

Portage Lake Trail

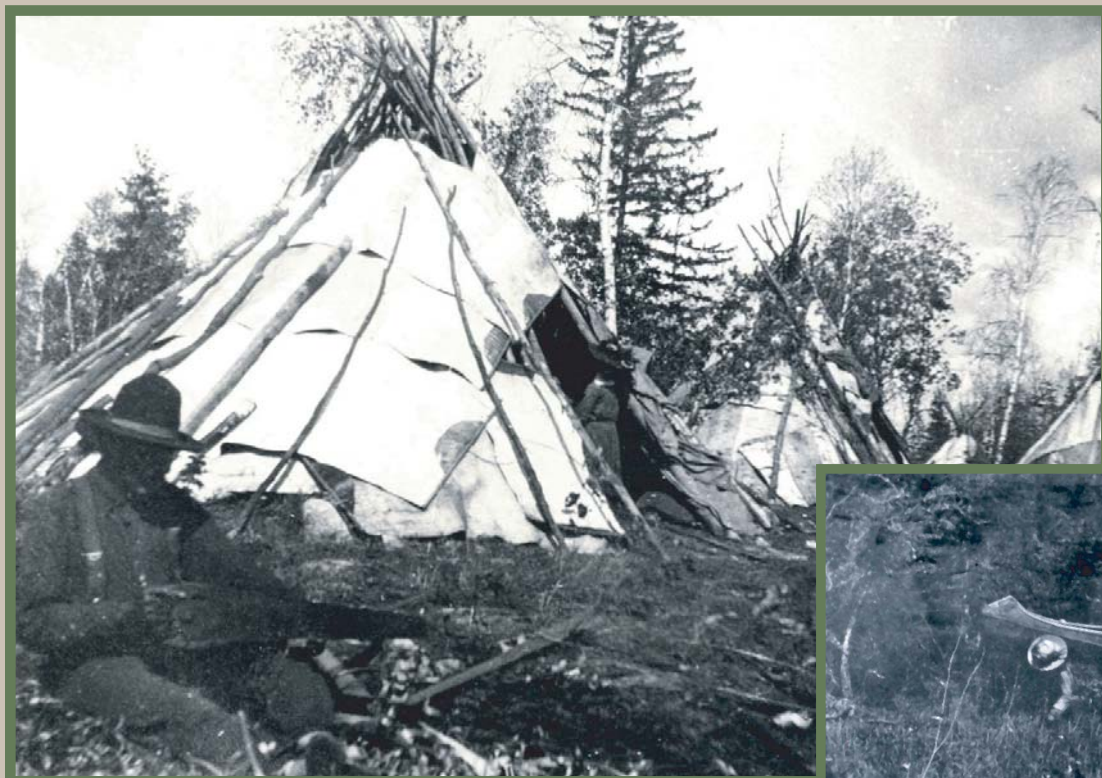


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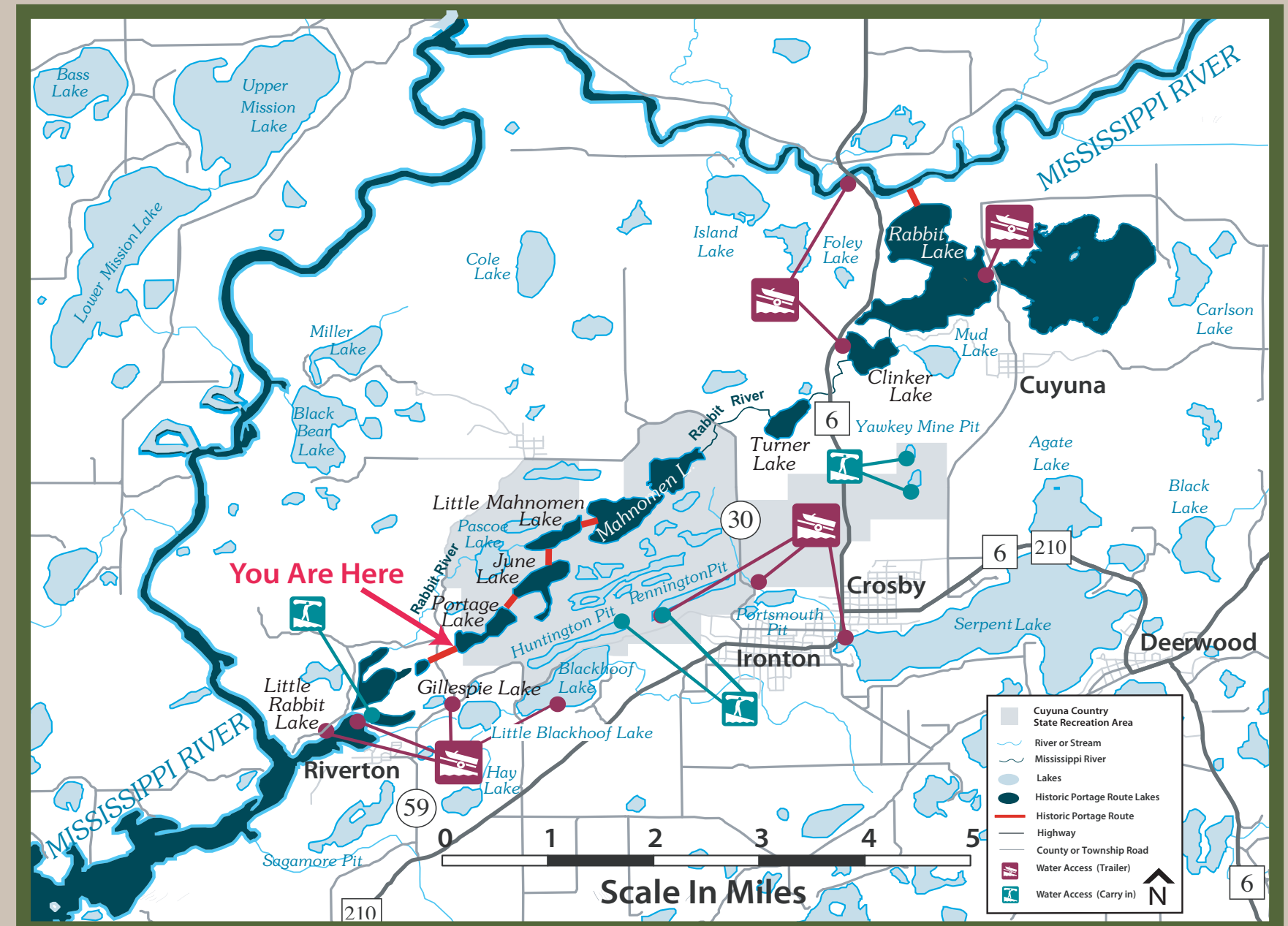
More than a Pass-through Route

In addition to its use as a shortcut for Mississippi River upstream travelers, the Rabbit River Portage Route served local people. In the 19th century Ojibwe villages were located at both ends of the portage route, one on Rabbit Lake and another where Little Rabbit Lake met the Mississippi River. Mid-way on this route is aptly-named Mahnomen Lake. Wild rice, called Mahnomen by the Ojibwe, grew abundantly in this lake and people came from both villages to harvest.



From 1855 until 1863 this area was included in the Rabbit Lake Indian Reservation. The Mississippi River formed the western and northern borders, and the Rabbit River flowed southwesterly through the center of this Ojibwe Reserve. From Mahnomen Lake another portage route headed south, through Serpent Lake, Bay Lake and on to Mille Lacs.

Photographs courtesy of
U.S.D.A. Forest Service



Changing Water Levels

A quick glance along this shoreline shows that the water level has changed over time. From the 1940s through the 60s, de-watering activities from nearby iron mining pits caused the lake level to drop. Cessation of dewatering activity and the construction of a dam on Pascoe Lake caused the water level to rise. Dead trees near the shore bear evidence to these human landscape alterations.

Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area

To the east, Portage Lake enters Cuyuna Country State Recreation Area. Much of this area is former mining pits and rock-deposit stockpiles which have been developed into 5,000 acres of regenerated vegetation. The area offers a variety of recreation opportunities including hiking, biking, canoeing, snowmobiling, fishing, boating, scuba diving, camping and more.

You are welcome to paddle in any of the waters on this historic route, but be aware that some of the shore land is private. At present there are no formal landings or portages beyond the Portage Lake Trail. If public portages are developed they will be clearly marked.



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