence of the War of 1812.

In 1816 the Treaty of Chent ended the war and the government ordered the reconstruction of a second Fort Dearborn. Again the building of a fort brought back the many fur traders as they came back in increasing numbers. An immense amount of traffic and ever increasing amount of furs was now passing over the Chicago Portage. The original portage now became the route over which fox, beaver, muskrat, mink, marten, and deer skins in mackinaw boats, flatting rafts, canoes, and batteaux were carried on their way to the fabulous courts of Europe. The entire Chicago region hummed with activity from the growing number of people and the cry for internal improvements was heard throughout the land. On August 24, 1816, a treaty with the Indians was completed in which they ceded the territory comprehended between the Indian boundary lines ten miles north and south of the present mouth of the Chicago River. The grant was used for the main purpose of building a canal and military road to cope with the large amount of traffic which was passing through the Portage.

As early as 1808 Albert Gallatin had presented to Congress the idea for a canal across the Portage. In 1814 President Madison, in a message at the opening of Congress, called attention to the building of a ship canal connecting Lake Michigan with the Illinois River at Chicago.

In 1822 Congress finally passed the act which enabled the State of Illinois to build the canal connecting the Illinois River with Lake Michigan and in 1832 the General Assembly of Illinois passed the act providing for the internal navigation of the state. Two engineers, Post and Paul, were sent to explore, survey, and compile a map of the region where the canal would be built. In 1825 the Erie Canal was opened and five years later the Government opened for settlement the public land which was ceded by the Indians. Now the agriculturists from the New England States and the settlers from the South began to occupy the region and make permanent homes for themselves as they drove the fur trade farther westward. In addition to furs the agricultural products from farms out west were carried eastward over the Portage while new settlers still pushed westward. The boats used in this type of transportation could only be floated on Mud Lake in very wet season. Usually they had to be pushed by hand through the mucky slough by laboring crews. Also the unusual growth of wild rice and tall grass in Mud Lake was a further hindrance for those who used the Portage. So strenuous was the passage through Mud Lake that people said it often took three days and nights to complete the Portage. There were also times when the Portage was almost completely dry and travel by canoe impossible. These unfavorable conditions caused much of the goods to be transported along the margin of the Lake on higher land, (Portage Road). Thus the wagon, pony, or cart, and pack horse slowly replaced the canoes as the need for developed overland routes was needed. The ancient Indian trails soon became wagon roads and Indian fords the chief crossing places for these roads where bedrock insured solid footing.

By September 25, 1833, all of the Indians titles to the land east of the Mississippi were gone. The first stagecoach line was established down the Southwest Plank Road, present day Ogden Avenue, In January of 1834. The removal of the Indians to their reservations across the Mississippi in 1835 marked the end of the Portage as a fur trading center. In December of 1836 Fort Dearborn was ordered to be evacuated by the Government and on March 4, 1837, Chicago became a city. Construction of the Illinois Michigan Canal was begun on July 4, 1830 and completed on April 16, 1848. The canal followed the old water route and Portage as do presently the Sanitary Ship Canal, Chicago and Illinois Western, and Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroads.

Thus the Chicago Portage, once uniting the waters of the St. Lawrence River and the Great Lakes with those of the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico through a mile and one half long strip of grassy prairie, became the Old Chicago Portage, destined to fall into disuse and decay and be forgotten. No longer would the region hum with the lusty songs of the Canadian voyagers and fur traders in their batteau or see the canoe of the Indian and half-bree.

When the Des Plaines River became unnavigable and Mud Lake almost completely dry, the very long portage or land carry became necessary. Early sources say it often was necessary to make a portage of fifty miles to the mouth of the Des Plaines River or portage the entire distance of 100 miles between the Chicago River and head of navigation on the Illinois. Even La Salle made note of this and gave indication of a long portage road used in part by himself on his expedition in the winter of 1681 and 1682. As the dry season continued, a short portage from the main channel of Mud Lake near Thirty-Ninth Street and Central Avenue to the deeper South Arm became necessary. If the condition became more critical it became necessary to leave the South Arm at the Point of Oaks located at Fifty-Third Street and Oak Park Avenue and make a portage on South Portage Road to where Summit Ford crosses the Des

