DESIGN STUDY

THE CHICAGO PORTAGE AND LAUGHTON TRADING POST AREA

"The Waterway West"

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June, 1975

Prepared By:
Wm. E. Rose and Associates, Inc.
Hinsdale, Illinois

Prepared For:
Forest Preserve District of Cook County
River Forest, Illinois

National Park Service Grant Number 17-73-00027

FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS

General Headquarters: 536 North Harlem Avenue
River Forest, Illinois

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Arthur L. Janura

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Wm. E. Rose AND ASSOCIATES INC.

SITE PLANNING
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
ENGINEERING

■ June, 1975

The Board of Commissioners
Forest Preserve District of Cook County
River Forest, Illinois

Attention: Mr. Arthur L. Janura, General Superintendent

Gentlemen:

In accordance with our agreement, we are pleased to submit this Design Study for the Chicago Portage and Laughton Trading Post Area. The General Development Plan, describing the proposed facilities to interpret the historic significance of this geographic area, is the culmination of many field inspections, meetings and historical research.

The focal point of the proposed development is the Interpretive Center located in Ottawa Trail Woods. This facility is separated from the actual Portage site by an arterial street, two railroads and several utility rights-of-way. Due to the dispersion of historic features over the 280 acre study area, the plan highlights the need for safe pedestrian movement past these vehicular and utility corridors. Therefore, a pedestrian bridge is required to connect the Interpretive Center to a major interpretive feature at the site of the Portage.

We sincerely appreciate the assistance received from the Study Committee throughout the study period, especially in historical research and documentation.

Respectfully submitted,

WM. E. ROSE AND ASSOCIATES, INC.

Carl L. Goetz
President

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Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this design study is to document the historical significance of a geographic area known as the Chicago Portage, and to propose the development of a regional facility to preserve and to interpret the various historical and geological features located in this area. The report is funded by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois and the Department of the Interior (National Park Service Grant No. 17-73-00027) under the "Historic Preservation Act."

History of Chicago Portage

The study area is located on the Des Plaines River just west of Chicago, Illinois near the suburbs of Lyons and Riverside. It was here that glaciers created a system of waterways which became important routes for early explorers and fur traders. The Des Plaines River (Mississippi River drainage) and Lake Michigan (St. Lawrence River drainage) were separated by a continental divide which had to be crossed by a land "portage" during dry seasons. Portage Creek, Mud Lake and the south branch of the Chicago River were the important links to this portage route which was discovered by Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet in 1673. The route later became known as the "Chicago Portage."

The waterways and interrelated land trails which created the Chicago Portage were utilized by trappers and explorers until about 1800. In 1803 the first Fort Dearborn was built on the shore of Lake Michigan. The fort provided refuge from marauding Indians, and encouraged additional settler traffic through the Portage route. The need for improving these waterways was recognized by the Federal Government when it authorized the State of Illinois to construct the Illinois and Michigan Canal which began in 1836 and completed in 1848. The canal heralded the end of the Chicago Portage as the major link between the Des Plaines River and Lake Michigan.

The Study Area

The total study area comprises approximately 300 acres of land owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. In 1952 a 91 acre section of the preserve was designated by the Department of the Interior as the "Chicago Portage National Historic Site." However, because important historical features and sites are found outside the official historic site, the

design study has concentrated development plans within an area between Joliet Road (Route 66) and the southern boundary of the study area.

Development Concept

The development concept proposes facilities to identify various historical and geological features to explain to the public the relationship of the Des Plaines River Valley and Lake Michigan to the development of the western half of the United States. Further, it is the purpose of the development to restore evidence of the past, and to preserve natural amenities through sound planning principles. It is estimated that the facilities will attract more than one-half million visitors annually.

Due to the dispersion of important historical features, it is desirable to accomplish much of the interpretation on a trail system. The Interpretive Center, at one end of the historic area, and the Portage area at the other, requires the movement of people across major public vehicular rights-of-way. Therefore, a major and essential improvement is a pedestrian bridge to span 47th Street and railroad and utility rights-of-way.

Public access to the proposed development will take place in two locations. The major entrance will be from 47th Street to a major parking facility adjacent to the proposed Interpretive Center. The secondary public access point is a highly controlled parking lot for handicapped off of Harlem Avenue at the site of the Chicago Portage. Fencing will be installed around the boundaries of the site to prohibit indiscriminate admittance.

The proposed improvements will be designed to give the desired historical appearance. Buildings such as the Interpretive Center and the historian residence will be constructed of naturalistic building materials that will help reflect the architecture of the mid-nineteenth century. The Laughton Trading Post would be reproduced as it might have looked during its period of use between 1828 and 1834.

A map proposed as the major interpretive feature at the site of the Chicago Portage will describe the important geographic link between the Des Plaines River and Lake Michigan. For the visitor's convenience, seating, rest room facilities and drinking fountains will be provided at the site of the map. Being relatively distant from the Interpretive Center and the resident historian home, the map will be constructed of vandal-resistant materials requiring little maintenance. All proposed facilities will be designed for minimal maintenance.

Archeological Exploration

Archeological activities are securing more detailed and additional information regarding the Indian settlements in the area, and are determining how and where the white man utilized the Indian trails and fords, the Des Plaines River and Mud Lake, and where early structures may have been built.

Beginning in 1973 anthropology students began preliminary excavations in and around the site of the old Laughton's Trading Post. The "expedition" was led by Dr. Margaret Brown project archeologist. The "digs" resulted in the discovery of many Indian and white man artifacts. Dr. Brown's exploration has been designated as site number CK-150 by the Illinois Archeological Survey. Annual archeological "digs" will be continued under professional leadership with the National Park Service being kept fully appraised of all activities. A complete description of Dr. Brown's study is recorded in the Appendices to this report.

Environmental Effects

The proposed improvements will utilize a relatively small portion of the study area and will have little effect on the existing environment. It is anticipated that no irreversible changes will be made on the ecology of the site or the surrounding area. Due to the controlled development of the site, and due to restricted public access and movement, there will be an improvement to present conditions. The aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems will become established under natural conditions. Therefore, it is determined that the new development as planned will not have a lasting detrimental effect on the ecology of the area.

Need

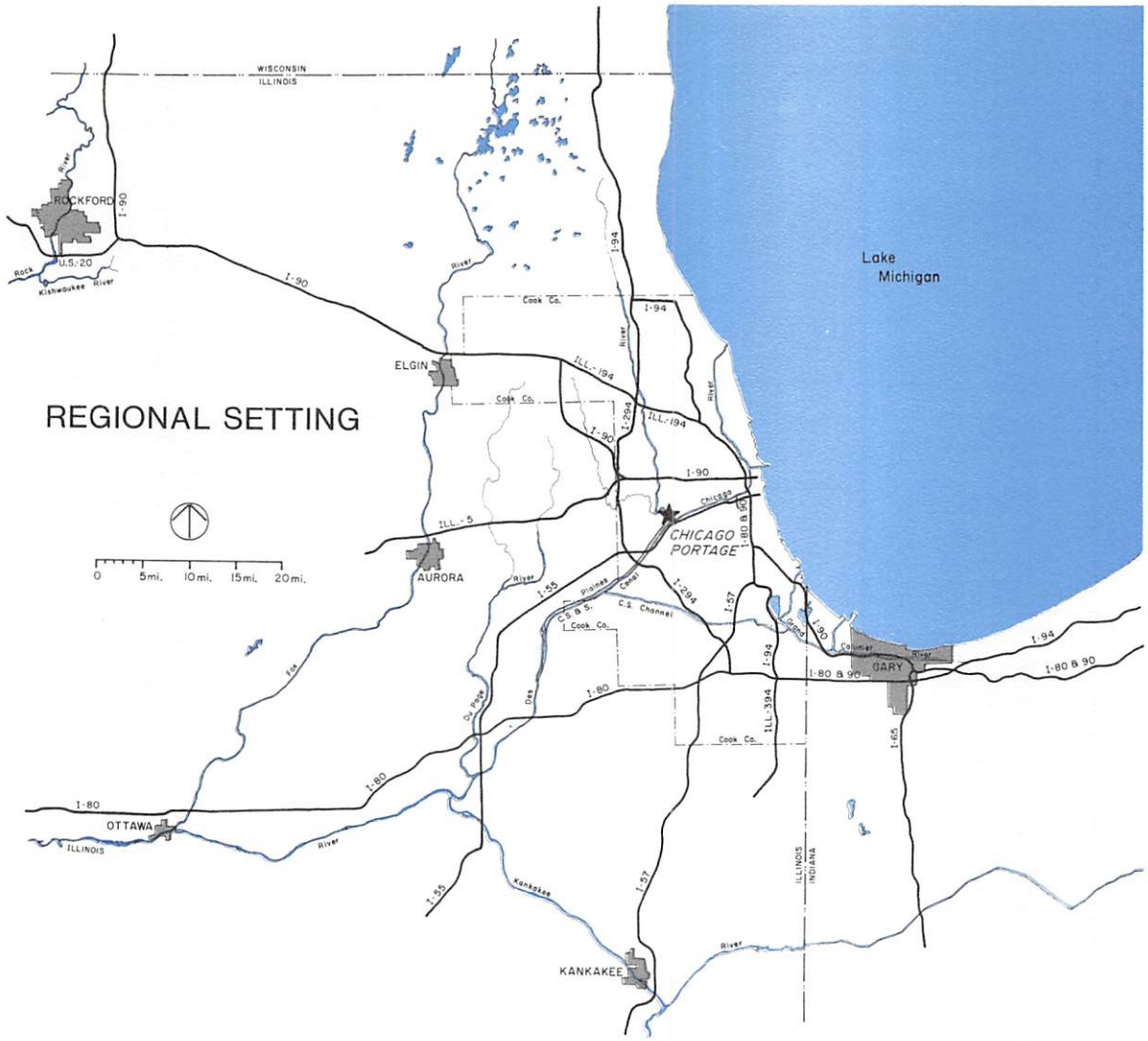
The Metropolitan area of Chicago offers very little public opportunity to witness and learn of it's rich historical past. There is vast interest and support of this project on the part of communities, Chicago and County school systems, historical societies and the news media. The project will provide a program that will be new to the 5,000,000 residents of the Chicago area. Past experience gained through the operation of a nature center by the Forest Preserve District would indicate that such a historical facility would attract over 600,000 visitors annually.

Introduction

The Site

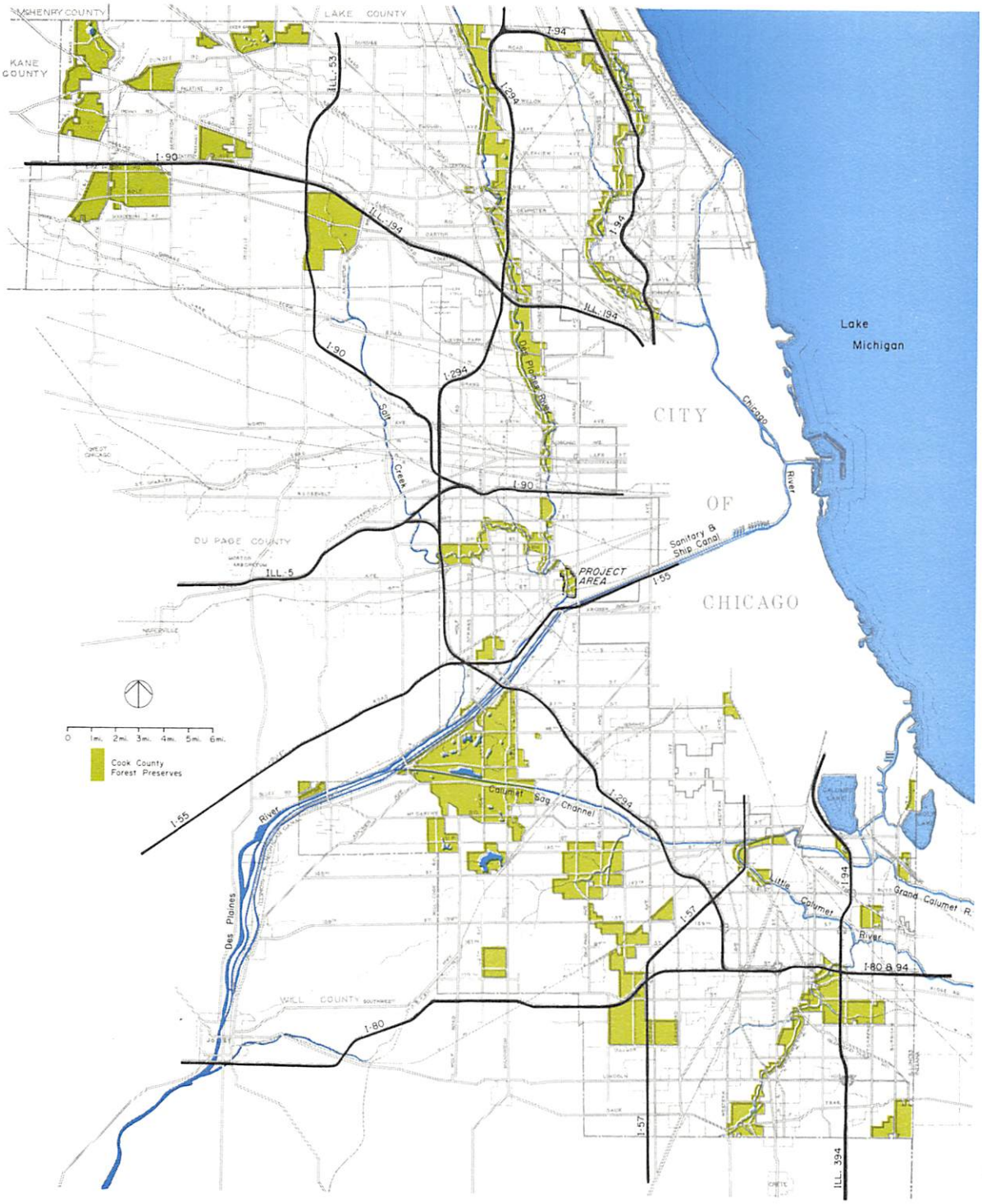
Approximately twelve miles from the heart of the City of Chicago, in Lyons, Illinois just west of Harlem Avenue at 47th Street, there exists 300 wooded acres owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois. Several historically important natural and man-made features exist within this area. The significance of these features was recognized by the Forest Preserve District, and through application, the District requested national recognition of the area. On January 3, 1952, the National Park Service designated ninety-one acres as the Chicago Portage National Historic Site (Cooperative Agreements and Historic Site Designation Orders, Part 170, Chapter 14, Section 1.23 - see Appendices).

Because the Chicago Portage National Historic Site has major regional cultural value, there has been great interest by the Forest Preserve District, local communities and citizens to interpret the historical and natural aspects of the Portage, and the other nearby historical features including Laughton's Trading Post, Laughton's Ford, Stony Ford, and the



Ottawa and Green Bay Trails. It is universally agreed that there is great public interest and attraction for a program which would provide insight into the events of the past which took place within the area designated as the National Historic Site. Due to the national significance of the Chicago Portage as the major route - "waterway" - to the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and it's role in helping create Chicago as the transportation center of the United States, such an interpretive program will draw visitors from all areas of the country, as well as from the seven million people living in the Chicago metropolitan area.

This type of interpretive facility does not exist today in the Chicago area. The proposed interpretive program will afford the needed opportunity to explain the inter-



COUNTY SETTING

connection of local and regional history, and illustrate its impact on national development.

Scope of Study

The purpose of the study is to plan for the orderly and protective development of a regional historic site including an interpretation facility for public use. The scope of the study includes the development of design criteria for the following improvements:

1) Points of public access

2) Public parking and service facilities

3) Interpretive Center - philosophy, size and location

4) Trail system with interpretive features

5) Coordination with existing recreational system

6) Establishment of an architectural theme

7) Construction cost estimate and staging

The design study includes the planning of areas adjacent to the official 91 acre Chicago Portage National Historic Site. The expansion was necessary for the following reasons:

1) They are historically significant to the same era and are geographically bound to the entire 300 acre study area.

2) The official "Chicago Portage National Historic Site" is not of sufficient size to accommodate the required facilities, provide for the anticipated public use and yet preserve the natural setting.

3) The present day segmentation of the preserve land by public and private rights-of-way and the Des Plaines River restricts efficient use of the available land and limits suitable development and protection of existing historical land marks and/or sites separately.

The important historical features which are located within and adjacent to the study area are described on the Historical Features Map (Page 15).

Methodology and Financing

This study was conducted within an eighteen month period. During this time the design consultant reviewed and analyzed available historical documentation (see Bibliography). Many site inspections were made to become familiar with the functional and environmental characteristics of the site during the four seasons.

Archeological explorations were performed under the direction of Dr. Margaret Kimball Brown, State of Illinois Archeologist (see Appendix 'D' on Page 65). Continuing field studies and historical research are being conducted by Edward Lace, Naturalist of the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, and Maureen Goode, anthropology student (Northwestern University).

Preliminary design concepts were developed utilizing all available information obtained through historical research and field studies. Each concept was thoroughly reviewed by the Study Committee and all options were examined for possible inclusion. The final design plan evolved through the continual process of review and refinement. The final design plan has been reviewed by the organizations in control of the public and private rights-of-way and easements through the Forest Preserve. Preliminary approval has been obtained from these groups; related commentary is available in Appendix 'F', beginning on Page 77.

