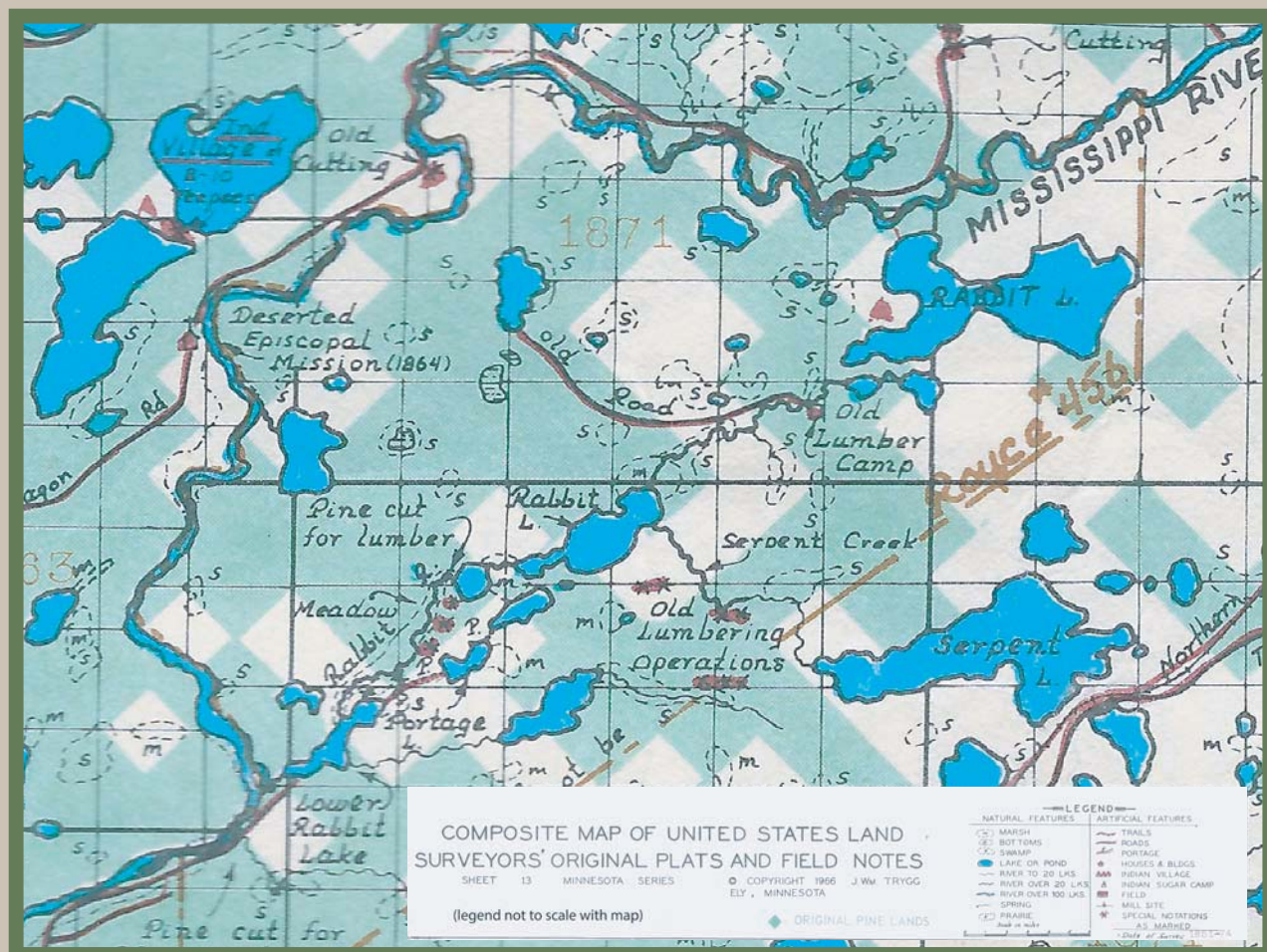


# Portage Lake Trail

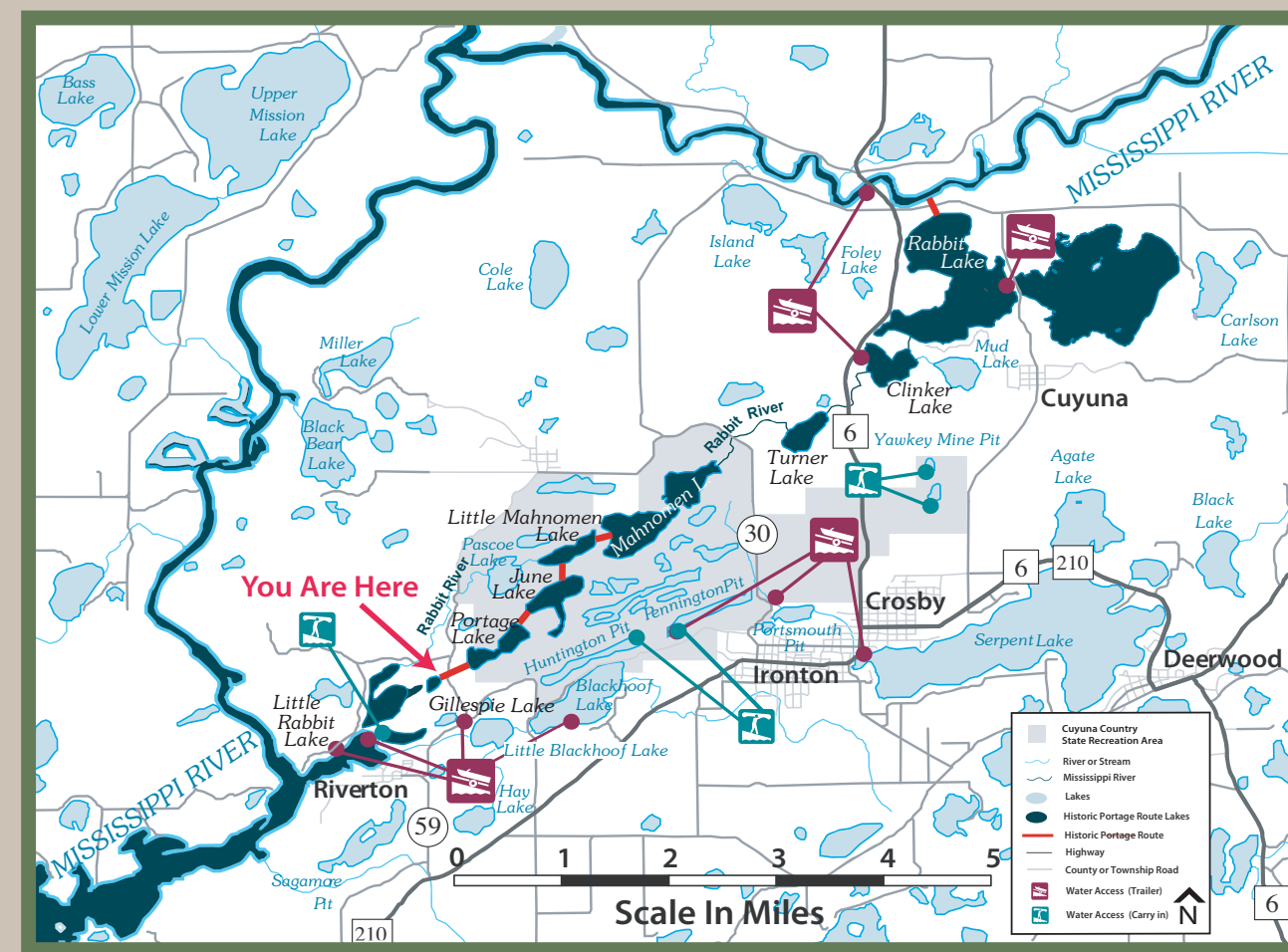


# The Historic Portage Route

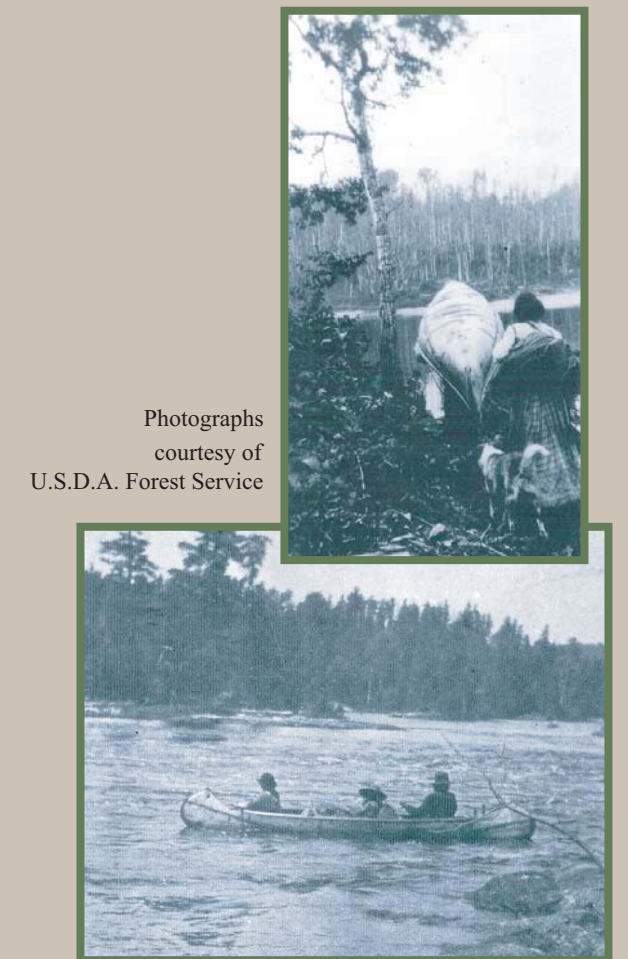
For hundreds of years the main route for long-distance travel through what is now central Minnesota was the Mississippi River, and the preferred watercraft was the canoe. Beginning in the 1700s European fur traders adopted this ancient travel route, eventually setting up trading stations about one-day's travel apart. Historical accounts note Mississippi River trading stations near Aitkin, Rabbit Lake and at the Pine River confluence. From Riverton to the vicinity of Rabbit Lake the river takes a considerable northwesterly loop. Long ago, upstream travelers discovered a "shortcut" through a string of small lakes and along the Rabbit River. This portage route shortened the Mississippi River upstream paddling trip by several miles. Crow Wing County's Portage Lake Trail provides an opportunity for you to experience part of the same canoe route travelled hundreds of years ago.



From 1849 to 1920, United States General Land Office Surveys were conducted throughout what is now the State of Minnesota. The surveyors plotted survey lines across the countryside, noting tree cover and cultural features such as trails, roads and settlements along the way. J. William Trygg of the Ely Land Company compiled these survey records into a series of maps he titled Composite Maps of United States Land Surveyor's Original Plats and Field Notes. This map section shows the portage trail encountered by the U.S. Government surveyors as they documented their lines through the area. The Rabbit River Portage Trail also appears on Joseph N. Nicolle's map of 1836.



On this map the lakes and river along the old Rabbit River Portage Route are highlighted in a darker blue and the historic overland portage trails are marked in red. 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. There are no formal landings or portages beyond the Portage Lake Trail. Be respectful of private lands. If public portages are developed they will be clearly marked.



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



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