Plaines. Usually when this period occurred the most widely used route was the one portage from Leavitt Street on the North Portage Road to Laughton's Ford on the Des Plaines or Portage Creek. Boats drawing fifteen inches of water required this portage and ones drawing from five to eight inches of water usually passed through the South Arm to Portage Creek after a short portage to the South Arm of which the condition endured for a period of 103 days. In the remaining 150 days of the year the water route through Mud Lake was either too shallow or filled with ice, although the Des Plaines River stayed navigable for a longer period of time for boats with light draught as far as La Salle, Illinois.

A very important contribution to the study of the portage was obtained by Cooley who made daily gaugings of the Des Plaines River from 1887 to 1910. From Mr. Cooley and the U. S. Geological Survey the following facts had been deduced from people who had passed over the portage.

During an extremely long dry season the water level of the Des Plaines River would become so low it became a dry stream bed except for the shallow pools which marked its course. However, the river remained navigable for a much longer time than that of Mud Lake. There were also times of extremely high water and swift current along with much floating ice which made the use of the water route useless. During this time the water in Mud Lake reached a level of four or five feet above the Continental Divide at Kedzie Avenue and flowed into the Chicago River connecting the Mississippi and Saint Lawrence River Valleys. Lyman E. Cooley, Chief Engineer of the Sanitary District of Chicago, estimates this condition to exist an average of 3.95 days per year.

During other times it would be possible to travel by water the entire distance from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi in boats which drew fifteen inches of water. This condition lasted forty-eight days per year. Also when using boats which drew fifteen inches of water it became necessary to make a portage of about one mile between Leavitt Street and Albany Avenue. The

time consumed here is estimated to be twenty-six additional days. At this time the water level in Mud Lake was level with the crest of the Continental Divide at South Sacramento Blvd. Still using boats which drew fifteen inches it was sometimes necessary to portage one and a half miles between South Leavitt Street and deep water in Mud Lake by way of the Lake to Central and Thirty-Ninth Street. At this point the South Arm of Mud Lake would be followed or an additional second portage made along the North Arm of Mud Lake using North Portage Road. This stage of time is estimated at an average of forty-four additional days. Lyman Cooley's data informs us that the water in the Des Plaines River would allow boats which drew twenty inches of water as far as I'lle de la Cache, a distance of eighteen miles. Also during this time, boats which drew eight inches or less could pass through the North Arm of Mud Lake.

Portage Road was the principal land route and began at the original mouth of the Chicago River where the Green Bay Trail ended. The road then crossed the South Branch Chicago River below the junction of the North and South Branches of the Chicago River and ran along the northern shore of Mud Lake about a mile south of Ogden Avenue and roughly paralleling it. There were four fording places on the Des Plaines River in the region closely surrounding the portage. Each originally carrying an Indian Trail, they were Laughton's Ford, Stony Ford, Riverside Ford, and Summit Ford. Laughton's Ford, following the contours of Old Tolleston Beach, was the crossing place of Portage Road because of its nearness to Mud Lake and therefore the main route of travel, exploration, and trade down the Des Plaines and Illinois Valley on the Long Portage or Ottawa Trail to the headwaters of the Illinois River at La Salle, Illinois.

Laughton's Ford is located one-half mile south of State Highway Number Four or Joliet Road and one-half mile west of Harlem. It lies below Old Tolleston Beach and immediately north of Prescott's Island. The point where

the Ottawa Trail began was a little ways east of the intersection of Joliet Road and Forty-Seventh Street. Here the easterly branch of the Green Bay Trail joined with Portage Road to form this great trail to the southeast.