This study is financed by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois and the Department of the Interior (National Park Service) under the Historic Preservation Act. The National Park Service Grant (No. 17-73-00027) is administered by the Forest Preserve District.

Surficial Geology

An estimated 25,000 years ago a glacier crept southward from Canada into Northern Illinois. The ice sheet carried with it an accumulation of rock and soil. When the glacial mass receeded, it depositied a large quantity of this mineral debris forming a large ridge of land paralleling the western and southern shoreline of present day Lake Michigan. This ridge, the Valparaiso Moraine, was the original outline of a massive galcial lake called Lake Chicago.

Lake Chicago drained southward (ice prevented drainage to north) through a gap in the Valpariso Moraine called the Des Plaines outlet. Water made its way down the Des Plaines, Illinois and Mississippi River Valleys. The receeding of the glacier and the lowering of the level of Lake Chicago took place over a period of centuries and did so in three distinct stages. The Glenwood Stage (highest level) was fifty feet above present day Lake Michigan; the Calumet Stage, thirty-five feet above the lake; and the third, or Tolleston Stage was twenty feet above Lake Michigan. Field exploration has provided evidence that the early beach lines found within the study area were used as early Indian trails for both

communication and trade.

At one point in geological history the drainage of the glacial lake to the south ceased. The Des Plaines River flowed eastward into Lake Michigan through the Chicago River. Then, for an unknown reason a barrier was created in this drainage system, causing the Des Plaines River to back up and force itself once again to flow south through the old glacial lake outlet. The "barrier" formed a continental divide separating the Mississippi River watershed from the Great Lakes/ St. Lawrence River watershed. The crest of the continental divide (present day Kedzie Avenue) is approximately 10½ feet above the level of Lake Michigan. A small shallow lake about five miles long was left in the depression which had been the river's earlier outlet to Lake Michigan. The lake was named Mud or, Portage Lake and was the western terminus of a historic portage route between Lake Michigan and the Des Plaines River which gave access to the heartland of America.

This is a cursory documentation of the geological occurrences which created the system of waterways which became the highways for early American frontier travel. The total explanation is much more complex. A detailed analysis, with accompanying illustrations, may be found in several books and periodicals listed in the Bibliography section of this report.

Historical Synopsis

The geographical relationship of the Des Plaines River, Mud Lake, Chicago River and Lake Michigan was responsible for the location and rapid development of the metropolis of Chicago. This relationship was the connecting link by water and a short portage of the Great Lakes region to the Mississippi River and the Great Northwest. The water route and the paralleling land routes (later to become some of our main highways) enabled the French to explore the Mississippi Valley and Illinois.

Historically, this system of trails and waterways was first utilized by prehistoric man. Over 7000 years ago southern Indians met with those from the north to trade for copper, and later by Indians traversing the Midwest in hunting, trapping, trading and war parties. The first known white men to trod on this historic ground were Father Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet the explorer, who passed here in 1673. The French were at St. Ignace in 1634 and probably some came to the Chicago Portage area; Marquette reported meeting trappers in the area of Lyons, Illinois. At that time the British Colonists were established along the Atlantic, but the French were in control of Canada even as far west as Green Bay, Wisconsin. Marquette

and Jolliet were commissioned by the French to search for what the Indians referred to as the "Great River" that lay in the west.

The historic voyage began at St. Ignace on May 17, 1673, and proceeded to Green Bay by way of Lake Michigan, then westward down the Fox and Wisconsin River routes to their destination - the mighty Mississippi. The "Great River" was explored as far south as the mouth of the Arkansas River. South of here were the Spanish and the Indians whom they had made hostile.

On their return journey, the explorers met Indians who described a shorter route to Lake Michigan. The explorers taking the route, traveled up the Illinois River to the Des Plaines River. Canoeing up the Des Plaines they came to a place approximately midway between present day Summit and Riverside, Illinois. Here, at what is now known as the Chicago Portage, in September of 1673, they came to a little creek (Portage Creek the outlet of Mud Lake) which took them into and across Mud Lake to its eastern edge (the continental divide). At this point they carried - or portaged - their canoes across one and one half miles of open prairie to the west fork of the south branch of the Chicago River. The Chicago River led Marquette and Jolliet to Lake Michigan and back to Green Bay.

(Jolliet was the leader of this expedition. However, his journal was lost, and most historic documentation comes from Marquette's journal. Therefore, Marquette has received more historic mention than Jolliet, and is remembered in the names of buildings, streets, parks and statues. A couple of small plaques are all that remind us of Louis Jolliet. Joliet, Illinois is named for Shakespeare's Juliet and not for the French explorer.)

Marquette had promised the Illinois Indians that he would return to their Village on the Illinois River near Starved Rock, to found a mission. On October 25, 1674 Marquette left Green Bay. His health failing, Marquette and two companions were forced to spend the winter in a cabin constructed at a site near the Chicago River at Damen Avenue. They became the first white persons of record to reside in what is now the City of Chicago.

The importance of "Le Portage de Checago" was realized even in the era of early French exploration. Jolliet reported that "it would only be necessary to cut a canal through half a league of prairie to go in a bark by easy navigation from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico." (He saw the site about September 1, when it was between dry and wet seasons.)

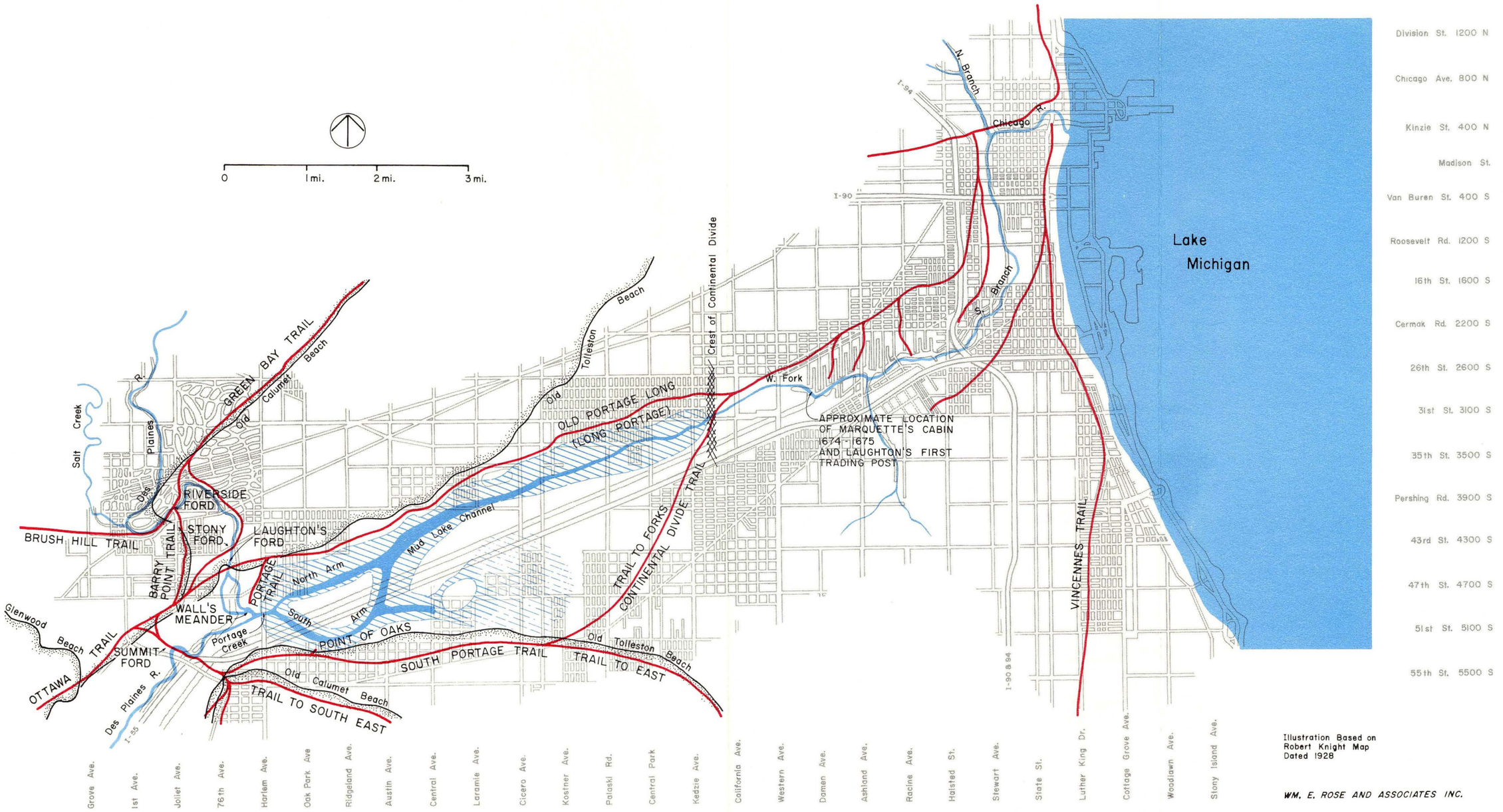


Illustration Based on
Robert Knight Map
Dated 1928

WM. E. ROSE AND ASSOCIATES INC.

MAP OF OLD CHICAGO PORTAGE

The French considered this connecting link as an important possession to control fur trade (centered in Montreal on St. Lawrence) and to expand their Empire. LaSalle received permission from Louis XIV to explore and colonize the Mississippi River Valley. On April 9, 1682, LaSalle reached the mouth of the Mississippi; here in the name of France, he took possession of the river and its tributaries, and all the country drained by it.

The French, with the help of their Indian allies, controlled the Chicago Portage and the fur trade of the region until the year 1700. At that time the French lost control of the Portage to hostile Indians. Many attempts were made to repossess this strategic area but to no avail; the French never again permanently established themselves in the Illinois River Valley. By 1763 the British, with the help of the Iroquois, had acquired control of the fur trade in the Northwest, and had taken from France all her land and possessions in North America.

At the time of the Revolutionary War, the Chicago Portage was used by both the British and the Colonists. At the conclusion of the Revolutionary War, the Treaty of Paris (1783) gave the Colonists possession of all lands east of the Mississippi and between the Great Lakes and the Gulf of Mexico. By implication, the Chicago Portage was included in the "Ordinance of Virginia" which stated that all navigable waters leading to both the Mississippi and the St. Lawrence, and "the carrying places in between" are to be forever free. The British, however, refused to agree to this mandate. They wanted to continue their control of the fur trade and to encourage the Indians of the region to resist the Colonists' attempts to settle the territory.

After several significant battles, the Colonists were able to enter into a treaty with the Indians. The Treaty of Greenville (1795) transferred the ownership of great tracts of land from Ohio to Michigan into the hands of the newly formed country. The treaty contained a provision for 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." Similarly lands at Peoria and at the mouth of the Illinois River joining the Mississippi were included in the treaty. And most importantly, the treaty guaranteed "free passages of the portages and rivers connecting these grants."

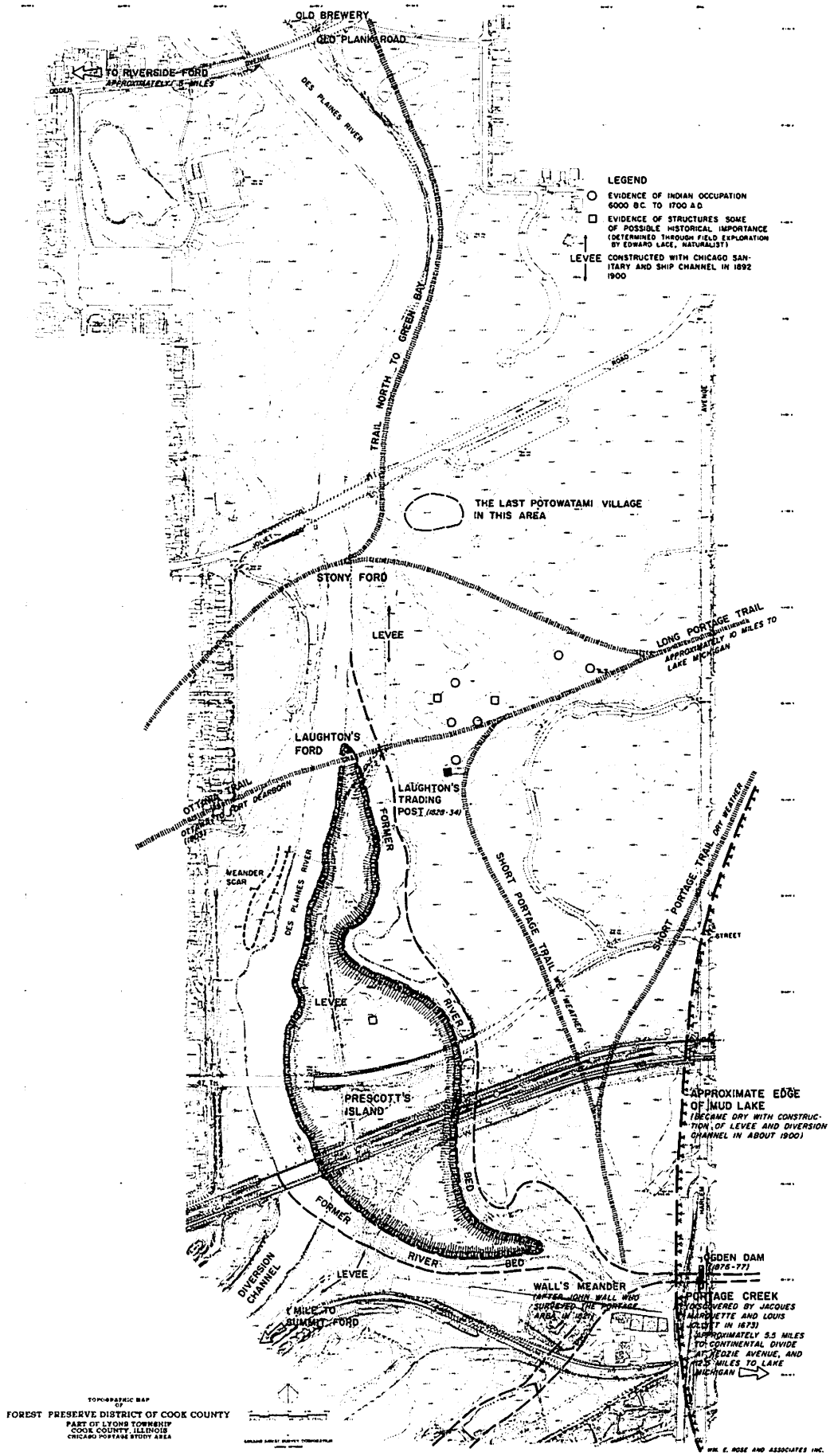
The United States Government, recognizing the strategic importance of the Portage, erected a fort on the land ceded by the Treaty of Greenville. The first Fort Dearborn was constructed between 1803-4 as ordered by President Thomas Jefferson, and ensured the safety of the fur trade until the fort was burned by the Indians as a consquence of the War of

1812. The Indians controlled the Portage once again until 1816 at which time the second Fort Dearborn was constructed under the Treaty of Ghent.

Once again the fur traders came in great numbers. The amount of traffic crossing the Portage increased to immense proportions. Boats to be portaged became larger with deeper draft. The old small channel connecting Mud Lake to the Chicago River was worn into a deeper trough. (The only improvement by design was a widening of the Channel in 1852 by the Cook County Drainage Commission.) The larger boats containing heavier loads meant difficult portages requiring wagons. However, there were times when a portage was not required: during certain wet seasons, the waters of Mud Lake and the waters of the West Fork of the Chicago River connected and covered the continental divide at a depth of four to five feet. It is estimated that this maximum water depth occurred for only four days per year. At other times water covered the continental divide at a depth less than four feet, but did permit boats drawing 15 inches or less to navigate the entire distance from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River for about 48 days per year. This happened to coincide with the seasonal travel of the fur trappers. Conversely, during the dryest periods, Mud Lake was dry and the Chicago and the Des Plaines Rivers were merely a series of shallow pools. At that time boats were portaged from the shore of Lake Michigan 50 miles to the mouth of the Des Plaines, or even 100 miles to the head of navigation of the Illinois River at LaSalle.

The most important Indian trails intersected near the "Chicago Portage." The South Portage Trail crossed the Des Plaines River at Summit Ford. The North Portage Trail (also called the Ottawa Trail) crossed at Stony Ford and at Laughton's Ford. The Ottawa Trail connected Chicago with Ottawa on the Illinois River where there was always enough water for canoes. Portages were made on this trail during dry seasons; later it became a wagon road (now Route 66 and Route 6). The trail from Green Bay, Wisonsin came into Chicago where Lincoln Park is now located. The trail branched off on what we now call Ogden Avenue (formerly the Old Plank Road) to the Riverside area. The trail crossed the river at Riverside Ford and connected to the High Prairie Road (now Plainfield Road) and the Ottawa Trail.

