In The Great Lakes Area

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Workshop Paper for the Conference on The National Parks of the Great Lakes
Wingspread Center, Racine, Wisconsin, April 1982

The ten National Park Service facilities and three affiliated areas in the Great Lakes region afford the Service an excellent opportunity to interpret the history and culture of the region as an integrated, interdependent whole. Throughout their history, the Great Lakes have played a key role in development of the surrounding areas, knitting them together culturally, politically, and economically. The addition of several important Great Lakes area facilities to the NPS system in the 1960s and 1970s, including Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, Voyageurs National Park, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and St. Croix National Scenic Riverway, illustrated the nation's awareness that the Great Lakes region remains an important part of its life and culture and that the National Park Service has a great contribution to make in preserving and interpreting that life and culture, in Eastern as well as Western areas, in "developed" as well as "wilderness" areas. Elements of the past frequently are hard to detect in areas such as the Great Lakes region where human civilization has worked over the land and its resources many times. For all that, however, they remain no less important to a full appreciation of the national life of the late twentieth century and no less worthy of the attention of the National Park Service.

The Service could do a better job at interpreting the history of the Great Lakes region through its facilities in the area than it does at present. Chief among the weaknesses of the interpretive prospectuses of existing NPS areas in the region are their narrow focus and lack of regionwide integration. The full extent of the Great Lakes' importance to the history of the nation becomes clear only when one studies and interprets them as a unit, every bit as much interrelated culturally, ecologically, and historically as they are hydrologically. A second weakness lies on the exaggerated emphasis the Service places on the frontier phases of the region's history. While Indians and voyageurs are indeed colorful historical figures and important to the heritage of the region, they were not the only historical actors to have left their mark on the area, nor is their legacy the most enduring in the life of the region in the twentieth century. Equally important to our understanding of the history of the region are more recent periods, when the Great Lakes formed what one historian called "the keystone of the arch of American federal union." Indeed, the Indians and voyageurs themselves are less to be appreciated as historical curiosities than as harbingers of the many more people and more enduring developments that followed them.

The importance of the Great Lakes as the main artery of the fur trade is well documented in the NPS interpretive prospectuses.

What is missing is an emphasis on the geopolitical importance of the trade and the Lakes' role in it. For the Iroquois and other Indian nations who usually are depicted as "middlemen" in the business, the fur trade was a crucial element of their struggle for political and economic survival against their enemies, native and European. For the British, the trade was but one arm of a highly integrated, international economic network: British economic diversification and superior organization were keys to the Empire's victory over its French rival in the 1760s. The British North West Company was the first European organization in North America to operate on a continental scale. British command of the Great Lakes, indeed, was a major deterrent to American development in the region after Independence, forcing Yankee traders like John Jacob Astor to look first to the Pacific for furs and westward migrants to travel down the Ohio instead of taking the Lake route into the Northwest Territory. British and United States rivalry for control of the Lakes continued until the War of 1812; the British lost interest in the fight after Perry's Victory in 1813, and as the United States successfully interdicted British trade in its northwestern territories later in the decade the St. Lawrence system gradually fell into disuse as an artery of trade. Perry's Victory is thus linked to the histories of the Grand Portage, Voyageurs, and Indiana Dunes facilities. Perry's Victory, finally, meant not only "victory" over the British, but over the Indians as well. A massive, continent-wide native defense against United States expansion across the Appalachian Barrier fell to pieces when United States troops, now free to cross Lake Erie, vanquished the Shawnee chief Tecumseh and his British allies of the moment at the River Thames. Though the British-American standoff meant the decline of the St. Lawrence fur trade and the delay of settlement and development in the upper Lakes region until the Transportation Revolution of the nineteenth century transfused new life into the waterway, it also meanth security for the republican experiment from its enemies, within and without, so that commercial activity could begin in a new and altogether different way after 1825.