The Green Bay Trail ran near the shoreline of Lake Michigan and crossed the Chicago River on the sand bar of its original mouth. The trail also had an intercepting trail that branched out from the main trail near Gross Point and followed the contours of Old Calumet Beach through Niles Center, Jefferson Park, Cragin, Austin, South Oak Park, Berwyn, and Riverside. In Riverside the trail again divided at the intersections of Forest Avenue, East Avenue, Burlington Street, and North Longcommon Road. The westerly trail or Barry Point, proceeded southwest down East Avenue and crossed the Burlington Railroad tracks at East Avenue and Pine Street reaching the intersections of Blooming Bank and Barry Point Road. Proceeding south down Barry Point Road, the trail reached the intersections of Barry Point and Fairbanks Road to turn southeasterly down Fairbanks. The trail then crossed Riverside Ford, located 150 yards north of the Hoffman Bridge on which present day Barry Point Road enters Lyons.

Most evidence of Riverside Ford has been obliterated by the building of the Hoffman Dam and a small dam North of the Hoffman Bridge constructed with the purpose of leveling the height of water in the Des Plaines River. A historical marker was placed on the east side off of Fairbank Road at Riverside in 1932 by the Women's Reading Club of Riverside with the aid and assistance of the Chicago Historical Society. It reads ---

THIS BOULDER MARKS THE
OLD RIVER-CROSSING USED BY THE
INDIANS ON THE TRAIL FROM
NORTH TO SOUTH, BY THE FUR
TRADERS, AND BY THE EARLY
SETTLERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT
OF THE WEST

DEDICATED JULY 4, 1932
WOMEN'S READING CLUB
RIVERSIDE, ILLINOIS
CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

One locating the true ford will find it almost directly south of the small dam north of the Hoffman Bridge. On the east bank of the river there exists a type of grove in the slope leading down into the river which can bear out proof of a trail once existing there and the slope being worn down from the pioneers and Indians draggin their weary bodies and belongings down the slope to the rocky ford below. On the westerly bank of the river there still exists a small part of the Barry Point Trail where it travels southward through the forest preserve until reaching the intersections of Barry Point Road and Joliet Avenue in Lyons.

At Barry Point Road and Joliet Avenue, the westerly branch of the Green Bay or Barry Point Trail divides once. One trail, the Brush Hill Trail, runs south down the last portion of Barry Point Road and westerly down Ogden Avenue to Fullersburg, Downers Grove, Naperville, Aurora, and the Rock River. The Barry Point Trail continues down Joliet Avenue and cuts into Prescott Avenue one block south of Ogden. The trail then proceeds south down Prescott Avenue and curves easterly to enter Joliet Road. After entering Joliet Road, the trail curves to the west and back into Joliet Avenue only to end at Joliet Road once again at the intersections of Joliet Road and Joliet Avenue which is now the Ottawa Trail.

The easterly branch of the Green Bay Trail continues south down Longcommon Road till the road ends at the Burlington Railroad Tracks. After the tracks, the trail becomes Riverside Road and proceeds south down this road and leaves this road shortly before the road ends to cut the lower portion of Miller Road and cross Ogden Avenue. From Ogden the trail continues very close to the bank of the river until crossing the Des Plaines at Stony Ford.

Stony Ford was the oldest Indian Ford in the Chicago Portage region and used by the red men as their principal crossing place from their villages on the Illinois River to the main portion of the Green Bay Trail along the shore of Lake Michigan. Stony Ford is located three-eighths of a mile north of Laughton's Ford and one-hundred-fifty feet south of State Highway Number Four

or Joliet Road Bridge. Stony Ford is presently marked by a wooden plaque on the east side of the parking lot in Stony Ford Woods. Stony Ford Woods is located directly west of the south side of 66 where the bridge ramp ends. The plaque faces the ford from the west side of the river and reads ---

STONY FORD

HERE THE RIVER FLOWS OVER A FLAT
OUTCROP OF NIAGARA LIMESTONE.
IT WAS USED BY INDIANS AS THE
PRINCIPAL CROSSING ON THEIR TRAIL
FROM VILLAGES ALONG THE ILLINOIS
RIVER TO THE SHORE OF LAKE MICHIGAN
AND THE TRAIL TO GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN.

Once across the Des Plaines the easterly branch of the Green Bay Trail continues southwest for three-fourths of a mile and ends a little ways east of Joliet Road at Forty-Seventh Street where it connects with Portage Road to form the Ottawa Trail.