Traveling southwest along the former land trails and water routes from the Chicago Portage area, one finds many towns that sprang up along these routes. Willow Springs, Lockport, Joliet, Ottawa, Utica on the canal, and towns such as Lyons, Riverside, Hinsdale, Naperville, Morris, Marsielles and LaSalle along the trails.



HISTORICAL FEATURES MAP

The converging of trails near the Chicago Portage gave impetus to the development of the Villages of Lyons and Riverside. These communities were the crossroads of the Northwest Territory and were the center of population in Cook County until 1833. At that time Chicago had become a village, soon to become a city in 1837.

It was in the Lyons and Riverside area that history saw the passing of the Indian, the trapper, the hunter, the settler and later the Santa Fe Railroad. Bernardus and David Laughton saw the need for a trading center in this region. They farmed and traded first at "Hardscrabble" near present day Racine Avenue and the south branch of the Chicago River. Later they moved to Riverside where they built a tavern. In 1828 they built a trading post on the Ottawa Trail near the ford which bears their name. Both brothers died in 1833. The trading post went out of business in 1834 when the Indians left and the trappers found their raw material in short supply.

Another early settler in the area of the Chicago Portage was Stephen R. Forbes. Forbes was a squatter near the Laughton property, and later purchased land from the Laughton's. He built a mill at Riverside Ford. The record shows that Stephen R. Forbes was Cook County's first sheriff.

William and Mahlon Ogden owned land around the Portage site. William Ogden was Chicago's first mayor. Mahlon Ogden's home was located where Newberry Library now stands, and was one of a few structures to survive the Chicago fire in 1871. They constructed Ogden Ditch to provide a water route for a longer period of time through the north area of Mud Lake. It is reported that the ditch was never an economical success.

Ogden Dam was constructed on Ogden property by the City of Chicago in the winter of 1876-77. The dam, located at approximately 49th Street and Harlem Avenue, had the effect of moving the continental divide more than six miles west of it's natural location at Kedzie Avenue. The dam lengthened the west fork of the south branch of the Chicago River and caused the Des Plaines River to once again flow down the valley.

Most of the property in the Portage area was owned by the Ogdens. Eventually the Metropolitan Sanitary District purchased considerable acreage from their descendents.

While the Ogdens owned much land east of the Des Plaines River, a man named Prescott owned land west of the River. Prior to the re-channeling of the river by the Metropolitan Sanitary District, the river split into two channels south of Laughton's Ford. The channels joined again at the mouth of Portage Creek

(Wall's Meander). In this manner the dividing of the river created an island which was named after it's owner Mr. Prescott. During the prohibition days a speakeasy called "The Blind Pig" was located in the center of what was once Prescott's island.

The great increase in traffic through the Portage area made evident the need for government sponsored improvements. A treaty was made with the Indians granting additional lands in the Chicago region to provide for the construction of a canal and a military road. Finally, in 1822 the Congress authorized the State of Illinois to build a canal to connect Lake Michigan to the Illinois River, and on February 14, 1823, the General Assembly of Illinois passed an act which would provide for the State's internal navigation system. However, it wasn't until 1836 when construction began on the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The completion of the I & M Canal in 1848 signaled the beginning of the end of the Chicago Portage. The construction of the Sanitary and Ship Canal (1892-1900) brought with it a straightening of the Des Plaines River channel, and along its east bank a levee extending between Lyons and Summit, leaving Mud Lake dry for all time. However, portions of the Chicago Portage are still there. Today the canals follow the route of Jolliet and Marquette from Ottawa to Chicago. More important now are the modern highways which follow the trails paralleling the waterways in prehistoric times.

Even though the drama and usefulness of the Chicago Portage has ended, there is a need and moral obligation to provide public recognition of the historical significance of this geographic feature. It is likewise important to identify and interpret the relationship of the various other nearby historic features. The features include the Ottawa and Portage Trails, Laughton's Ford and Stony Ford, and Laughton's Trading Post, all of which contributed greatly to the development of the West. See Map of Old Chicago Portage on Page 11, Historical Features Map on Page 15, and "Historic Chronology" and "Nature Bulletins" in Appendices beginning on Page 51.

Inventory and Analysis of Existing Features

Geopolitical Boundaries

The study area comprises approximately three hundred acres of land owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County. The area is generally bounded by Harlem Avenue on the east, Ogden Avenue on the north, the Des Plaines River on the west, and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal on the south. The majority of land lies within the corporate limits of Lyons, and is contiguous to the communities of Berwyn, Forest View, and Stickney on the east, an unincorporated area on the south, and Riverside on the north. See Existing Features Map on Page 21.

Surrounding Land Uses

The area is surrounded by a variety of land uses. Primarily single family residential neighborhoods form the boundary west of the river and north of Ogden Avenue. A combination of multi-family residential dwellings, mixed commercial establishments and industrial developments make up the primary land uses along the Harlem Avenue corridor to the east. A major oil

storage facility and the Metropolitan Sanitary District storage basin form the southern boundary. With the exception of the oil tanks to the south, it should not be difficult to visually and physically detach proposed developments from these surrounding land uses. The oil tanks, due to their closeness to the actual Portage site, represent a visual problem for future developments located in the southern section of the study area.

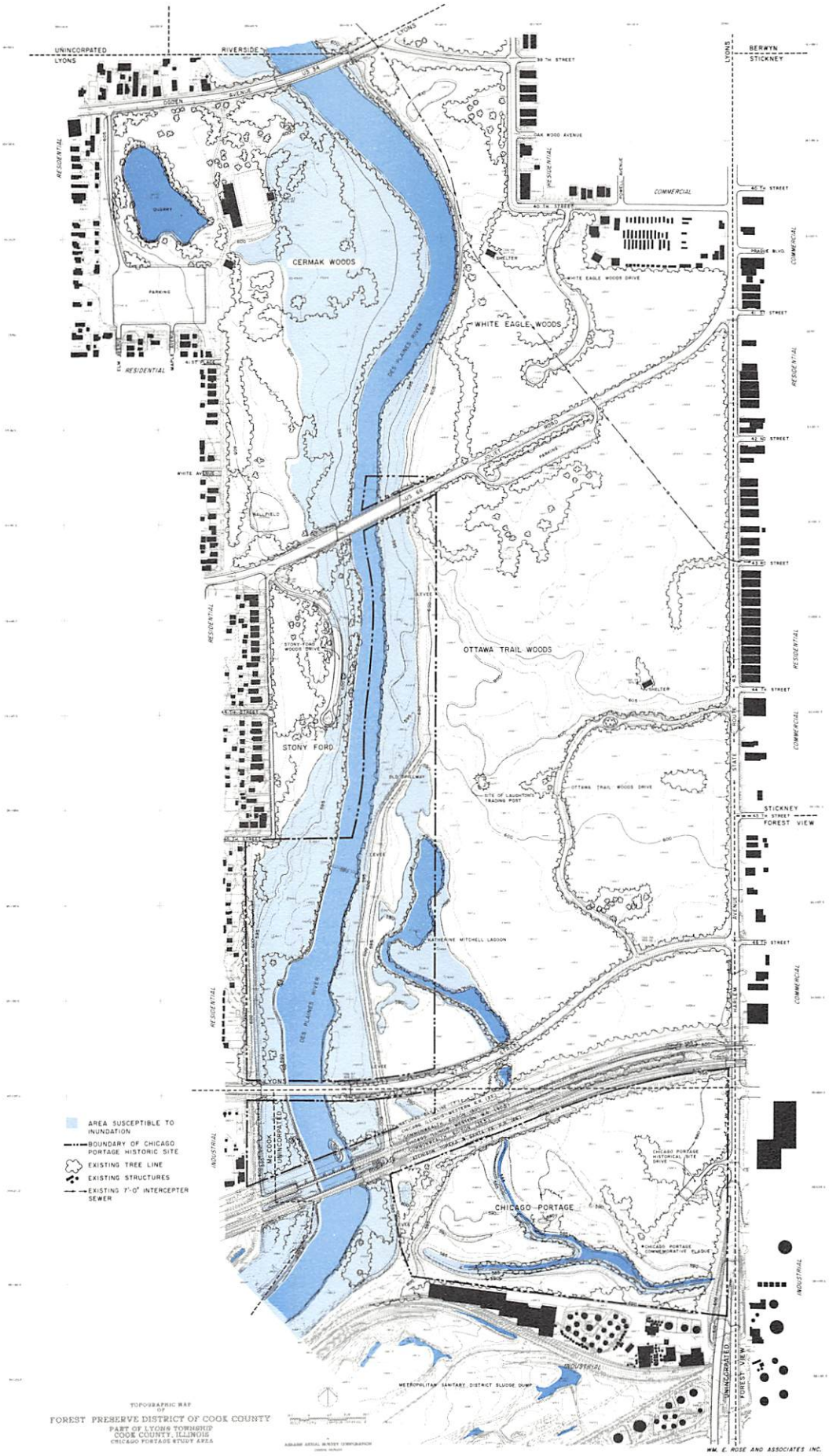
Existing Developments

The study area includes several developed preserves: Cermak Pool, Cermak Woods, White Eagle Woods, Ottawa Trail Woods, Stony Ford, and Chicago Portage. These preserves are utilized primarily by the public for recreation such as swimming, picnicking, hiking and nature activities, and in several open meadow areas, ball fields are provided for informal play. The preserves are separated from each other by the Des Plaines River, Joliet Road and 47th Street. Also, a series of railroad rights-of-way and utility easements cross the site just south of 47th Street. All of which disjoin Chicago Portage from Ottawa Trail Woods where several pertinent historic landmarks are located. This separation of historical features is the major consideration in the development of plans for the proposed interpretive facilities. The problem: how to safely and aesthetically provide for the movement of visitors to each significant and interrelated historic feature.

A drive with parking bays connects 47th Street with Harlem Avenue, providing public access to Ottawa Trail Woods, the largest single land parcel (150 acres) in the study area. Other vehicular entrances with smaller parking facilities serve White Eagle Woods, Stony Ford, and the Chicago Portage. A developed picnic woods with parking facilities is located on the south side of Joliet Road (Rte. 66) between the river and Harlem Avenue. A major parking facility for heavily used Cermak Pool is located in the far northwest corner of the study area.

Structures

Structures in the study area include three stone picnic shelters, several comfort stations and Cermak Pool. Wells with hand pumps provide the public with potable water supply. There are historic plaques to commemorate the sites of the Chicago Portage and Laughton's Trading Post. Major highway bridges carry traffic across the Des Plaines River at 47th Street and Joliet Road, and a railroad bridge crosses the river several hundred feet south of 47th Street.



TOPOGRAPHIC MAP OF
FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY
PART OF LYONS TOWNSHIP
COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS
CHICAGO PORTAGE STUDY AREA

WM. E. ROSE AND ASSOCIATES INC.

EXISTING FEATURES MAP

Utilities

There is an 84 inch sanitary interceptor sewer which crosses the northeast corner of the Ottawa Trail Woods. This sewer could provide disposal of sanitary waste resulting from development proposed for Ottawa Trail Woods. No other utilities exist within these forest preserve properties.

Other services which may be generated by proposed improvements must come from the Harlem Avenue right-of-way to the east. Municipal services located here include sanitary sewer, storm sewer and water. A potable water supply could come from existing well sources. Private utility companies would provide any necessary gas or power service.

Drainage and Topography

With the construction of the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal in 1900, came a straightening and widening of the Des Plaines River channel. Overburden from these combined construction operations was utilized to create a levee along the east bank of the new river channel to prevent flooding to the east. The original channel is now a meandering stream which serves as the primary collection point for on-site water drainage south of Joliet Road. The major impoundment within this watershed is a small permanent backwater pond called Katherine Mitchell Lagoon. The flow is to the southeast, through the Portage site, and then under Harlem Avenue ultimately emptying into the Ship Canal.

The normal low flow elevation of the Des Plaines River through the study area falls in the range of 589 to 593. The United States Geological Survey map (Berwyn Quandrangle, Atlas HA-252) indicates a high water line at the 47th Street bridge at elevation 599 (1957 flood). The levee, having a top elevation of about 600, prevents these flood waters from entering forest preserve lands east of the river. The levee provides an important service in this regard, because approximately 75 per cent of the land east of the river and south of Joliet Road is below elevation 599, and would be subject to considerable flooding inhibiting development.

Topographically, the site is quite flat, having an average gradient of approximately two per cent. From the north end of the study area (elevation 610) to the outfall under Harlem Avenue (elevation 583) there is a maximum change in elevation of approximately twenty-seven feet. It is anticipated that proposed developments would require relatively minor grading operations to establish building and parking facilities.

Vegetation and Wildlife

A dense stand of mature deciduous forest trees and understory covers the majority of the project area. Hardwoods are predominantly located in the higher, north-central section of Ottawa Trail Woods, while the remaining sections exhibit a prevalence of soft wood species and understory trees. Shade trees include the following species: Red Oak, Bur Oak, Black Oak, Shagbark Hickory, Hackberry, Black Walnut, American Elm, Silver Maple, Green Ash, Box Elder, Cottonwood, Black Locust, Honey Locust, Black Cherry and Willow. Understory trees include Native Hawthorn and Crab Apple. Other woodland plants include: Buckthorn, Honeysuckle, Sumac and many species of wildflowers in undisturbed areas. Meadow grasses occur in the more open areas.

Due to the forested nature of the site, proposed buildings and parking areas will cause the removal of some major shade trees and understory plant material. However, prior to construction, a careful field investigation will identify valuable specimens for preservation.

Animal life abounds in the study area. The heavy woodland growth provides ideal cover for many species of native and migratory wildlife including small mammals, birds, reptiles, fish and insects. Existing animal life would easily adjust to the new activities and will find continued habitat in the natural areas. Control of public access and use will increase avilable habitat.

Public Access

The study area is surrounded by important transportation corridors providing excellent public access to the site. Motorists will find 47th Street, Joliet Road, Ogden Avenue and Harlem Avenue direct routes from surrounding local communities to the proposed interpretive facility. Regional access is provided by Interstate 294 to Interstate 55 which intersects Harlem Avenue approximately one-half mile south of the project. Access from the Chicago "Loop" and lake front would be accommodated by the Eisenhower Expressway (I-90) to Harlem Avenue, Harlem Avenue south four miles to the project area. See Regional Setting map on Page 2.

Public transportation is available from all sections of the Chicago Metropolitan region. The West Towns Bus Company serves the study area with routes on Harlem Avenue and Ogden Avenue. The Harlem Avenue route (Route 7) extends north to O'Hare Airport, south to the Village of Summit and east to the Chicago Loop. The current Harlem Avenue schedule includes convenient stops at Ogden Avenue, Joliet Road and 47th Street,

and provide a connection to the Burlington Northern Railroad commuter stations at Riverside and Berwyn. The West Towns Bus line connects to the Chicago Transit Authority south of the study area at 55th Street. Transfer privileges are available. The future plans of the Regional Transportation Authority will provide additional regional public transportation for visitor's convenience.

The Plan

GENERAL DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The planning program provides for the orderly development of a principle educational facility and features which will serve as media to interpret the historical events and their importance related to the Chicago Portage, Laughton's Trading Post and interrelated natural history. The proposed development will accomplish the following objectives:

1) Provide an interpretive center building to accommodate an estimated 600,000* visitors annually, and to serve as the focal point of this development.

2) Identify and interpret historical features and natural elements; establish a trail system to provide safe pedestrian access to these important areas.

*Estimate provided by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County

3) Provide safe and accommodating vehicular circulation and parking.

4) Provide necessary service facilities for an on-site maintenance program including facilities for a resident historian and watchman.

5) Provide a pedestrian and bicycle pathway system connecting the surrounding residential neighborhoods and the Salt Creek Division of the Forest Preserve District to a major public entrance.

6) Erect sufficient fencing to control indiscriminate access to the preserve and it's facilities.