If the Great Lakes were "the keystone of the federal union," the people who settled the lands around them were its backbone. Although this aspect of the region's history is not stressed in existing NPS interpretations of Great Lakes area parks, it might well be. The society that grew up in the Lakes region is perhaps the most distinctively, traditionally "American" in the entire country. The old Northwest Territory was among the first to be settled after the Revolution. New Englanders moved into the Cuyahoga Valley after Moses Cleaveland founded his city at its mouth in 1796. One historian has stated that the area became more like New England than New England itself, and the cultural and architectural legacy of these early settlers is still apparent in some of the towns and farms of the Western Reserve. Although migrants came at first by way of the Ohio River, between 1815 and 1840 they increasingly came by the lake route and settled what are now the states of Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Economi-

cally more independent of Eastern capital and Eastern markets than later westward migrants would be, these pioneers came in hopeful, upwardly-mobile times. Buoyed by a boundless faith in the republic's ideology and institutions and encouraged by a liberal public lands policy, they came closer than any other region in the country to realizing Jefferson's dream of a republic made up of independent, small-scale farmers. It was from the experiences of these people that the Wisconsinite Frederick Jackson Turner induced his theory of the salutary influence of frontier life on American civilization and the American character.

The Great Lakes became a critically important artery on American social and economic life after the 1820s, when the Erie Canal brought them into close touch with the commerce of the Atlantic Coast and the Ohio and Erie Canal, part of which is preserved in Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area, connected them with the Mississippi basin via the Ohio River. No part of pre-Civil War economic history is more important than the Transportation Revolution wrought by these canals and by steamships on the rivers and lakes of the old Northwest. They at once made available to the market the vast natural resources of the Lakes region and brought settlers from the Eastern Seaborad and Western Europe to develop them. Here was Turner's "melting pot" working more effectively than it ever would again. One of the most significant transport improvements of the antebellum period was the St. Mary's Canal, built in the 1850s, which opened a deep water channel around Sault Ste. Marie and opened the vast iron and copper deposits of the Superior region to eventual development. Another was the Illinois and Michigan Canal, opened in 1848, which replaced the old Chicago Portage route from the Lakes to the Mississippi by an all-water route, thus completing the integration of the Lakes and national commerce and contributing significantly to the subsequent rise of the city of Chicago. The bits of waterway preserved in Cuyahoga Valley NRA are thus an important key to understanding the marks that industry left on the lands in NPS areas all around the Great Lakes.

The Transportation Revolution of the antebellum period forged the Great Lakes region into an economic unit. The five "mushroom metropolises" of the region, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and Milwaukee, all grew up at about the same time and at the same phenomenal rate. Their histories, their layouts, and their institutional characters are all remarkably similar, testifying further to the cultural and economic unity of the region. Indeed, contemporaries were apparently more aware than we are today of the region's common identity and destiny. An inland waterways convention in 1847 drew ten thousand people to the then-barely more populous city of Chicago to demand a fair share of Congressional appropriations for rivers and harbors development in the Lakes region. Spurred by dreams of fabulous returns from the timber and mineral resources of the upper lakes region, midwesterners of the 1850s also fell in behind Eastern interests in demanding a protective tariff for domestic industry. Congressional representative

Abraham Lincoln made his first national appearance at the Chicago convention in 1847. The close ties between the East and the old Northwest that the Lakes made possible were crucial to the Republican political victory in 1860 and to the success of the Northern war effort in the years that followed. Again, the Great Lakes proved to be the keystone upon which the Union rested.