Summit Ford, located directly north of Lawndale Avenue Bridge, was the main crossing place of South Portage Road, the trail to the east, trail to the southeast, and two trails to the southwest, followed the contours of Old Tolleston Beach and the trail to the southeast Old Calumet Beach. Traveling north after crossing the Des Plaines at Summit Ford, South Portage Road ran northerly and forked. The south branch hit Joliet Road or the Ottawa Trail and proceeded down through the Des Plaines and Illinois Valley. The north branch also hit the Ottawa Trail at Lawndale Avenue and the traveler had the choice of using this trail, the Green Bay Trail, or the Barry Point Trail in order to reach the Brush Hill Trail to the west.

In 1833 the Government had a new channel cut across the sand bar near the mouth of the Chicago River into Lake Michigan where presently Michigan Avenue crosses the river. The old mouth of the river and its channel were filled with drifting sand and eventually washed away.

The Continental Divide lay between Albany Avenue and 31st Street and the junction of South Leavitt Street with the West Fork South Branch Chicago River. Its crest was located where South Sacramento Boulevard crosses the West Fork. Later the West Fork was worn into a small canal or rigolet by the Indians and fur traders dragging their canoes and belongings over the divide. In 1852 the channel was widened and deepened by the Cook-County Drainage Commission. Mud Lake now began to drain itself into the Chicago River. Other measures were taken to drain Mud Lake. The Ogden Ditch was constructed to drain the North Arm of Mud Lake, and the Nickerson Ditch drained the South Arm.

The Ogden Ditch began at the intersections of Albany Avenue and 31st Street where it was part of the Main Channel of Mud Lake. From the intersection of West 39th Street and South Central Avenue the Ogden Ditch followed very closely the original course of the North Arm of Mud Lake as far as where the ditch crosses the Santa Fe and Alton Railroad tracks just east of South Oak Park Avenue. The North Arm, however, bore a little farther to the south for the ditch runs in almost a straight line. After crossing the railroad tracks the ditch continued west to Harlem Avenue where it traveled along the east side of Harlem to make its conjunction with the Nickerson Ditch and form Portage Creek along with the easterly and westerly channels of the Des Plaines River below Prescott's Island.

The Nickerson Ditch followed the Main Channel of Mud Lake from Central Avenue and West 43rd Street to Austin Avenue and West 43rd. Then following the South Arm of Mud Lake as far as the Old Illinois and Michigan Canal, the ditch left the South Arm here to turn north of the canal, running southwesterly a mile parallel to it. Here the ditch turns and follows the South Arm once more making its conjunction on the east side of Harlem with the Ogden Ditch and from Portage Creek along with the easterly and westerly channels of the Des Plaines River below Prescott's Island.

The Ogden and Nickerson ditches were constructed in order to drain the western portion of Mud Lake but the constant flowing of water from the Des Plaines River widened and deepened the ditches making the Upper Des Plaines River once again flow into the Chicago River as it had done in the Tolleston Stage.

The Ogden Dam, built directly on the west line of Harlem Avenue during the winter of 1876-1877, destroyed Mud Lake by holding back the waters of Portage Creek which flooded it periodically. Its crest was about one foot higher than the Old Continental Divide at South Sacramento Boulevard. The Ogden Dam caused the divide to be moved westward to the location of the dam and lengthened the West Fork South Branch Chicago River more than six miles.

The Chicago River was later dredged and its flow reversed. Now Lake Michigan discharges its water southwestward along the main trunk of the river to the junction of the North and South Branches. At this junction, the water from the North Branch mingles with the water from Lake Michigan and travels along the South Branch into the Sanitary Ship Canal and eventually entering the Des Plaines River at Lockport.