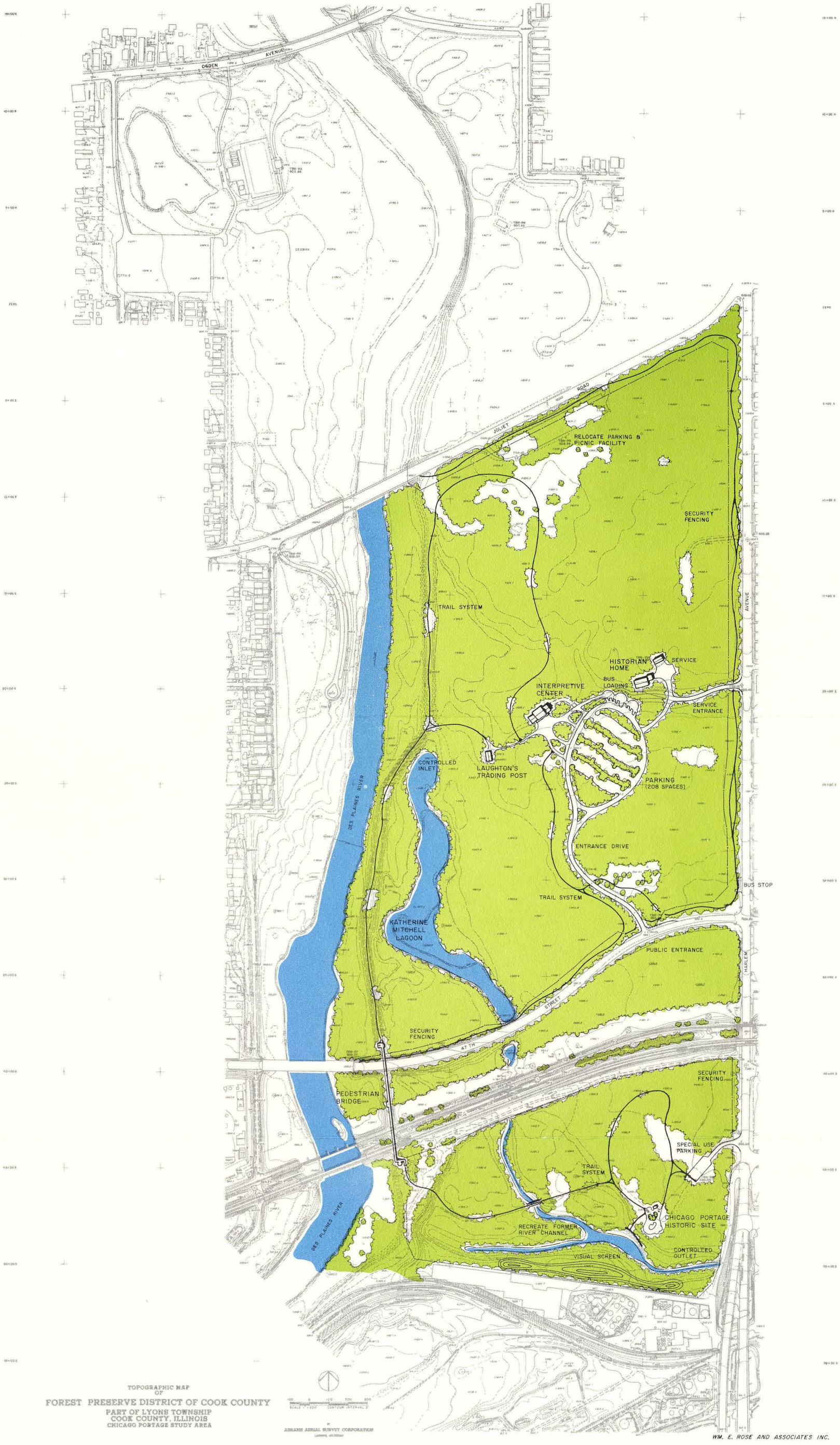
SPECIFIC DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Entrance and Parking

The study area represents a design challenge. This relatively large parcel of land has deficiencies due to the intrusion of various public and private rights-of-way. The Ottawa Trail Woods is the largest section of the study area and is best suited for the proposed development. It is recommended that the interpretive center facility be located within this section. The public entrance will be at the existing forest preserve drive, located just west of Harlem Avenue on the north side of 47th Street. Approximately 1,200 lineal feet of the existing drive will be incorporated in the design. The main entrance will be gated to control and regulate public access to the interpretive building area. Public access from Harlem Avenue was considered, but deemed impractical due to the heavy volume of traffic already existing on this major arterial route.

Approximately 600 feet north of 47th Street will be the access point to a parking facility for 210 cars. The lot will be located on the east side of the entrance drive, and will have aisles aligned in an east-west direction to allow people arriving by automobile to walk safely to the Interpretive Center. It is anticipated that this parking facility will have some parking bays that could be closed during periods of low visitation.

It is recommended that the pedestrian access point be located adjacent to the entrance drive off 47th Street. This pathway system will enter the site from the 47th Street right-of-way, and will provide pedestrian approach routes from both the east and the west. In conjunction with this pathway



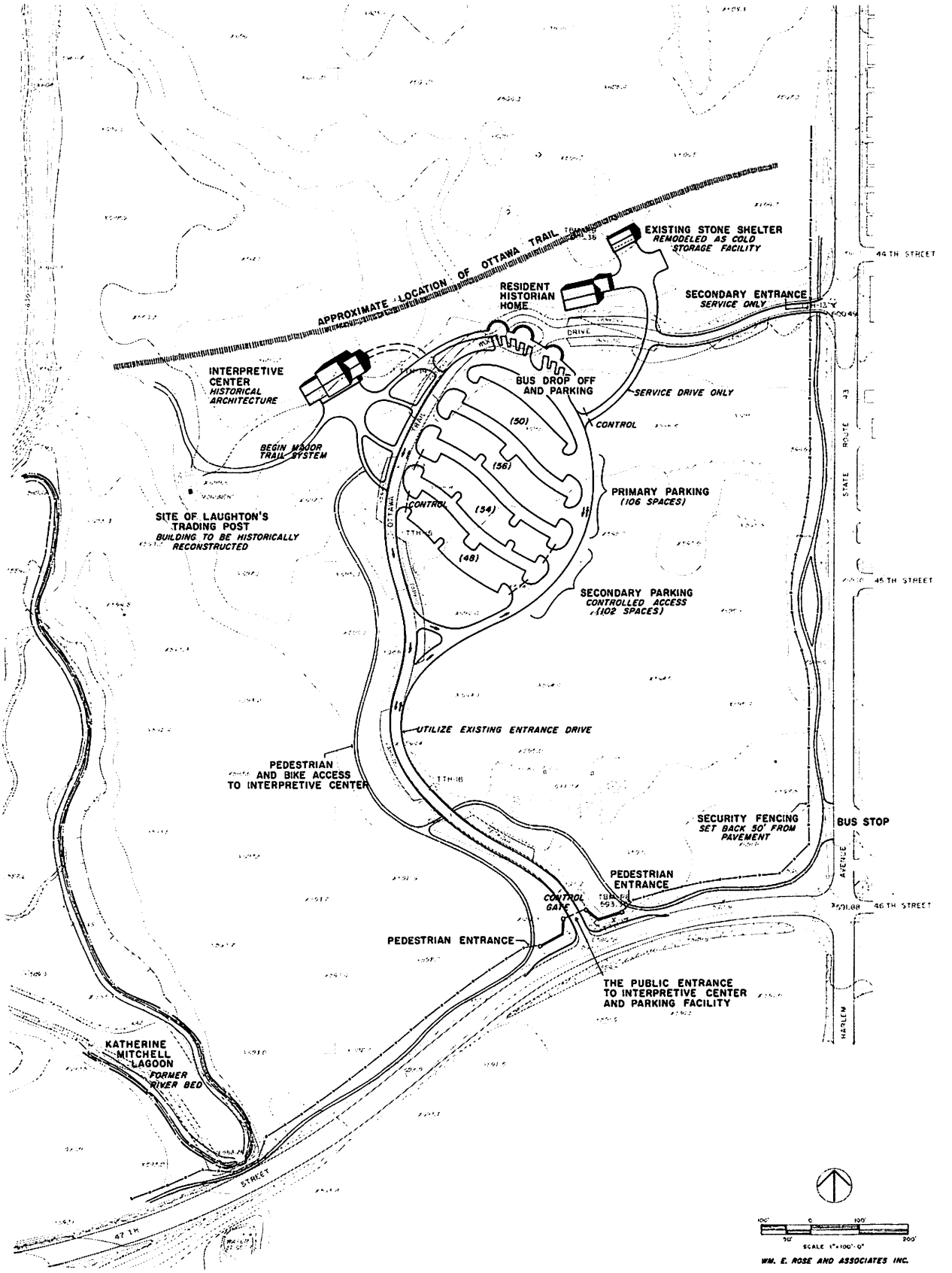
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
OF
FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT OF COOK COUNTY
PART OF LYONS TOWNSHIP
COOK COUNTY, ILLINOIS
CHICAGO PORTAGE STUDY AREA

SCALE 1" = 200' CONTOUR INTERVAL 2'

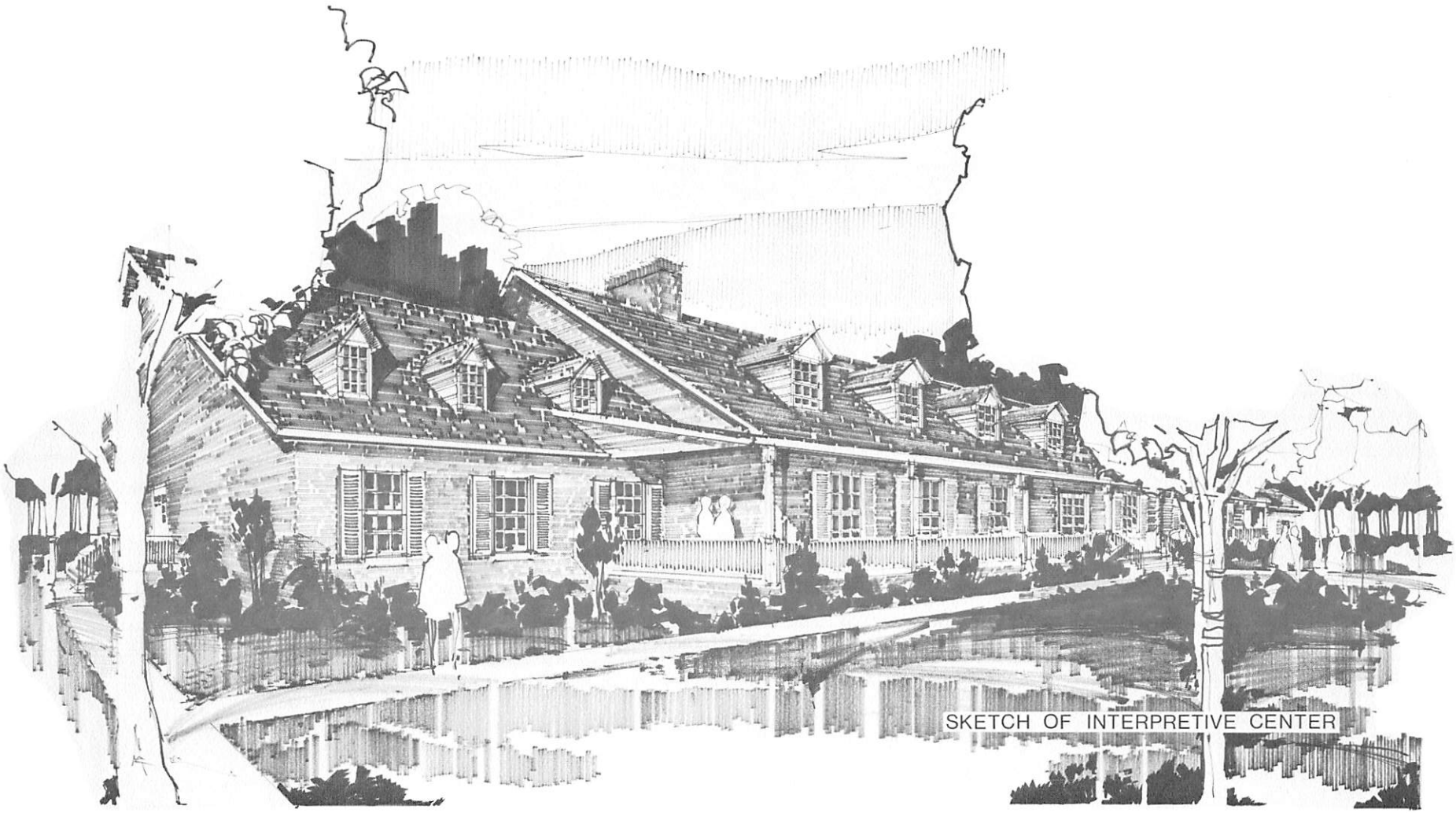
BY
AIRBORNE AERIAL SURVEY CORPORATION
LANSING, MICHIGAN

WM. E. ROSE AND ASSOCIATES INC.

GENERAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN



INTERPRETIVE CENTER AREA



SKETCH OF INTERPRETIVE CENTER

system it is recommended that additional sidewalk pavement be provided adjacent to Harlem Avenue to accommodate bus loading and unloading zones. In the future, special bus pull-off lanes may be required to accommodate large numbers of visitors arriving by public transportation.

Service Access

A secondary entrance drive will be from Harlem Avenue two blocks north of 47th Street at an existing drive. The secondary entrance will provide a controlled access point for service vehicles, as well as to accommodate a private point of access to the resident historian home. There will be a connecting drive between this service area and the major parking facility to allow service vehicles direct access to the Interpretive Center area.

Historian Residence and Service Building

The historian residence proposed is a modest three bedroom residence with an attached garage for personal use. The residence will be architecturally in keeping with the other proposed buildings located nearby. The adjacent existing stone picnic shelter will be retained and remodeled to serve as an unheated storage building for necessary maintenance equipment and materials.

The resident historian home will be positioned to afford visual observation of as much area as possible to assure maximum policing of facilities subject to vandalism.

Interpretive Center

The Interpretive Center building will be centrally located in Ottawa Trail Woods. The location shown on the accompanying illustrations is approximate. The precise location will be determined after field exploration has determined the precise alignment of nearby Ottawa Trail. Utility excavations could assist in locating this and other archeologically important elements which will be preserved and identified for visitor viewing. Another important consideration in the Interpretive Center is to allow for visual observation of the Laughton's Trading Post to be reconstructed at it's original site.

Architecturally, the Interpretive Center design will utilize an architectural flavor reminiscent of the mid-nineteenth century. The building will be constructed of indigenous and organic materials: native limestone, paving brick, wood siding, and wood-shake shingles for the roof. See Sketch of Interpretive Center on Page 33.

The building will contain approximately 6,200 square feet on the ground floor to accommodate the required entrance foyer, exhibit space, work rooms, rest room facilities, office and storage space, and a small apartment for a resident naturalist or watchman. Additional storage can be designed into the attic space.

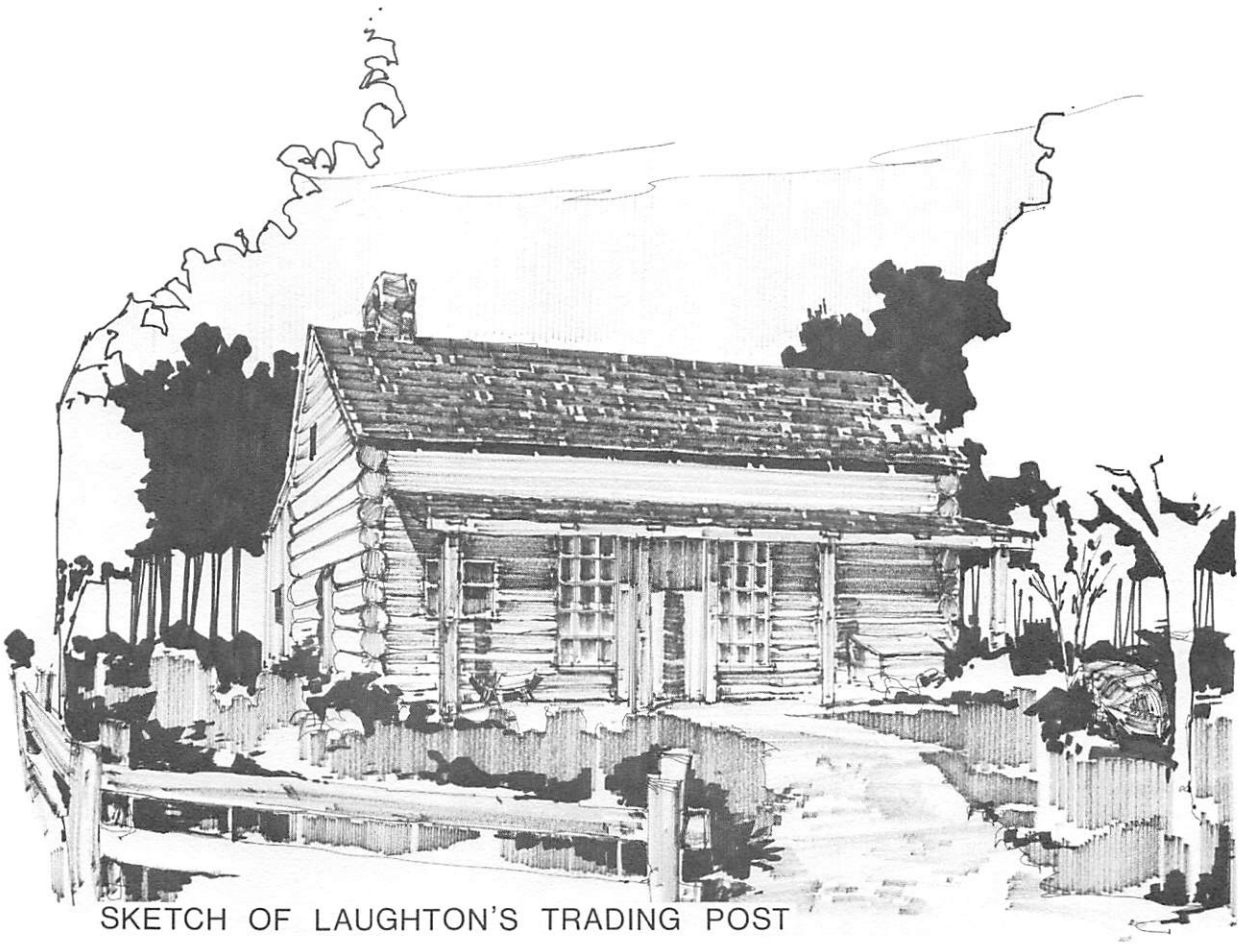
Generous pedestrian pavement is provided at the main entrance to the interpretive facility to accommodate groups of visitors moving in opposite directions between the parking lot, bus loading area (north end of parking facility) and the trail system. A ramp will be provided to accommodate paraplegic access from the sidewalk level to the ground floor of the Interpretive Center. The top of foundation will be established at elevation 604 to facilitate good natural drainage. Any necessary service access, utility area, or solid waste disposal will be screened from public view using fencing and plantings in naturalistic arrangement.

