

# Portage Lake Trail



# The Forest Then & Now

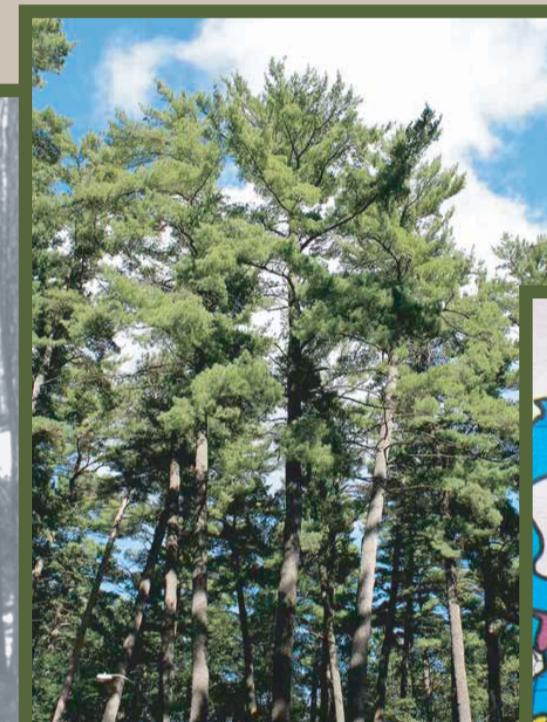
What was the original forest like? It really depends on when. Scientists studying pollen from central Minnesota lakebeds note that over the past 10,000 years the landscape has changed from glacial tundra to spruce forest, then to red and jack pine, and oak savanna. By around 2,500 years ago a cool, wet climate had given rise to the development of forest dominated by white pine, with red pine and jack pine in the sand plains near the Mississippi River. This area was also at the northern edge of the hardwood forest that came to be known as the “Big Woods,” so deciduous trees overlapped into what became a mixed forest of pines, spruce bogs, aspen-birch stands and northern hardwoods.



Photo courtesy of the Crow Wing County Historical Society

## Logging

Beginning around 1850 massive logging operations cut many of the white and red pines that dominated the forest canopy. The nearby Mississippi River was the main conduit for transporting logs to lumber mills to the south. After these logging operations trees have grown back into what is known as second-growth forest.



GRASSLAND	
Yellow	PRairie
Yellow	WET PRAIRIES, MARSHES AND SLOUGHS
BRUSHLAND	
Orange	BRUSH PRAIRIE
Red	ASPEN- AK LAND
Dark Purple	OAK OPENINGS AND BARRENS
HARDWOOD FOREST	
Light Green	BIG WOODS
Dark Green	RIVER-BOTTOM FOREST
Dark Green	ASPEN-BIRCH
PINERIES	
Cyan	MIXED HARDWOOD AND PINE
Cyan	PINE GROVES
Light Blue	White Pine
Light Blue	White and Norway Pine
Dark Blue	JACK PINE BARRENS AND OPENINGS
Dark Blue	PINE FLATS
Pink	ASPEN-BIRCH
BOGS AND SWAMPS	
Dark Blue	CONIFER BOGS AND SWAMPS
Black	OPEN MUSKEG

## The Marschner Map

In an effort to give a glimpse of what the forest was like before logging, Francis Marschner compiled General Land Office Survey records from 1859 to 1920. Later, these notes and maps were compiled into a statewide map, known today as the “Marschner Map.” It is important to remember that this is not a “snapshot” of a particular time period. These forest types are compiled from field notes recorded from the mid-1800s to 1920. The above detail shows the variety of forest types that were documented in the area that came to be known as *Cuyuna Country*.



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