The Sanitary Embankment or Levee, completed January 17, 1900 and extending from Joliet Road in Lyons to Lawndale Avenue in Summit, prevented the flow of water in the easterly channel and part of the main westerly channel of the Des Plaines River forming Portage Creek below Prescott's Island. The point where Portage Creek fell into the Des Plaines River was also cut off by this embankment. Thus any danger of water entering the Mud Lake from the Des Plaines River was diminished. The embankment also kept the remaining water in the old easterly, and part of the main westerly channels including Portage Creek, very low. The main westerly channel of the Des Plaines River before turning southeast to join the easterly channel has been diverted by the embankment and straightened so that a new channel now exists connecting with the Des Plaines River at the point where Portage Creek once fell into the Des Plaines River. The very place

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where Father Marquette and Louis Joliet turned from the Des Plaines and entered Portage Creek exists today as part of the Des Plaines River. It is located north of Lawndale Avenue Bridge and Summit Ford on the easterly bank of the river and travels southeastward for a few yards before being cut off by the Sanitary Embankment on the east.

In 1931 Harlem Avenue was improved and the Ogden Dam destroyed. Also during this time Portage Creek was drained and almost completely destroyed in 1936 when Lake River Terminals, now located at 5005 Harlem Avenue, leased the northern portion of the land containing Portage Creek from the Sanitary District and built their refineries on the site. The part of the creek where it came closest to Lawndale Avenue and made a sharp turn to the northeast before falling into the Des Plaines River still exists in part before being cut off by the Sanitary Embankment on the west. It has now been refilled with oil and sewage water dumped there from the Sanitary District who have in their possession the last remaining portion of the creek as well as the entire plot of land on which Portage Creek once stood. One visiting the area will find it difficult to realize that it is a historic site, for the stench and sight of the dumped sewage and sewage water from Portage Creek is unbearable. The Sanitary District will most likely fill in this last remaining portion of Portage Creek with more sewage, for it now serves no useful purpose, and it will be remembered not as a historic site, but just another dumping ground for useless refuse. A plea to all patriotic Chicagoans was once made in 1928 to preserve the hallowed ground on which Portage Creek stood and by all means include it in the Forest Preserve District. Nothing was done, however, and now Portage Creek remains lost to all humanity.

A historical marker was placed at the west end of the Old Chicago Portage on May 16, 1930 by the Chicago Historical Society. It was located in Portage Woods, South of 47th Street on the west side of Harlem Avenue and just north of the Harlem Avenue Bridge. This area has been declared as a National

Historic site, Once entering Portage Woods directly south down a grassy avenue lined with trees and two big limestone steps stretching across the avenue, lay the marker. It consisted of a huge red granite boulder with a brass plaque showing not only the west end of the Portage, but the entire Chicago Portage Route and surrounding regions. It read ---

THE CHICAGO PORTAGE 1673 - 1836

THIS MARKS THE WEST END OF THE CARRYING OR CONNECTING PLACE UNITING THE WATER OF THE ST. LAWRENCE RIVER AND THE GREAT LAKES WITH THOSE OF THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER, ITS TRIBUTARIES AND THE GULF OF MEXICO. THE EARLIEST FACTOR IN DETERMINING CHICAGO'S COMMERCIAL SUPREMACY. AN ARTERY OF TRAVEL USED BY THE ABORIGINES IN THEIR MIGRATIONS AND LATER BY JOLIET, MARQUETTE, LA SALLE, TONTI AND THE FUR TRADERS OF NEW FRANCE. AN EARLY STRATEGICAL POINT, IN THE WARS INCIDENT TO THE WINNING OF THE NORTH-WEST FOR THE SETTLER + DISCOVERED BY JOLIET AND MARQUETTE IN 1673.

ERECTED BY THE CHICAGO HISTORICAL SOCIETY IN PURSUANCE OF A PLAN TO GIVE POSTERITY THE FACTS OF CHICAGO'S EARLY HISTORY. A.D. 1930

The brass plaque from this boulder was stolen by vandels in the early 1930's and the granite boulder has been chipped, desecrated, and even used as a fire-place. Plans should be made at once to replace the brass plaque with preferably one of aluminum in order to discourage souvenir collectors, scrap metal hunters, and junk men. Also plans should be made for a constant kept-up condition of Portage Woods and its surrounding areas. In Portage Woods the grass is hardly ever cut and the trees neglected. Since 1950 there has been a gradual drop in interest for the kept-up condition of Portage Woods and its environs by the Forest Preserve District. My hopes are that the Forest Preserve District will re-recognize the area for what it is, a National Historic Site.