The Interpretive Center building will be the visual and functional focal point of all activities within the proposed development. It is here that each visitor begins his educational experience - first viewing the exhibits within the building, receiving literature and orientation materials regarding the trail system, information "nodes" and points of interest along the trail.

Laughton's Trading Post

The first important feature on the major trail system is the site of historic Laughton's Trading Post, a major stopping off point on the land and water trails between the Des Plaines River and Lake Michigan during the early nineteenth century. There exists a monument commemorating the approximate location of this trading post. Archeological "digs" are being employed to determine its original site. When this is known a replica of this early log structure will be constructed to give the appearance of the original building.

Both the interior and exterior of this building will be reproduced as authentically as possible and will be appointed to show the public its original function as a trading post and tavern. Interior decoration will include such items as a large table for the display of furs, tool and implement sale, Indian items, dry goods and bottles reminiscent of the tavern aspect. There will also be a display of artifacts resulting from the archeological "digs." See sketch of Laughton's Trading Post on following page.



SKETCH OF LAUGHTON'S TRADING POST

Pedestrian Bridge

Since all of the lands are not contiguous, the movement of pedestrians is difficult. The specific problem is to provide access from the focus point of the Interpretive Center located north of 47th Street, to the Chicago Portage National Historic Site located at the extreme south end of the study area. The question is how to negotiate 47th Street and the railroad and utility rights-of-way. Several means of providing for the desired pedestrian movement were examined. Encouraging people to walk on the levee and crossing at grade as they do today, would be inexpensive, but too dangerous for the anticipated volume of visitors. An underpass is deemed too expensive, would create a policing problem, would probably be ineffective in sealing out ground water and flood waters, and would intersect underground utilities and petroleum product pipelines. Therefore, it is recommended that a pedestrian bridge be constructed over these rights-of-way to provide for the safe movement of people from the Ottawa Trail Woods section to the Chicago Portage.

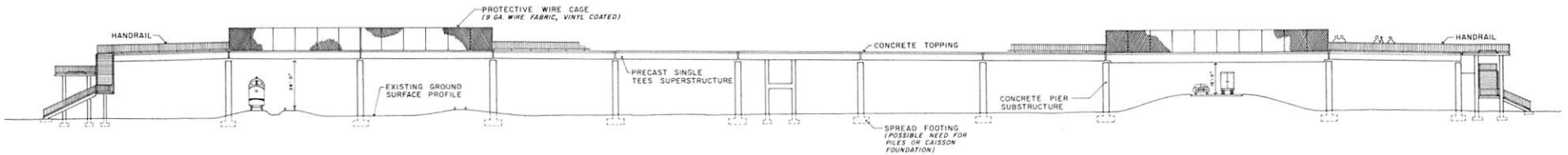
The most economical structure is a concrete bridge. The bridge will be twelve feet wide and supported by concrete piers. The total length of the bridge is 615 feet. Vertical transition at both ends of the bridge will be accommodated in three flights of expanded metal stairs. Overlooks will be constructed at both ends and in the approximate center of the bridge to afford views of the river, into the forest preserve and the historic features. Hand rails will be installed on both sides of the stairways and deck. A protective wire cage will cover the deck where the bridge spans 47th Street and the railroad tracks. The horizontal and vertical dimensions required by both railroads and the Highway Department have been recognized in the design. Preliminary approval of the design concept has been obtained from the railroads, the public and private utility companies and the Highway Department (see list of contacts and correspondence in Appendices). The preliminary structural design of this pedestrian bridge has been provided by Raths, Raths & Johnson, Inc., Structural Engineers, located in Hinsdale, Illinois. See Pedestrian Bridge illustration on Page 39.

Chicago Portage Historic Area

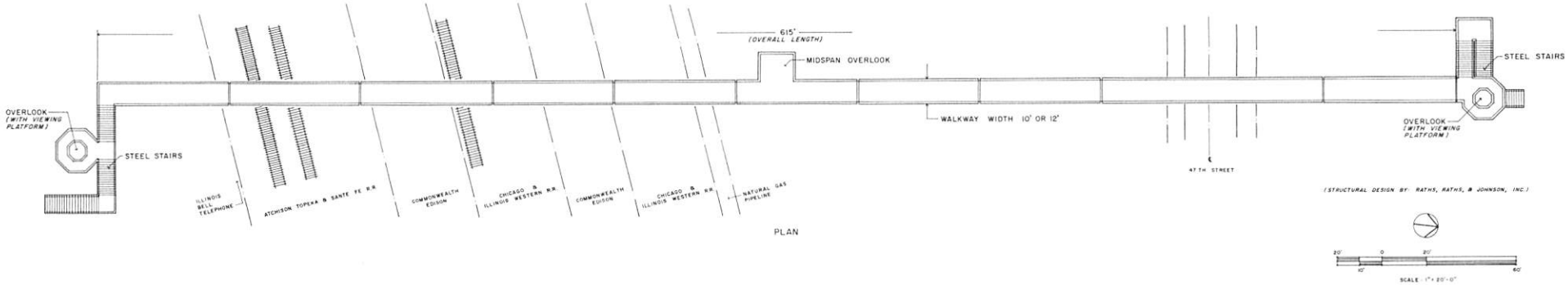
The bridge connection will introduce the visitor to the area where three centuries ago Marquette and Jolliet discovered the short cut between the Des Plaines River and Lake Michigan. In 1930 the Chicago Historical Society contributed a brass plaque to commemorate the west end of the Chicago Portage. At this location it is recommended that the major interpretive feature be constructed. The feature will be of such interest that it will encourage people to walk approximately one-half mile from the Interpretive Center to this feature.

The concept developed for the area is a *bas* relief map describing the physical relationship between the Des Plaines River Valley and Lake Michigan. The map will be installed in a convex fashion and will have overall dimensions of approximately 35 feet by 25 feet. See illustrations Chicago Portage Historic Area on Page 43, and Historic Map as Interpretive Feature on Page 45.

Several different materials for the construction of the map have been investigated. The most practical materials include metal, cast stone and plastics - either fiberglass or poly-vinyl cholride. Through correspondence, it was learned that the National Park Service recommends poly-vinyl chloride as the construction material. The map will be constructed in sections for ease in initial placement and practical replacement in the future. The map will be colored to emphasize the physical characteristics of the land, and to highlight the various important geological and historic features. Open to



ELEVATION



PLAN

(STRUCTURAL DESIGN BY: RATHS, RATHS, & JOHNSON, INC.)

PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE

the sky, the map surface will be subjected to the elements, and will require periodic maintenance. Having a convex surface, water will drain toward the perimeter of the map, and be picked up in drainage structures.

For better viewing, the map will be depressed within a large paved surface to provide adequate area to support several classes of thirty students simultaneously while an interpreter describes the map from a special "stage" area provided for this purpose. The visitors will be guarded from the sunken area by a three to four foot high metal railing. Additional guard rails will control the flow of people at the edges of the paved area where the protection of landscaped areas is important. Special seating areas, drinking fountains, and a rest room facility with a maintenance and storage section is also recommended as part of the improvement to the Chicago Portage Historic interpretive node.

The existing water adjacent to the map feature, is located in the approximate alignment of the original Des Plaines River channel and will be widened and deepened to create a view from the historic map area. The excess excavation resulting from this improvement will be graded in a natural fashion to create a heavily landscaped berm along the south property line. This earth mounding and landscaping will subdue the undersirable visual effect of the oil storage facility which forms the southern edge of the preserve. Additional plantings of shade trees, intermediate trees and shrubs will be planted along the railroads and along Harlem Avenue to minimize the audio and visual distrubances created by the activities of traffic occurring within these rights-of-way.

The existing parking facility entering off Harlem Avenue will be retained for handicapped people arriving in buses, as well as paraplegic parking. The entrance will be gated and opened only by appointment or special request. One-tenth mile section of the trail system near the Historic area will be paved with a hard (smooth surface) material (asphalt, concrete, etc.) to accommodate the movement of wheel chairs and elderly people utilizing special support apparatus. This special portion of the trail system provides an opportunity for the handicapped or semi-ambulatory to experience a natural setting and to glimpse into the historic past.

The formal allee which exists between the parking facility and the Chicago Portage commemorative plaque will be abandoned. It is recommended that a heavy planting of native Hawthorn trees be installed to discourage the visual connection which presently exists between the plaque and parking lot. The proposed pathway will connect the parking lot to the major interpretive feature (historic map) in an indirect alignment to

minimize any visual relationship between these two planned elements.

Trail System

Because the historic and natural elements of interest are located over a wide spread area, it is essential to provide a comprehensive trail system. The trail system will interconnect points of interest serving as interpretive nodes. There would be basically two trail routes: a short route of about one-half mile in length, and a long trail at least one mile long. All trails will begin at the Interpretive Center.

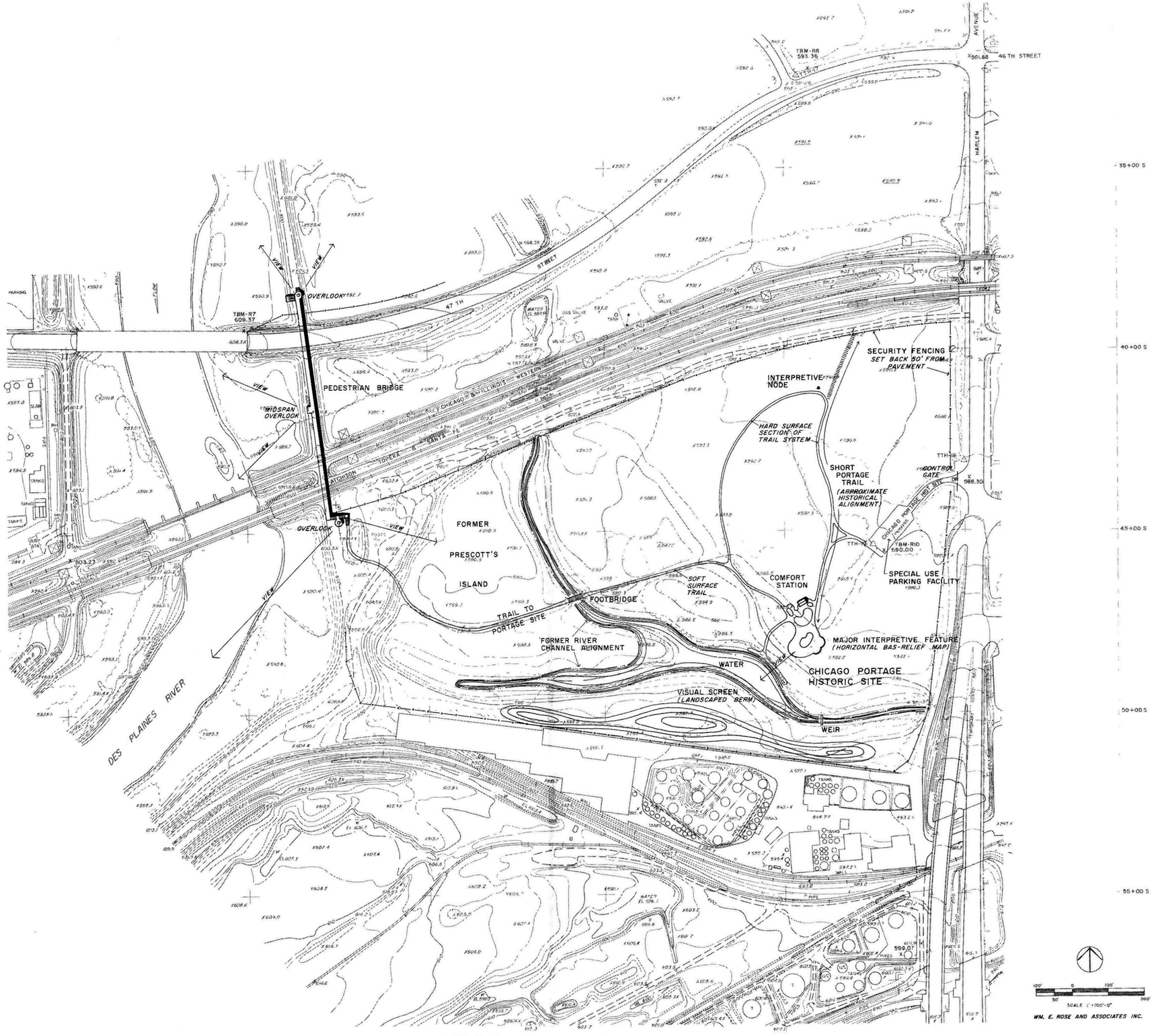
The interpretive nodes will be well marked widenings on the trail. Ample graphic and written descriptions will be provided to fully interpret each historic and natural feature. Efforts will be made to provide explanatory materials for the education of handicapped visitors.

The trail system extends into the north end of Ottawa Trail Woods. The present picnic facilities and attendant parking lot will be relocated outside of the historical sections of the study area. Several important historical features are located in and around the picnic grounds: Stony Ford, Laughton's Ford, Ottawa Trail, Green Bay Trail, Long Portage Trail and one of the last Potawatami villages in this area. These features, which will be specifically located by archeological explorations, will become major interpretive nodes on the trail.

Trails distant from the Interpretive Center building generally will be constructed of informal surface materials such as bark chips, limestone screenings and gravels. However, the trails will be installed to allow for positive surface drainage and would be of sufficient stability and width to accommodate occasional maintenance and security vehicles. Private vehicles, motor bikes and snow mobiles will be prohibited on the trail system.

An adjunct to the internal trail system is the external pedestrian pathways leading to the main public entrance on 47th Street. These pathways are not intended as educational improvements and generally will not have interpretive features. However, some minor educational signage/graphics could be developed along this pedestrian access to highlight the facilities within the preserve. Surface materials would provide a comfortable walking surface, and will permit bicycle traffic.

The access pathway is intended to connect nearby residential neighborhoods to the proposed education facilities. Also, this pathway might connect to existing trails in the Salt Creek Division of the Forest Preserve District, providing community-



CHICAGO PORTAGE HISTORIC AREA

HISTORIC MAP AS INTERPRETIVE FEATURE

wide pedestrian access.

Restoration of Original Channel

The Des Plaines River channel, as it was during the Portage era and prior to it's realignment in the 1890's, will be restored in two sections of the study area. The first section occurs in Ottawa Trail Woods where Katherine Mitchell Lagoon is located just west of the site of Laughton's Trading Post. This lagoon will be improved by deepening the existing water body and by stabilizing its shoreline. The improved Katherine Mitchell Lagoon will serve as one of the information nodes on the trail system and provide an attractive water feature. To increase the quantity of water entering the lagoon, it is recommended that a control inlet be provided at the north end of the lagoon to allow Des Plaines River water to circulate into the lagoon during dry seasons. Any structure(s) associated with the control device would be camouflaged to minimize its visual impact along the trail. The outfall structure under 47th Street will act as a control weir to maintain a stable water surface between elevations 587 and 588.

The other section of channel restoration is that existing waterway which is all that remains of the Des Plaines River at Portage Creek. This section of channel meanders through the "Chicago Portage Historic Area" and is a major part of the interpretive feature proposed for this area. As mentioned under the previous discussion concerning the "Chicago Portage Historic Area" this waterway will be improved by widening and deepening. A control weir will be established at the point of outflow located in the far southeast corner of forest preserve property. The weir will maintain a constant level of water at an elevation between 584 and 585. Maintaining a stable water surface will effectuate a stable shoreline which is important in developing the proposed interpretive facility in this historically important area of the preserve.

Security and Control

To control as much as possible indiscriminate public access to the proposed development, a seven foot high woven wire fabric fence topped with three strands of barbed wire, will be installed. Fencing is proposed for the north, the east and south edges of Ottawa Trail Woods, and of the Chicago Portage site. To maintain an appropriate appearance, the bank of the Des Plaines River will not be fenced. Except during ice cover, the water itself would serve as a natural barrier. Wherever the public access footpaths system is proposed around perimeter areas, the fencing will be set back well within forest preserve property to allow a meandering alignment, to

save significant single trees or masses and to permit the fence to be hidden from view. Gates will be provided at entrances and for occasional service access.

Lighting will be installed along drives, in parking areas, and adjacent to service areas, the Interpretive Center, Laughton's Trading Post, the pedestrian bridge and at the site of the Chicago Portage. Lighting will be utilized for evening activities and for security purposes. Generally, light fixtures will be detached from buildings. Whenever possible, the light source will be screened from view during daytime hours, and fixtures will be mounted on attractive poles.

Signing will be used throughout the development to direct and control pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The use of directional signs would be minimal. Whenever possible graphics will be used instead of written information.