After the Civil War, with the expansion of industry in the Lake cities and with the extension of railroad links to the west, development of the natural wealth of the upper lakes region went ahead with a vengeance. Many of the National Park Service areas in the region show traces of this rapid, destructive development. Commercial fishing near Isle Royale, Grand Portage, and Apostle Islands had begun in the 1830s and 1840s under the auspices of the American Fur Company, but after 1870 it boomed. By the end of the century, however, pollution and reclamation had depleted the Atlantic salmon and whitefish stocks in the Lakes. Commercial fishing continued to grow into the early twentieth century, but declined sharply thereafter due to overfishing and invasions of alewife and sea lamprey through the newly-completed Welland Canal around Niagara Falls. Only recently have the fish stocks of the Lakes begun to return to balance and begun to support healthy fisheries, this time for recreational use. Minerals development, traces of which remain at Isle Royale and Apostle Islands, began in force once the St. Mary's Canal made bulk transportation between Lake Superior and Lake Huron possible and continued through the rest of the century. Most spectacular of the natural resource industries of the late nineteenth century, however, were the pineries of Wisconsin and Michigan. Beginning in earnest during the Civil War period, by the turn of the century industry had denuded much of the timberlands of the upper lakes region to supply the railroads and other industries of the Great Plains states with raw material for construction and fuel. This, also, was a regional phenomenon, to which the St. Croix waterway, Pictured Rocks, and Apostle Islands yet bear testimony. Interestingly, the devastation of the upper lakes pinelands was the experience out of which emerged the ideas, strategies, and tactics of Gifford Pinchot and other Progressive Era foresters, which in turn inform much of our park and forest policy to this day. Natural resource development, then, is another major theme deserving of regionally-integrated interpretation by the National Park Service.

The twentieth-century history of the Great Lakes region holds a different sort of significance for the nation than that of the nineteenth, though no less an important one and one no less deserving of emphasis by NPS. Where the Lakes were a critical component of the economic growth of the nineteenth century, in the twentieth they have provided a major testing ground for important experiments in international economic cooperation and in bringing the demands of an advanced industrial society into balance with the needs of its natural environment. Here, too, NPS may have an important interpretive role to play. Conflicts between the US and Canada over the use of the Lakes for irrigation, shipping, and

hydropower development grew in the 1880s and 1890s. The international peace and friendship memorialized at the Perry's Victory monument turned to active cooperation in the first decade of the new century, when Great Lakes shippers and others successfully pressed the US government to invite Great Britain to join with it in forming the International Waterways Commission, which in turn drew up the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. The International Joint Commission, established by the 1909 treaty, has to this day proven an effective forum for US-Canadian cooperation in water quality, public health, navigation, and other matters of transboundary concern. Public concern over Great Lakes water pollution led to the passage in 1912 of the first federal statute aimed at the problem and its effects on public health. At present, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore offers a valuable interpretation of the history of modern ecology and the pioneering work of Professor Henry Cowles of the University of Chicago in the discipline. This example could well be extended to stress the importance of the other NPS facilities in the region as laboratories for studying the effects of urban growth on the natural environment in this most urbanized of all regions in the US and Canada.

In sum, the Great Lakes region constitutes a unit culturally, economically, and historically, a unit bound together and given life by the Lakes themselves. The National Park Service, through its several facilities scattered over the region, has the opportunity to develop the region's awareness of its unity and identity by interpreting the histories of each of its facilities from a regionally integrated perspective. By doing so, it can at once bring new life and immediacy to our awareness of the history and culture of the region and impress upon the nation the fundamentally integrated character of the relationships between history, environment, and modern society in an area so important to the past, present, and future life of the nation as the Great Lakes region.

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INDIANS AND THE NATIONAL PARKS Of The Great Lakes

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Workshop Paper for the Conference on The National Parks of the Great Lakes
Wingspread Center, Racine, Wisconsin, April 1982

There are 10 national park units located around the Great Lakes devoted to preserving and interpreting areas and events of the Great Lakes region. This paper analyzes the relations between the 10 park units and American Indians.

The Indian groups located around the Great Lakes can be called Woodland Indians. They share many cultural traits, and have developed similar adaptations to the Great Lakes environment. Many of the Woodland tribal groups who occupied the Great Lakes region at the time of European settlement have disappeared from the region — either by removal, or through cultural destruction and absorption. Nevertheless, the Indian population around the Great Lakes is growing. This Chippewa and (growing) remnants of the related Ottawa and Potawatomi currently live in close enough proximity to be said to border Apostle Islands, Isle Royale, Grand Portage, St. Croix, and Voyageurs. Other Chippewa and related groups live close to Indiana Dunes, Sleeping Bear Dunes, and Pictured Rocks. Most active issues of NPS-American Indian concern in the Great Lakes are actually issues of NPS-Chippewa (Ottawa-Potawatomi) relationships.