Before 1936 one could look a little to the southeast of the historical marker and see the connection Portage Creek made with the old easterly and main westerly channels of the Des Plaines River before reaching Harlem Avenue or the Ogden Dam before 1931. Now one may only observe Portage Pond, a small remnant of the past containing what's left of the old easterly channel and part of the main westerly channel of the Des Plaines River. The old main westerly channel does not go far for it continues in a northwesterly direction and soon reaches the Sanitary Embankment.

The old easterly channel of the Des Plaines proceeds up to the Santa Fe and Alton Railroad tracks on the northwest. From there the channel runs underneath the railroad tracks and 47th Street entering Ottawa Trail Woods and up into Catherine Mitchell Lagoon. The flow of water in both the old easterly and old main westerly channels is to the east and rain is its only source.

After reaching the point where Portage Creek once began below the confluence of the old easterly and old main westerly channels and the North and South Arms of Mud Lake, the true course of the creek has been altered by a ditch which was built after the creek was drained. The ditch was constructed in 1936 along the south side of the true creek bed to allow the flow of water in the old easterly and westerly channels of Portage Pond and later refuse from Lake River Terminals to flow into the Sanitary Ship Canal. The new ditch begins where the flow of water in the easterly and westerly channels of the Des Plaines River entered the Old Portage Creek Bed and curves slightly to the southeast and back to the northeast where it enters its former creek bed before passing underneath Harlem Avenue through the Portage culvert and into what was once Mud Lake, the water then enters into open air again for a brief moment and flows underground where it eventually reaches the Sanitary Ship Canal through a system of complex sewers.

Laughton's Ford acquired its name from Laughton's Trading Post. David and Bernardus Laughton had once been Indian traders near Hardscrabble or Lee's Place above Racine Avenue and the South Branch Chicago River. Their cabin

occupied the site where Father Marquette's cabin had formerly stood above Damen Avenue and the West Fork South Branch Chicago River, where presently the Sanitary Ship Canal enters the river. Fur trade was good here being the head of navigation on the river and the east end of the Chicago Portage. As the Indian fur trade began dwindling, the Laughton's built a tavern at Riverside in 1827. In 1830 they acquired the quarter plot of land where the tavern stood located just north of the Hoffman Bridge on the Barry Point Trail and north of the present intersections of Barry Point and Milleridge Road on the east side of Barry Point Road. The Barry Point Trail later became part of the first county road built in Cook County and in 1834 was a stage coach stop on the first stage-coach line running westward from Chicago.

In 1828 the Laughton's established their famous trading post on Portage Road. The Laughton Ford was located almost directly west from the trading post where Portage Road crossed the Des Plaines River.

During the Black Hawk War in 1832 Laughton's Ford became the scene of great excitement as hundreds of settlers scurried across it in order to get to safety at Fort Dearborn. Laughton's Trading Post became the scene of fun and laughter as well as danger and excitement. It was a place where settlers, traders, and Chicagoans all gathered for fun and frolic.

The remains of Laughton's Ford are disappointing for the Sanitary Embankment, constructed along the east bank of the Des Plaines River, had obliterated most evidence of the ford. However, at times of low water, which are but a few, one can discern the ford beneath the river and see the westerly bank gently sloping into the river.

Of Laughton's Trading Post, a boulder commemorating that historic site, and a low masonry limestone wall at each corner stands there. The boulder reads ---

THIS IS THE SITE OF THE
TRADING POST ESTABLISHED
AND OPERATED BY BERNARDUS
AND DAVID LAUGHTON,
FUR TRADERS IN 1828

LAUGHTON'S FORD ON THE
DES PLAINES LIES DIRECTLY WEST

Formerly there existed a shallow rectangular depression remaining of the cellar but that was filled in when the boulder was set up. The boulder is located in Ottawa Trail Woods, two blocks north of the 47th Street entrance and 400 feet west of the drive through the forest preserve.

The location of Laughton's Ford tends to confuse the visitor, for the boulder states the ford as directly west. Actually, the ford is slightly to the southwest for the boulder is positioned that way to follow Portage Road which angled in that direction. To arrive at the true ford you must walk at a southwesterly angle from the way the boulder is positioned for the visitor who walks directly west will not arrive at the true ford.