Plantings

In keeping with the forest preserve nature of the project, new plantings will be installed in an informal layout. Only indigenous plant species would be used. Any plant material which must be removed due to the proposed improvements will be replaced. Additional reforestation and special landscaped areas would be developed to define and augment existing plant material for design purposes and to screen undersirable views. Plantings will assist in the control of both pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and to enhance and reinforce the architecture of proposed structures. Plantings will be used to stabilize slopes and areas subject to erosion, and existing open areas capable of supporting meadow grasses, might be re-established as native prairie patches.

COST ESTIMATE

The following construction cost estimate is based on second quarter 1975 prices.

Item	Description	Amount	Sub-Total
A.	Improvements in Ottawa Trail Woods		
1.	Roads and Parking		
a.	Entrance Drive (bituminous concrete)	$ 54,000	
b.	Parking (bituminous concrete)	49,000	
c.	Concrete Curb and Drainage	72,000	
d.	Service Drives (bituminous concrete)	17,000	
e.	Removal of Picnic Parking	29,000	
			$ 221,000

Item	Description	Amount	Sub-Total
2.	Buildings [1]		
	a. Interpretive Center (incl. built-in equipment)	295,000	
	b. Historian Residence	45,000	
	c. Unheated Storage Building	15,000	
	d. Laughton's Trading Post	20,000	
	e. Utilities	50,000	
			425,000
3.	Pathways		
	a. Exterior (limestone)	16,000	
	b. Interior - Hard Surface	32,000	
	c. Interior - Soft Surface	31,000	
			79,000
4.	Widen and Deepen Katherine Mitchell Lagoon (incl. control inlet)	115,000	115,000
5.	Fencing		
	a. Entrance Structure (masonry)	8,000	
	b. 6' Woven Wire Fence (incl. service gates)	47,000	
			55,000
6.	Landscaping	25,000	25,000
7.	Lighting and Signing	35,000	35,000
B.	Improvements South of 47th Street		
1.	Pedestrian Bridge [2]		
	a. Substructure (concrete piers)	102,000	
	b. Superstructure (12' wide concrete deck, protective cage, handrail, steel stairs)	143,140	
	c. Contingencies @ 10%	24,520	
	d. Contractor Overhead @ 15%	40,450	
	e. Contractor Profit @ 10%	26,965	
			337,075
2.	Historic Map as Interpretive Feature		
	a. Map (poly vinyl chloride)	75,000	
	b. Concrete Deck Around Sunken Map (incl. railing and drainage)	15,900	
	c. Landscaped Sitting Area	9,800	
			100,700
3.	Comfort Facility		
	a. Restrooms and Storage Building	40,000	

Item	Description	Amount	Sub-Total
	b. Utilities	8,000	
	c. Security Lighting	2,000	
	d. Landscaping	4,500	
	e. Drinking Fountains and Benches	2,200	
			56,700
4.	Pathways		
	a. Hard Surface	10,000	
	b. Soft Surface	13,000	
	c. Footbridge	2,500	
			25,500
5.	Restoration of Original Channel (incl. control weir and berm)	50,000	50,000
6.	Fencing		
	a. Entrance Treatment	3,500	
	b. 6' Woven Wire Fence (incl. service gates)	34,000	
			37,500
7.	Seal Coat and Line Paint Existing Lot	1,200	1,200
8.	Landscaping	15,000	15,000
9.	Lighting and Signing	15,000	15,000
	Grand Total		$ 1,593,675

[1] Cost Estimate by Forest Preserve District of Cook County

[2] Cost Estimate by Raths, Raths & Johnson, Inc.

Appendices

Appendix A 53
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ORDER
DESIGNATING THE CHICAGO PORTAGE
A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Appendix B 57
CHICAGO PORTAGE HISTORIC SITE
PLAT OF SURVEY

Appendix C 61
HISTORIC CHRONOLOGY

Appendix D 65
"THE LAUGHTON TRADING POST"
by Dr. Margaret Kimball Brown,
Project Archeologist

Appendix E 69
NATURE BULLETINS
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"The Portage"
"The Illinois and Michigan Canal"
"The Des Plaines River - Part Two:
It's History"
"Early Cook County Roads - Part Two:
The Plank Road Era"
"The Laughton Ford and Trading Post"

Appendix F
UTILITY, TRANSPORTATION AND CONSERVATION
CONTACTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

Appendix A

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR ORDER

DESIGNATING THE CHICAGO PORTAGE

A NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

ORDER OF JANUARY 3, 1952
DESIGNATING THE CHICAGO PORTAGE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE, ILLINOIS

WHEREAS, the Congress of the United States has declared it to be a national policy to preserve for the public use historic sites, buildings and objects of national significance for the inspiration and benefit of the people of the United States; and

WHEREAS, the Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings, and Monuments has recognized the lands hereinafter described as possessing national significance because of their relation to the historic portage which determined the location and growth of the Nation's second largest metropolitan center; and

WHEREAS, a cooperative agreement has been entered into by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Illinois and the United States of America, providing for the designation, preservation, and use of the historic remains of the Chicago Portage as a national historic site:

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Oscar L. Chapman, Secretary of the Interior, by virture of and pursuant to the authority contained in section 2 of the act of August 21, 1935 (49 Stat. 666; 16 U.S.C., 1946 ed., sec. 462), do hereby designate the following described lands, together with all historic structures hereon and appurtenances connected therewith, to be a national historic site, having the same "Chicago Portage National Historic Site":

All those tracts or parcels of land known as the Chicago Portage Area, consisting of the actual portage point at the west end of the Chicago Portage, existing west and abandoned east channel of the Des Plaines River, the westerly end of Portage Creek, and the Laughton and Stony Fords across the west channel of the Des Plaines River, all located within the Forest Preserve District of Cook County and more particularly described as follows:

> Lots One Hundred and Three (103) and One Hundred and Five (105) including the sixty (60) foot road common to both, of Sanitary District Trustees Subdivision of Right-of-Way, from North and South Center Line of Section 30, Township 39 North, Range 14 East of the Third Principal Meridian to Will County Line, except that part of said Lot One Hundred and Five (105) lying Northwesterly of a line beginning at a point in the east line of said lot which is sixty-six and ninety-two hundredths (66.92) feet South of the Northeast corner thereof; thence southwesterly on a line curved to the left, convex to

the north, having a radius of two thousand three hundred (2300) feet, to its point of tangency to a line which is sixty-seven (67) feet, Southeasterly of, normally distant from, and parallel to the Northwesterly line of said lot; thence southwesterly in a line sixty-seven (67) feet Southeasterly of, normally distant from and parallel to said Northwesterly line to the Westerly line of said lot: and except that part of Lot One Hundred and Three (103) lying South of a Line beginning in at a point in the east line of said lot which is one thousand, three hundred and eight, and fifty-seven hundredths (1,308.57) feet South of the Northeast corner of said Lot One Hundred and Five (105); thence Northwesterly in a line making an angle of eighty-three degrees and thirteen minutes (83 degrees 13') with the East line of said Lot One Hundred and Three (103) measured from North to West, one thousand, six hundred and seventy-six and sixty-five hundredths (1,676.65) feet, more or less, to the Southwesterly line of said lot; containing thirty-seven and six tenths (37.6) acres, more or less, subject to the dedication of the easterly portion thereof for Harlem Ave.

Also Lot One Hundred and Seven (107), River Lot AR, and River Lot BR of said Subdivision except those parts of Lot One Hundred and Seven (107) and River Lot BR lying south of a line parallel to and fifty (50) feet Northwesterly of,measured at right angles, the Northerly Right-of-Way Line of the Chicago and Illinois Western Railroad as it existed on September 9, 1931, containing fifty-three and six tenths (53.6) acres, more or less, subject to the dedication of parts thereof for 47th Street and U.S. Highway Route 66:

All situated in Sections One (1) and Twelve (12) Township 38 North, Range 12 east of the Third Principal Meridian in the County of Cook and State of Illinois.

The administration, protection, and development of this national historic site shall be exercised in accordance with the provisions of the above-mentioned cooperative agreement and the act of August 21, 1935, supra.

Warning is expressly given to all unauthorized persons not to appropriate, injure, destroy, deface, or remove any feature of this historic site.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the official seal of the Department of the Interior to be affixed, at the City of Washington, this 3rd day of January 1952.

(SGD) OSCAR L. CHAPMAN
Secretary of the Interior

Appendix B

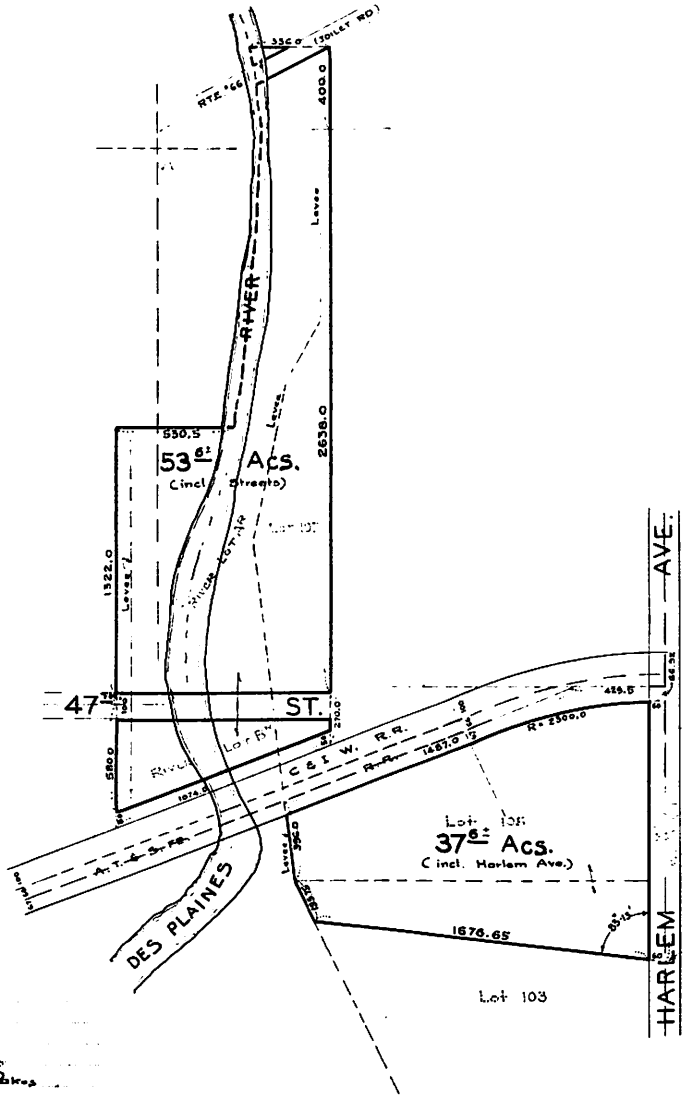
CHICAGO PORTAGE HISTORIC SITE

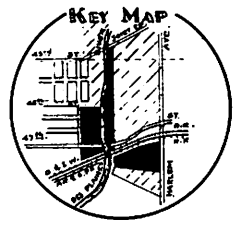
PLAT OF SURVEY

Forest Preserve District of Cook County

PLAT of SURVEY

Of part of Lots 103, 105, 107, River Lot A^R and River Lot B^R of Sanitary District Trustees Subdivision of right-of-way from N. and S. center line of Section 30, T-39-N, R-14-E to Will County line, all situated in Sections 1 and 12-38-12 in Cook County, Illinois





A.S. 3-50
286-1669
2194-2287

Scale 1" = 400'
District LYONS
Bought From
Book 38-12 Page
Drawn by Alex. Rakos
Checked by
Approved
Surveyor.

STATE OF ILLINOIS, } ss.
COUNTY OF COOK }

THE FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT of Cook County hereby certifies that it has surveyed the property described above, and that the plat above drawn is a correct representation of said survey

Chicago, Nov. 23rd A. D. 1955

Chief Engineer.

Appendix C

HISTORIC CHRONOLOGY

6000 B.C. - 1834 A.D.	First use of Chicago Portage by southern mound builders meeting with Indians from north to trade for copper. During this period the Indians developed and utilized the system of land and water routes associated with the Portage area.
	Early Indian tribes living in the vincinity of the Chicago Portage include: the Miami and Illini tribes. In the mid-eighteenth century the Sauk and Fox periodically traveled through this region from their settlements in the Galena region. The Iroquois came from the Lake Erie region and the Chippewa came from the north to forage here. The Chicago Portage area was later settled by the Ottawa and Potawatami tribes.
1673	Jacques Marquette and Louis Jolliet discovers Portage Creek
1674	Marquette spends winter near continental divide (December 4, 1674 - March 30, 1675)
1682	LaSalle and his lieutenant DeTonty travelled through the Portage area on an exploration trip
1700 - 1836	Portage used extensively by fur traders
1673 - 1700	French control Portage
1700 - 1730	Indians control Portage
1730 - 1780	British control Portage
1783	Treaty of Paris - Colonists given territory east of Mississippi River
1787	"Ordinance of Virginia" - implies that all navigable waters are forever free
1795	Treaty of Greenville - granted lands to the Colonists including a corridor (Chicago Portage) from Lake Michigan to the Illinois River

1803	Louisiana Purchase/first Fort Dearborn constructed
1812	War of 1812/massacre and buring of Fort Dearborn
1812 - 1816	Indians regain control of Portage
1816	Treaty of Ghent/second Fort Dearborn constructed
1821	John Wall surveys Portage area for the General Land Office of the United States
1822	Congress authorizes State of Illinois to build canal around Portage
1823	State of Illinois provides for it's own internal navigation
1824	Post and Paul survey area to determine best route for Illinois and Michigan Canal
1828 - 1834	Laughton's Trading Post in use
1830	Lyons and Riverside center of population in Cook County
1833	Bernardus and David Laughton die
1833	Chicago becomes a Village
1834	Last band of Potawatami Indians to leave the State of Illinois
1836 - 1848	Construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal
1837	Chicago becomes a city
1871	Great Chicago Fire
1877	Ogden Dam constructed by the City of Chicago to hold water in Ogden Ditch
1892 - 1900	Construction of Sanitary and Ship Canal; excess excavation used to construct levee on east bank of Des Plaines River leaving Mud Lake dry
1920 - 1930	"Blind Pig" - popular speakeasy built on Prescott's Island
1929	Metropolitan Sanitary District gives right of protectorateship of 91 acres at west end

of Chicago Portage to the Forest Preserve District of Cook County

1948 Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners begin negotiations to purchase property

1950 Forest Preserve District of Cook County purchases Portage for $125,000

1952 Secretary of Interior Oscar L. Chapman, adds Chicago Portage to National Park System as a National Historic Site in non-federal ownership

1973 National Park Service Grant Number 17-73-00027 approved.

Appendix D

"THE LAUGHTON TRADING POST"
by
Dr. Margaret Kimball Brown
Project Archeologist

In 1827, The Laughton brothers, Bernardus and David, owned a small tavern at "Hardscrabble" located at Racine Avenue and the south branch of the Chicago River. They moved to Riverside and opened a tavern. Sometime in 1828 the brothers opened a trading post at a spot on the Des Plaines River where the Ottawa trail crossed. This crossing was north of Portage Creek and south of Stony Ford. The river shallowed at this spot and has since been called "Laughton's Ford".

The trading post existed as such until 1834 when the last of the Potawatami Indians were sent from Illinois to the reservations in the West. The Laughtons had in the meantime, died within a month of each other and the post was operated by others. When trading slowed, the building was reputed to have become a tavern. Some reports indicate that the building existed until it burned in the 1870's. There is nothing but heresay evidence in literature that the post ever existed. There is no description available and only scant evidence as to it's location.

A monument with low wing walls was erected in the early 1930's to commemorate the location of the trading post. The location of the monument was decided by some historical research and was finally determined by a depression in the ground which some persons considered to be the foundation of the original structure.

An archeological study of the area was proposed to locate the site of the post and learn what it could of the building and it's surroundings. Students of the University of Illinois, Chicago Circle Campus, studied the area in 1973, and in testing of the monument site, evidence of the late woodland Indian culture was discovered in the soil used to fill the depression. Nothing else of unusual interest was found and only an archeological excavation would determine the existence of other historically significant artifacts.

The summer anthropology course of the Field Museum of Natural History was looking for a site to excavate, and the Forest Preserve District was looking for a crew to "dig".

A cooperative effort was the result. The summer anthropology course is for high ability high school students who are interested in the study of man. Spending four weeks in the study of anthropology at the museum, the students are prepared to have a week in the field excavating a site.

The first step in excavation was to discuss the site with the students. They were informed that we were looking for something which may not have existed and if it did exist it was for a short period of time, possibly only five or six years. We would excavate at the monument site because all research and heresay evidence pointed to that general area. The evidence of some late woodland material was all we could promise the students. We were able to tell them, however, that if a late woodland culture existed, past performance indicated that an older "archaic" culture was usually found in the same location. We knew also that a historic village or campsite would be located near a trading post and that geologically and geographically the area was suited to the Mississippian culture which existed from about 800 A.D. to the historic period.

The site was cleared of brush and debris on a Sunday afternoon. The quadrats were laid out for the students to begin the excavation on Monday morning, finishing we hoped, by Friday afternoon. Each quadrat or "square" was 5' x 10' and excavated by a team of three students. Eighteen of these squares were completely excavated down to sterile soil; three were completely excavated and two others were just begun during the five day period.

Materials from the excavation were put in bags and returned to the museum for study. A map was drawn of the excavated area; the map delineated the wing walls and the monument. On this map we located the few Indian features which were found. Soil tests were made to determine the "ph" which would indicate the amount of bone preservation we could expect. Soil samples were taken back to the lab for further study. The holes were filled in after the "dig" and all further work on the project this season was to be in the lab at the Field Museum.

Ten of the students from the course were asked to participate in the laboratory work. After several Saturdays the following information was learned from the excavated materials and our digging records:

1) Not much fill was used to level the area.

2) Coarse beach sand had been naturally deposited upon finer dune sand.

3) Most of the area showed an acid soil condition not

good for bone preservation

4) Many fragments of late woodland Indian pottery and several artifacts were found.

5) As predicted a few archaic artifacts were found.

6) A few Mississippian cultural artifacts and pot sherds were discovered.

7) A large piece of Indian pottery similar to that used in the contact period (1640-1740) was found.

8) No historic Indian material was discovered at this time but may be found in future excavation.

9) Much iron was discovered, and it is believed that some of the rusted square nails are handmade and of the type used *circa* 1830.

10) Some glazed pottery has been identified as pre-1850, but this is usually not a good indicator as it tends to have a long life.

11) Glass from several hand blown molded bottles was found. Historically these were used pre-1850; however, in the Chicago area some hand blown bottles were manufactured until 1870.

12) Over twenty (20) pieces of kaolin (clay) smoking pipes were found. At least three (3) pieces have been identified as a type made by a company which went out of business in 1850. Pipes of this sort are very short lived and are considered good indicators.

13) Later test pits indicate that the Indian occupation extends much further to the north.

We conclude that the location of the trading post is nearby. Much of the material we found indicates an occupation of the immediate area by someone during the period in which the post was supposed to be operating. Most of the materials of the per-1850 vintage are coming from the southeast corner of the "dig" area, and a slight rise in that area should be excavated next.

Indian occupation in the area covered several thousand years and further excavations should be undertaken to learn more about this multi-component occupation.

Location of the trading post, the old trails (especially Ottawa Trail), and the Indian sites will be determined with more archeological investigation. Evidence of the historic occupation should be found very soon. We should have enough information buried here to last for many years of "digs".

Further research in libraries, local historical societies, talks with local people and other evidence will be considered before future excavations are attempted.

Appendix E

NATURE BULLETINS
(Forest Preserve District of Cook County)

"Lake Chicago"
"The Portage"
"The Illinois and Michigan Canal"
"The DesPlaines River"
Part Two: It's Early History"
"Early Cook County Roads -
Part Two: The Plank Road Era"
"The Laughton Ford and Trading Post"

Nature Bulletin No. 57
March 16, 1946

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Clayton F. Smith, President

Roberts Mann
Superintendent of Conservation

LAKE CHICAGO

Chicago lies in a broad plain which, hundreds of millions of years ago, was a great interior basin covered by shallow seas that divided North America from the Artic Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. Evidences of that are the coral reefs in quarries such as those at Stoney Island, Thornton and McCook, or at 18th Street and Damen; also the fossils in the Niagara limestone bedrock.

Later, four times, the polar ice-cap crept down across the continent, covering this region with ice to a depth of a mile or more. As the climate changed they melted back. The last one, named the Wisconsin glacier, had an outlet thru the Sag Valley and the DesPlaines River Valley around Mt. Forest, now the Palos. Mighty torrents of water poured thru those valleys. As it retreated, it created Lake Chicago, ancestor of our Lake Michigan, then extending west to LaGrange and south beyond Homewood and Lansing.

As the glacier retreated it found new outlets, finally at Niagara Falls and thru the St. Lawrence River. Each new outlet caused Lake Chicago to drop -- first 20 feet, then 15 feet, finally another 20 feet. The outlet to the southwest dried up and the DesPlaines River, when in flood, overflowed into Lake Michigan.

At each of its three levels, Lake Chicago built up sand spits in its bays, beach lines and sand dunes. Our earliest trails and many of our modern roads follow these beach lines or the ridges of the sand spits. Ridge Road from Homewood thru Thornton and Lansing is one; Michigan City Road thru Riverdale, Dolton and Calumet City is another; LaGrange Road is another; Riverside Drive in Riverside, Grosse Point Road, Carpenter Road and Ridge Avenue thru Evanston are some others. Notice the drop from Michigan Avenue at Roseland and Kensington toward the Pullman plant. Notice the sharp rise on Washington Blvd. at Central Ave., or on Addison at Narragansett. Blue Island and Stoney Island were actual islands at successive levels of Lake Chicago.

Chicagoland is the inevitable consquence of events happening thousands, millions and hundreds of millions of years ago. Walk and learn.

Nature Bulletin No. 58 - 1946
March 23

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Clayton F. Smith, President

THE PORTAGE

Roberts Mann
Supt. of Conservation

Chicagoland has been millions of years in the making. But for 25,000 years it has been certain that this would be the crossroads for any great civilization on this continent and one of the major metropolitan centers of the world. Even the prehistoric mound-building Indians of the south and those of the north who built effigy mounds, met here to trade for copper. Later the Sioux, the Iroquois, the Illini, the western Algonquins which included the Potawatomi, and other once-powerful Indian nations paid tribute to the strategic importance of this region with their dead.

Finally, in the 1600's, came the white man. Here he discovered a portage across the low continental divide between Lake Michigan and the DesPlaines River, between the watershed of the Great Lakes emptying into the Atlantic Ocean and the watershed of the Mississippi emptying into the Gulf of Mexico.

Here he established forts. Then missions and trading posts. Then a town. Trails radiated from the town. Finally he dug a ditch connecting Lake Michigan with the DesPlaines River and called it the Illinois and Michigan Canal. The town he called "Chicago".

Take a look at the DesPlaines River Valley at Willow Springs. On the highland northwest runs the great transcontinental highway, U. S. 66. Turning south from it and crossing the valley you pass beneath the 220,000 volt transmission line, from Pekin, that made possible the great war-industry plants of Chicagoland. Beneath it lies a 24-inch pipe carrying natural gas from Texas. Next the Santa Fe R. R. Then the DesPlaines River in a man-made channel. Then the Sanitary and Ship Canal, one of the world's busiest inland waterways. Then the abandoned I & M Canal. Then the Chicago and Alton R. R., the other of the only two railroads leaving Chicago westward on a continuous downgrade. Then Route 4-A, Archer Avenue, an old post road with the lines of the old Postal Telegraph on its angling right-of-way.

There you have the gateway to the Mississippi and to the Middle West. Take a walk and learn about Chicago.

Nature Bulletin No. 168-A
November 7, 1964

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Seymour Simon, President

Roberts Mann
Conservation Editor

THE ILLINOIS AND MICHIGAN CANAL

Chicago is and always has been the key to the Middle West. The Potawatomi, Chippewa and Ottawa Indians were but the last of a long succession of Indian tribes to hold this region because of its strategic importance. Louis Jolliet, returning with Father Marquette from a voyage of discovery in 1673-74, reported to the governor in Montreal that, in order to travel by boat from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, it would be necessary to make but "... one canal intersecting only half a league of prairie in order to enter from the foot of the lake of the Illinois (Lake Michigan) into the river of St. Louis (Illinois River)."

By 1803, the fur trade in the Northwest Territory had become so important that Fort Dearborn was established. The war of 1812 emphasized the necessity of a route over which military and naval forces and supplies could be readily transported to the northern frontier. In 1816, an Indian treaty granted to the United States a strip of land 20 miles wide along the route of a proposed waterway from the mouth of the Chicago River down the DesPlaines and Illinois river valleys. The bill for the admission of Illinois as a state was amended to shove its boundary, from an east and west line drawn thru the southerly bend of Lake Michigan, north to its present location -- solely because, then, the proposed canal might be entirely within and constructed by the new state -- thus serving, with the Erie Canal then building, to link the Atlantic Ocean with the Mississippi valley.

In 1822, Daniel P. Cook and Jesse B. Thomas, respectively congressman and senator from Illinois, obtained from the federal government a grant of the public domain consisting of a strip of land for the proposed canal and 90 feet on each side of it. In 1829, Cook (for whom the County of Cook was named) was also instrumental in obtaining passage of an act by which the federal government donated to Illinois, for the purpose of financing the construction of the canal, alternate sections of land for a distance of five miles on each side of it.

A canal commission was appointed, consisting of Gen. William F. Thornton, Col. Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard and Col. William B. Archer, and in 1829 the towns of Ottawa and Chicago were laid out. On July 4, 1836, with a great celebration at Canal Port, the first spadeful of dirt was dug and the job begun. Due to floods, labor scarcity and the panic of 1837, little progress was made before work was abandoned in 1842. Resumed in 1845, the canal, 96 miles long from Bridgeport (just east of Ashland Ave. at about 28th St.) to Peru-LaSalle, was completed and opened for traffic in 1848. The first boat to pass thru the entire length of the canal was the "General Thornton" of LaSalle, with a cargo of sugar.

Immediately the canal became a tremendous factor in the development of Chicago and northern Illinois. The produce of the Illinois valley, formerly shipped to St. Louis, began to pour into Chicago. Merchandise from the east, via the Erie Canal and the Great Lakes, poured down the canal to the river towns and from them to the settlements rapidly being extended northward and westward. In 1830 there were only 1310 people in that part of Illinois north of Peoria. By 1850 there were 125,708, largely concentrated in Chicago and along the waterway.

Now, in 1964, the bed and the right-of-way of that canal have been occupied by the Southwest Expressway (US 66 and Interstate 55) from Chicago as far as Summit. From there to Lemont, in Cook County, it may become a forest preserve. From Lemont to LaSalle, parts of it have been and all of it should be developed as a state park.

That little old canal has made mighty contributions to the growth of Chicago.

Nature Bulletin No. 607
June 4, 1960

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Daniel Ryan, President

Roberts Mann
Conservation Editor

THE DES PLAINES RIVER
PART TWO: ITS HISTORY

David H. Thompson
Senior Naturalist

The recorded history of Chicago, and the Des Plaines river which has had a vital part in its growth, began in 1673. Father Marquette and Louis Jolliet, returning from their discovery and exploration of the Mississippi, had been told by Indians of a short-cut to Lake Michigan. So they paddled up the Illinois and Des Plaines rivers to the Chicago Portage and thence to the lake. LaSalle and his voyageurs commanded by Tonty were the next white men to chronicle travels across the portage and on the Des Plaines in trips to and from forts at Starved Rock and Peoria.

However, Chicago had been a crossroads and the Des Plaines an artery of travel since prehistoric times. From Channahon to Wisconsin there used to be manmade mounds, singly or in groups, along the river. From artifacts and skeletons found in them it has been determined that most of those in Cook county were built by two ancient races of Indians. A few were effigy mounds typical of those found in Wisconsin and the copper regions near Lake Superior. The others were of types common along the Illinois, Mississippi and Ohio rivers, but smaller. Copper nuggets, utensils and ornaments were found in them.

Obviously, this was the place where the northern and southern races of mound builders came to trade and they came along the Des Plaines, either in dug-outs or on nearby trails. Being natural highways, with shallow fords at several places, those trails were adopted by the Indians who succeeded the mound builders and had large villages at seven strategic locations in Cook county alone. Later, they were used also by white explorers, traders and travellers. Now, some of our principal highways follow those ancient routes.

Chicago and all or parts of 14 counties including Cook are in Illinois, instead of Wisconsin, solely because it was recognized that a waterway from Lake Michigan to the Mississippi could be obtained by constructing a canal thru the Chicago Portage, down the Des Plaines valley, and thence to LaSalle-Peru where the Illinois river became navigable in all seasons.

The Northwest Territory Ordinance of 1787 established the north boundary of Indiana and Illinois territories at an east-west line thru the southern tip of Lake Michigan. In 1816 the governor of Illinois Territory, Ninian Edwards, negotiated a treaty with the Potawatomi, Ottawa and Chippewa tribes whereby they ceded a strip of land between two boundary lines: 20 miles wide from the mouth of the Chicago river to the junction of the Des Plaines with the Kankakee, and 10 miles wide -- on the north side of the Illinois -- from there to the Fox river.

When Illinois became a state in 1818 its northern boundary was established at latitude 42° 30', 61 miles north of the 1787 Ordinance line, in order that a canal from Lake Michigan to the Illinois river would be entirely within and could be built by the new state. Accordingly, the Illinois and Michigan Canal, authorized by Congress on March 30, 1822, was begun in 1836 and finally completed in 1848. It eliminated the series of arduous portages that, in very dry seasons, extended as far as Starved Rock -- over 80 miles. Its stimulating effects upon Chicago, northeastern Illinois and the Illinois river valley were tremendous.

Upstream from the Portage, at strategic locations along the river, trading posts and taverns, followed by villages, were established. Roads, now modern highways, were built between them and Chicago. After the Hofmann dam was built and the Forest Preserve District was organized, the Des Plaines became an important factor in the recreation of the people in Cook County. That story will be told in Part III.

Nature Bulletin No. 739
January 18, 1964

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Seymour Simon, President

Roberts Mann
Conservation Editor

EARLY COOK COUNTY ROADS
PART TWO -- THE PLANK ROAD ERA

For ten years after Chicago, with a population of 4,170, was chartered as a city in 1837, its commerce and growth were crippled by wretched transportation to and from the hinterlands. During many periods of each year it was surrounded and isolated by mud.

To be sure, there were dirt thoroughfares in all directions, graded and drained as best they could in those days, but not surfaced. No one who has never experienced it can appreciate how gooey and gluey a black prairie soil can be when wet. A wagon's wheels often become solid cylinders of mud as wide as a bass drum.

Then, in 1848, there occurred a "break through": three developments of vital importance. In July the Illinois and Michigan Canal from Chicago to Peru and the Illinois River, started in 1836, was finally completed and opened for traffic.

In October the Galena and Chicago Union, the first railroad (now part of the Chicago & Northwestern Ry.), was completed across the Slough of Despond and to the Des Plaines River. Within a few years, five other railroads had arrived: the Michigan Southern, the Michigan Central, the Rock Island, the Illinois Central, and the Burlington.

And in September, 1848, the Southwestern Plank Road was completed from Chicago to Doty's Tavern at what is now the intersection of Ogden Ave. with Joliet Ave. in Lyons. In 1850 it was extended to Brush Hill and Fullersburg (now Hinsdale), and in 1851 to Naperville. From there, a plank road was built to Oswego and Little Rock; and another to Warrenville, St. Charles, and Sycamore.

That was the first of a network of plank roads that radiated outward like the spokes of a wheel. Chicago was the hub. In 1849, the Northwestern Plank Road was constructed on Milwaukee Ave. to Oak Ridge at what is now Irving Park Blvd.; thence to Dutchman's Point (now Niles); and finally to Wheeling. The Western Plank Road was built westerly from Oak Ridge to Bloomingdale in DuPage County and thence to Elgin.

In 1851 the Southern Plank Road was constructed along the lines of State St. and Vincennes Ave. as far as Kyle's Tavern at about 83rd St. where it was halted by the approach of the Illinois Central RR. In 1854 the Blue Island Plank Road was completed on Western Ave. to its junction with Blue Island Ave., then the southwest corner of Chicago. There was also a 5-mile plank road parallel to the lake shore from North Ave. and Clark St. to Green Bay Road.

In 1839 a plank road was built in Canada, instigated by the governor-general who had seen them in Russia. The idea spread to New York, Wisconsin, Illinois and Indiana where laws governing the incorporation of plank road companies were enacted. Built at a cost of about $2000 per mile, they were very profitable at first. There were toll gates at intervals of 5 or 6 miles. On the first stretch of the Southwestern Plank Road, the tolls were 12 1/2¢ (one "bit") for a man on horseback, two bits for a single team, and three bits for a 4-horse vehicle.

Usually there was a row of heavy stringers on each side of a 16-foot roadway and across them were laid (but not spiked) heavy planks of pine and hemlock or, better, oak and walnut. However, the planks soon warped, decayed, and frequently floated away or were "borrowed" by neighboring settlers. After a few years, with little or no maintenance, most plank roads became so discomfortable and dangerous that they were abandoned. The decline of those "revolutionary improvements" was almost as rapid as their rise.

Much of the foregoing information was obtained from "Chicago's Highways -- Old and New", by Milo M. Quaife.

Nature Bulletin No. 696
December 1, 1962

Forest Preserve District of Cook County
Seymour Simon, President

Roberts Mann
Conservation Editor

THE LAUGHTON FORD AND TRADING POST

In 1827, David and Bernardus (Barney) Laughton built a tavern in what is now Riverside. It was located north of the present bridge between that village and Lyons, on the Barry Point trail from Chicago. A short distance downstream is a limestone ledge and shallow ford where that trail, and two important Potawatomi trails, crossed the Des Plaines River.

The Laughtons were far-sighted business men. They had been Indian traders at Hardscrabble, or Lee's Place, on the South Branch of the Chicago River near Damen Ave. That was the head of navigation on the river and the eastern end of the Chicago Portage route. Later it became the eastern terminus of the Illinois and Michigan Canal, and eventually the Sanitary and Ship Canal.