The site of Marquette's cabin can be located just north of Damen Avenue where it crosses the South Branch Chicago River. The cabin was built upon a hill but the overflow of water and extreme flooding from Mud Lake forced them to climb trees. This hill was later called Portage Mound. In 1844 when Ossian Guthrie, engineer, and James Mulholland, stone mason, were building the Illinois and Michigan Canal the mound was still in use by traders and Indians as the portage campsite. It was covered by forest trees, some of which were two feet in diameter and sixty feet in height. When these trees were later cut for lumber in the fine glacial sheet which formed the mound was found valuable in brick making. The mound soon disappeared after the Great Chicago Fire in 1871. On September 28, 1907 Cameron L. Willey, pioneer Chicago lumberman, erected a fifteen-foot wooden mahogany cross on the north bank of the river at Damen Avenue to commemorate the spot where Marquette's cabin once stood.

The cross read "IN MEMORY OF MARQUETTE AND JOLIET 1673" and was sunk into a sturdy foundation of cement. On the south side of the cement foundation facing the Chicago River existed a bronze tablet six by six feet which read, "IN MEMORY OF FATHER MARQUETTE, S.J., AND LOUIS JOLIET OF NEW FRANCE (CANADA), FIRST WHITE EXPLORERS OF THE MISSISSIPPI AND ILLINOIS RIVERS AND LAKE MICHIGAN, 1673, NAVIGATING 2,500 MILES IN CANOES IN 120 DAYS. IN CROSSING THE SITE OF CHICAGO, JOLIET RECOMMENDED IT FOR ITS NATURAL ADVANTAGES AS A PLACE OF FIRST SETTLEMENT AND SUGGESTED A LAKE-TO-THE-GULF WATERWAY BY CUTTING A CANAL THROUGH THE "PORTAGE" WEST OF HERE, WHERE BEGINS THE CHICAGO DRAINAGE SHIP CANAL. WORK ON THIS CANAL WAS BEGUN SEPTEMBER 3, 1802 AND RECEIVED THE FIRST WATER OF LAKE MICHIGAN, JANUARY 2, 1900. THIS REMARKABLE PROPHECY MADE 234 YEARS AGO IS NOW BEING FILLED. THE END OF ROBEY STREET IS THE HISTORIC "HIGH GROUND: WHERE MARQUETTE SPENT THE WINTER OF 1674 - 1675. TO DO AND SUFFER EVERY-THING FOR SO GLORIOUS AN UNDERTAKING. ERECTED SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 28, 1907, BY THE CITY OF CHICAGO AND CHICAGO ASSOCIATION OF COMMERCE". On the night of August 11, 1914 the cross was sawed down by vandals to be thrown in the river and the brass plaque stolen. On May 16, 1915 Willey replaced the cross with another of similar proportions. This new mahogany cross bore exactly the same inscription as the first did, "IN MEMORY OF MARQUETTE AND JOLIET 1673". Long before the present bridge was built at Damen Avenue, a three-foot iron cross was supposedly brought up by a dredge from the river bottom. This cross was French in design and most people thought it had been placed there by Marquette. The cross however was brought to the site by persons unknown at a date unknown from the grave of an early French settler in Cahokia, Illinois. This small wrought iron cross was also placed on the riverbank and stood beside the original and second wooden cross on its separate cement foundation till both crosses were removed in 1930 when the bridge was built. The wooden cross was then hung on the west side of a barn in the W. O. King Lumber Company below the bridge approach on the east side of Damen Avenue.

with the small wrought iron cross right beside it as it had been for years on the riverbank. The huge wooden cross was soon taken away to be repaired and it was never returned. This cross is presumed to be either lost or stolen. The small wrought iron cross then remained standing against the lumber yard wall until February 28, 1966. The owners of the property at that time informed the Chicago Historical Society that the W. O. King Lumber Company was being liquidated and razed and in March of 1966 presented the cross to the Chicago Historical Society for safe-keeping in storage until the time when the cross will either be set up in an enclosure at Damen Avenue or put on display at the Society. Presently at the northeast end of the bridge, stands a monument to Marquette near the spot where he spent the winter of 1674 - 75. There exists two bronze plaques, the top one showing Marquette and an Indian chief. Dedicated October 12, 1930, the bottom written plaque reads ---