But the Potawatomi trade at Hardscrabble was dwindling; it would be better at Riverside. The fur trade was dwindling. The proposed canal from there to Ottawa would end the travel in canoes or boats by fur traders, explorers, missionaries, or anyone using the Chicago Portage route to the Illinois and Mississippi valleys. Further, with the growth of white settlements along the Illinois River and westward from Chicago, overland travel was increasing rapidly.

So the Laughtons moved to Riverside and, in 1830, purchased the quarter section upon which their tavern stood. Barry Point trail became part of the first country road built in Cook county and Laughton Tavern, in 1834, was a stop-over on the first stage coach line westward from Chicago.

Meanwhile they had established a trading post on another much-travelled overland route: the old Portage Trail which began at Hardscrabble and paralleled the water route thru Mud Lake on high ground north of it. Laughton's trading post was just east of where that trail crossed the DesPlaines and then angled southwesterly to join what is now U.S. 66, an old Indian trail and overland route to Joliet, Ottawa, and the Illinois valley. The ford was about a half-mile north of where Portage Creek entered the river and a mile south of Riverside.

In those days the DesPlaines curved easterly until, near Harlem Ave., it made a hairpin turn and flowed southwest down the valley. There was also a cut-off channel thru what is now Catherine Mitchell Lagoon, and a large island between it and the main channel. The Portage Trail or Laughton Ford was just north of that island. The old channel, the ford, and the island were obliterated when, in order to construct the Sanitary Canal, the river was straightened and a levee built to prevent it from overflowing eastward.

Mud Lake was a long swamp with two shallow channels emptying easterly into the South Branch and westerly, on the other side of a low continental divide, into the DesPlaines. Sometimes, when it became nearly dry, a portage of seven miles, from Hardscrabble to Portage Creek, was necessary. During long drouths the DesPlaines became so shallow between a succession of pools that portages of 25 miles to Cache Island at Romeo, or 50 to the mouth of the Kankakee, or almost 100 miles to Starved Rock, had to be made. Consequently, the Portage Trail was intensively travelled but eventually -- after the I&M Canal was completed, Archer Ave. was built, and the Southwest Plank Road laid on Ogden Ave. -- it disappeared.

The locations of "Lawton's Trading House" and the ford were defined in an 1832 report by a U.S. engineer and shown on a later map. There we found a rectangular depression -- apparently an old cellar. It is in Ottawa Trail Woods, two blocks north of the 47th St. entrance and 400 feet west of the drive thru that forest preserve. At each corner there is a low masonry wall. In the center is a boulder commemorating that historic site.

Next week: Early Illinois Trading Posts.

Appendix F

UTILITY, TRANSPORTATION AND CONSERVATION CONTACTS AND CORRESPONDENCE

UTILITY, TRANSPORTATION AND CONSERVATION CONTACTS

1. CHICAGO & ILLINOIS WESTERN RAILROAD
   ILLINOIS CENTRAL GULF RAILROAD
   233 N. Michigan Avenue
   Chicago, Illinois 60601
   Engineering Department - 35 E. 11th Place
   Chicago, Illinois 60605
   Phone: 565-1600
   Mr. A.L. Sams, V.P. & Chief Engineer
   Mr. R.E. Skinner, Ass't to Chief Engineer
   Mr. G.W. Mahn

2. COMMONWEALTH EDISON
   P.O. BOX 767
   Chicago, Illinois 60690
   Phone: 294-3256
   Mr. A.R. Heidecke, Ass't Director of Real Estate

3. EDWIN HANCOCK ENGINEERING COMPANY
   752 Madison Street
   Forest Park, Illinois
   Phone: 366-4711
   Mr. William Bucha, City Engineer for Forest View, Illinois

4. ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
   300 N. State Street
   Chicago, Illinois 60610
   Mr. Ed Kramarz,Drainage Engineer
   Phone: 793-2306
   Mr. Donald Schietzelt, Central Area Permit Engineer
   Phone: 793-3830
   Mr. Melvin R. Sierakowski, Central Area Control Engineer

5. ILLINOIS DIVISION OF WATERWAYS
   300 N. State Street
   Chicago, Illinois 60610
   Phone: 793-3123
   Mr. J. Sobanski, Mr. P. Marcyn, Mr. D. Cogan

6. METROPOLITAN SANITARY DISTRICT
   101 E. Ontario Street
   Chicago, Illinois 60611
   Phone: 751-5789
   Mr. Harry Krajcer

7. NATURAL GAS PIPELINE COMPANY OF AMERICA
   2211 W. Jefferson Street
   Joliet, Illinois 60435
   Phone: 815-431-7945

7. (continued)
Mr. LaBarge, Engineering Department
122 S. Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60603
Mr. J.E. Thompson, V.P. - Engineering

8. NORTHEASTERN ILLINOIS PLANNING COMMISSION
10 S. Riverside Plaza
Chicago, Illinois 60606
Phone; 454-0400

9. THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY
80 E. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, Illinois
Division Office
Foot of 27th Street
Ft. Madison, Iowa
Phone: 319-372-7733
Mr. Carl Snowden, Chief Engineer
Mr. L.W. Cantwell, Division Engineer
Mr. E.D. Chaddock, Superintendent
Operating Department
P.O. Box 1738
900 Jackson Street
Topeka, Kansas 66628
Mr. C.L. Holman, Ass't Gen. Mgr. - Engineering

10. SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE DEPARTMENT AT MORTON ARBORETUM
Thornhill Building
Lisle, Illinois
Mr. Rex Mape, Soil Survey
Mr. Duwayne Klamm, River Basin Planning

11. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Chicago Field Office
2510 Dempster Street
Room 214
Des Plaines, Illinois 60016
Phone: 298-2622
Mr. Grant A. Petersen, Acting Ass't to the Regional Director, Chicago

12. WEST TOWNS BUS COMPANY
259 W. Lake Street
Oak Park, Illinois
Phone: 383-6420

Commonwealth Edison
72 West Adams Street, Chicago, Illinois
Address Reply to: Post Office Box 767
Chicago, Illinois 60690

May 7, 1975

Mr. Carl L. Goetz, President
Wm. E. Rose and Associates, Inc.
10 North Lincoln
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Dear Mr. Goetz:

Subject: Chicago Portage National Historic Site
Lyons, Illinois

Our Engineering Department has been reviewing the preliminary plans for the proposed extension of a pedestrian overpass of our transmission line south of 47th Street, west of Harlem Avenue, in Lyons, Illinois.

Since no dimensions were shown on the plans on the upper part of the overpass, measurements were scaled to determine heights of the structure in closest proximity to our conductors. The clearances thus arrived at are very close to the minimums required over structures.

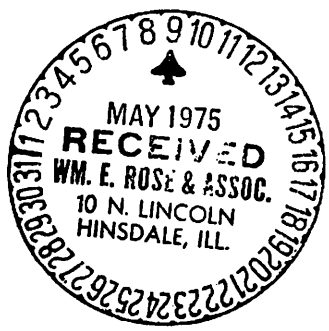
Before approval of the project can be provided, drawings will be required showing the dimensions of the overpass or other data provided from which we can more accurately determine our conductor clearances.

Yours truly,

J. T. O'Brien

FOR A. R. Heidecke
Assistant Director of Real Estate

RGE:bnn



Illinois Central Gulf Railroad
an IC Industries company

April 9, 1975

Carl L. Goetz
President
William E. Rose and Associates, Inc.
10 North Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Re: Chicago Portage National Historic Site.

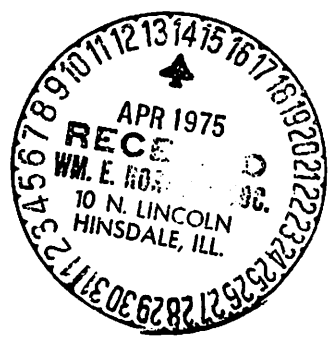
Dear Mr. Goetz:

This will acknowledge receipt of your letter dated March 13, 1975, concerning the proposed construction of a pedestrian bridge over our Chicago and Illinois Western track near Mile Post 7 at Lyons, Illinois.

We are reviewing your proposal and will contact you again with our comments as promptly as possible.

Very truly yours,

R. E. Skinner
Assistant to Chief Engineer



233 North Michigan Avenue/Chicago Illinois 60601
Telephone 312 565 1600

Illinois Central Gulf Railroad
an IC Industries company

May 6, 1975
CI 7/23

Mr. Carl L. Goetz
President
William E. Rose and Associates, Inc.
10 North Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Re: Chicago Portage National Historic Site

Dear Mr. Goetz:

Reference is made to my letter dated April 9, 1975 concerning the proposed construction of a pedestrian bridge over our Chicago and Illinois Western track near Mile Post 7 at Lyons, Illinois.

We have reviewed your preliminary plans and have no objections to the proposed bridge provided the following criteria are met:

1. A minimum of 23'-0" vertical clearance be provided.

2. A minimum of 12'-6" horizontal clearance, measured at right angles to the track, be provided.

3. If column type piers are utilized, a crash wall extending to 6 feet above top of rail will be required at the pier adjacent to our track.

Very truly yours,

for R. E. Skinner
Assistant to Chief Engineer

233 North Michigan Avenue/Chicago Illinois 60601
Telephone 312 565 1600

Illinois Department of Transportation
Room 907 300 North State Street Chicago Illinois 60610

CENTRAL AREA PERMIT OPERATIONS
Re: Ill. 43 and 47th Street — District 1
Chicago Portage National Historic Site

March 20, 1975

Mr. Carl L. Goetz, President
William E. Rose & Associates, Inc.
10 North Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois, 60521

Dear Mr. Goetz:

We are in the process of reviewing your preliminary plans for the referenced location.

Please submit detailed plans for the pedestrian overpass over 47th Street for our review.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact Mr. Donald Schietzelt, Central Area Permit Engineer, at 793-3830.

Very truly yours

Sigmund C. Ziejewski
District Engineer

By: Melvin R. Sierakowski
Central Area Control Engineer

TN:w

Illinois Department of Transportation
Room 907 300 North State Street Chicago Illinois 60610

Region 1

CENTRAL AREA PERMIT OPERATIONS
Re: 47th Street and DesPlaines River

April 7, 1975

Mr. Carl L. Goetz
William R. Rose & Associates, Inc.
10 North Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois, 60521

Dear Mr. Goetz:

We have reviewed your preliminary application for a pedestrian overpass at the referenced location, and find the concept acceptable.

Upon completion of plans and a traffic survey for the Chicago Portage National Historic Site, please submit same to this office for review.

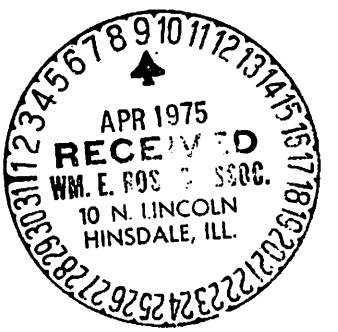
If there are any questions, please contact Mr. Donald Schietzelt, Central Area Permit Engineer, at 793-3830.

Very truly yours

Sigmund C. Ziejewski
District Engineer

By: Melvin R. Sierakowski
Central Area Control Engineer

TN:w



NATURAL GAS PIPELINE COMPANY OF AMERICA

122 South Michigan Avenue • Chicago, Illinois 60603

J. E. THOMPSON
Vice President - Engineering

Area 312/431-7630

March 25, 1975

Wm. E. Rose & Associates, Inc.
10 North Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Attention: Mr. Carl L. Goetz
President

RE: Chicago Portage National Historic Site

Gentlemen:

From the information you supplied we can grant a preliminary approval of the bridge concept.

We would like more detailed information on the location of the bridge piers in relation to our pipelines before we could give our final approval.

If you should have any questions or require additional information, please contact this office.

Very truly yours,

NATURAL GAS PIPELINE COMPANY OF AMERICA

J. E. Thompson

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company

A Santa Fe Industries Company

Foot of 27th Street
Fort Madison, Iowa 52627
March 24, 1975

File: 56296

Wm. E. Rose and Associates Inc.
10 North Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Dear Mr. Rose:

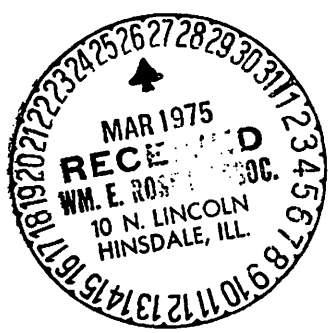
In regard to your letter of March 13, concerning proposed Chicago Portage National Historic Site at Lyons, Illinois.

Please furnish me an additional set of the four preliminary exhibits as furnished in your above letter.

Yours truly,

L W Cantwell

L. W. Cantwell
Division Engineer

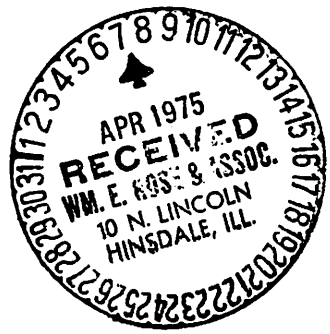


Santa Fe – THE ATCHISON, TOPEKA AND SANTA FE RAILWAY COMPANY

OPERATING DEPARTMENT • P.O. Box 1738, 900 Jackson Street, Topeka, Kansas 66628 • 913/235-0041

April 4, 1975

273005



Wm. E. Rose & Associates, Inc.
10 N. Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Gentlemen:

Your letter of March 13, 1975 addressed to Mr. L. W. Cantwell, our Division Engineer at Fort Madison concerning Chicago Portage National Historic Site was forwarded to this office for reply.

We note from the next to last paragraph of your letter you needed certain criteria from the Santa Fe prior to April 4, 1975. Mr. Burgess of my staff called Mr. Rose this morning and discussed the preliminary exhibits which were transmitted with this letter.

This letter is in confirmation of the above mentioned phone conversation.

On Exhibit 1 we note a fence line is shown on the South side of the Santa Fe tracks. No fence is shown on the North side of the Chicago, Illinois & Western tracks. We feel the public should be protected from rail traffic by having the railroad right of way completely fenced in order that all pedestrian traffic will be funneled to the proposed overpass.

On Exhibit 2 we recommend fences be shown also for the same reason given in the discussion of Exhibit 1.

On Exhibit 3, preliminary plan and elevation for the proposed pedestrian bridge, the clearance from the centerline of our adjacent track to Pier No. 2 scales 10 feet plus or minus. Our standards require a collision wall to be incorporated in the design of Piers which are closer than 15 feet from the centerline of track. This collision wall must extend 8 feet 0 inches above top of rail. Some economy in the design of the Pier may be had by placing it outside of the 15 feet clearance. In any case a minimum horizontal clearance of 10 feet 6 inches will be required because of proposed electrification of this segment of line.

The 23 feet 0 inches vertical clearance shown on Exhibit 3 should be increased to 26 feet 0 inches. This portion of our railroad is currently under study for electrification as noted above. The 26 feet clearance is required to accomodate the Electrification Overhead Catenary System.

You note in your letter that you are not seeking a construction permit at this time. As such we do not require a construction permit; however, the agency sponsoring this project will be required to enter into an agreement with the Santa Fe to cover the construction and maintenance of the proposed pedestrian overpass. This agreement will also provide the permanent easement necessary for the structure.

Please send us four (4) additional copies of the preliminary exhibits transmitted with your letter. When the preliminary plans are submitted for approval, six (6) sets will be required. When the final plans are ready for submission, we will require four (4) sets. Future correspondence concerning this project should be addressed to this office. In the meantime, if there is anything further we can do to assist you please let us know.

Very truly yours,

C. L. Holman

C. L. Holman
Asst. Gen. Mgr. - Engineering

The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway Company

A Santa Fe Industries Company

Foot of 27th Street
Fort Madison, Iowa 52627

June 13, 1975

File: 56296

William S. Rose & Associates, Inc.
10 N. Lincoln Street
Hinsdale, Illinois 60521

Gentlemen:

This refers to your request to construct a pedestrian bridge over and across Santa Fe's double track and right of way in the vicinity of Mile Post 11 in Cook County, Illinois.

In accordance with your letter dated March 13, 1975, you advised the bridge was required to obtain safe access to the Chicago Portage Historical Preservation. This bridge will make it possible for visitors to move from the proposed Interpretive Center to the Historic Site south of the railroad property.

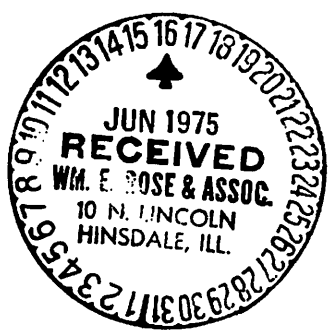
We understand the property which the pedestrian bridge will join is actually owned by Forest Preserve District of Cook County. If this is correct, the agreement will be considered between Santa Fe and Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

For our consideration in preparing an agreement, it will be necessary that we be advised of the complete mailing addres and corporate status of Forest Preserve District of Cook County. Also, advise if Forest Preserve District of Cook County would be agreeable to executing an agreement covering the proposed pedestrian bridge.

Yours truly,

E. O. Chaddock

E.O. Chaddock
Superintendent



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