J A M E S M A R Q U E T T E

FRENCH PRIEST OF THE SOCIETY OF JESUS
ON HIS MISSION TO THE ILLINOIS INDIANS
SPENT HERE THE WINTER OF 1674 - 1675.
HIS JOURNAL BROUGHT TO THE WORLD'S
ATTENTION THE ADVANTAGE OF SOIL, CLIMATE
AND TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES IN THE MISS-
ISSIPPI VALLEY AND GREAT LAKES BASIN

ERECTED BY THE CITY OF CHICAGO
WILLIAM HALE THOMPSON, MAYOR

ANNO DOMINI MCMXXX

MICHAEL J. FAHERTY
PRES. BOARD OF LOCAL IMPROVEMENTS

The Ogden and Nickerson ditches have been filled in throughout the years to make way for more industrial development in the old bed of what was once Mud Lake as the ways of old are brought up to date to form the still progressive future of Chicago and its surrounding areas. The West Fork South Branch Chicago River has been filled in completely to South Hoyne Avenue and does not exist anymore. The old mile and one half strip of prairie between Albany and 31st and South Leavitt Street now holds many of Chicago's industries and factories.

Much time has passed since Joliet thought to dig a canal through that mile and one half strip of prairie which once separated the Great Lakes from the Mississippi Valley by saying "if a channel were cut through this ridge one could sail from Lake Illinois to the Sea of Florida". Today we have fulfilled that prophecy. It began by the opening of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, now long abandoned and filled in many spots, which connected with the South Fork South Branch Chicago River at 29th Street if it were extended westward and Ashland Avenue in Chicago to terminate the Illinois River at La Salle. The formation of Sanitary Districts was authorized by the Illinois State Legislature and became a law July 1, 1889. On "Shovel-day" September 3, 1892, ground was broken for the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal and on January 2, 1900 water from the Lake Michigan flowing through the Chicago River was admitted through the artificial channel beginning on the South Branch at West 30th Street extended east and Damen Avenue. The artificial channel was filled to Lake level by Sunday morning January 14 and on January 15 the earth dam built at Campbell Avenue was cut away creating a new and better link from the Mississippi to the Great Lakes. This new 28 mile canal enters the Des Plaines River south of Lockport, 9 miles from Lemont, where it falls about 39 feet through penstocks. About 17 miles farther downstream is the junction of the Des Plaines and Kankakee Rivers forming the great Illinois River.

The present day citizens of Berwyn, Stickney, Cicero, Forest View, Summit, Lyons, and Riverside, as well as those of Chicago where trade originally began, are living in the midst of their own seaport through the Sanitary Ship Canal where international trade is now becoming a daily reality. Shipping by water is still the easiest means of transportation and this has also benefited the trucking and railroad business immensely. When looking back on history we find every conceivable means of transportation, communication, and development following the Old Chicago Portage route down the Illinois Valley. Today our water system throughout the

nation is basically a part of the natural resource which is not subject to depletion by use. A growing resource in terms of increasing contribution to our national economy, our own Sanitary Ship Canal is today's supreme artery of commerce just as the Old Chicago Portage had been years ago.

Whatever we have done in the past affects what we do today in the future. The affect can either be good or bad, depending on how we utilize the knowledge we have gathered. The purpose of this article is to show the people of Chicago and vicinity as well as those of the entire nation and world the importance and history of an area which benefits all mankind. History should not be forgotten and stored in libraries to gather dust but rather be made known to everyone and put on display. A good deal of honor must go to all our great discoverers, explorers, builders, and those who have made our nation as great as it is today. The bravery and courage of the pioneers as well as the adventuresome and often brutal stories of the red men must be told and retold. American today lives through its history and must continue to do so. Let us cherish the memory of the past in a manner not wishing to go back there but to reuse its benefits and disregard its failures.

THE AUTHOR

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