

Voyageurs

NATIONAL PARK • MINNESOTA

The forested lake country along Minnesota's northern border was once the scene of an epic chapter in North American history. For a century and a half, French-Canadian voyageurs, led or assisted by Indians, plied this maze of lakes and streams in frail bark canoes, transporting vast quantities of furs and goods between Montreal and the far Northwest. Hardy and energetic, these canoe men became the mainstays of the fur trade, a major industry on the continent during the 18th century.

The voyageur's "canoe has long since vanished from the northern waters," Grace Lee Nute wrote, "his red cap is seen no more, a bright spot against the blue of Lake Superior; his sprightly French conversation, punctuated with inimitable gesture, his exaggerated courtesy, his incurable romanticism, his songs, and his superstitions are gone."

Though the colorful voyageur is gone, his land is not. Since 1971, when Congress authorized establishment of Voyageurs National Park, a sizable portion of it has been preserved to look much as

it did during the voyageur days of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. The park, which encompasses 88,788 hectares (219,400 acres), much of it water, has all the wildness and immense scale associated with the northern lakes region: a land surface shaped by continental glaciation into an endless system of internal waterways, and a sense of vastness, reinforced by the uniformity of the forest mantle.

Most of the park land is on the heavily forested and relatively undeveloped Kabetogama Peninsula. Stands of fir, spruce, pine, aspen, and birch reach down to the water's edge, broken here and

there by bogs, sand beaches, and cliffs. The peninsula is accessible principally by water, and its interior holds a number of lakes that can be reached only by foot.

The north shore of the peninsula has a sharply broken front, with many small bays and hidden coves. Numerous small islands lie off the south shore, and along both shores are many places with smooth, glaciated rock, well suited for camping and picnicking.

The waters surrounding the peninsula range from narrows of less than 30 meters (100 feet) in width to lakes several kilometers across, irregular in shape, dotted with islands, and accented with rocky points and promontories. Four lakes dominate the park area: Namakan, Kabetogama, Rainy, and Sand Point.

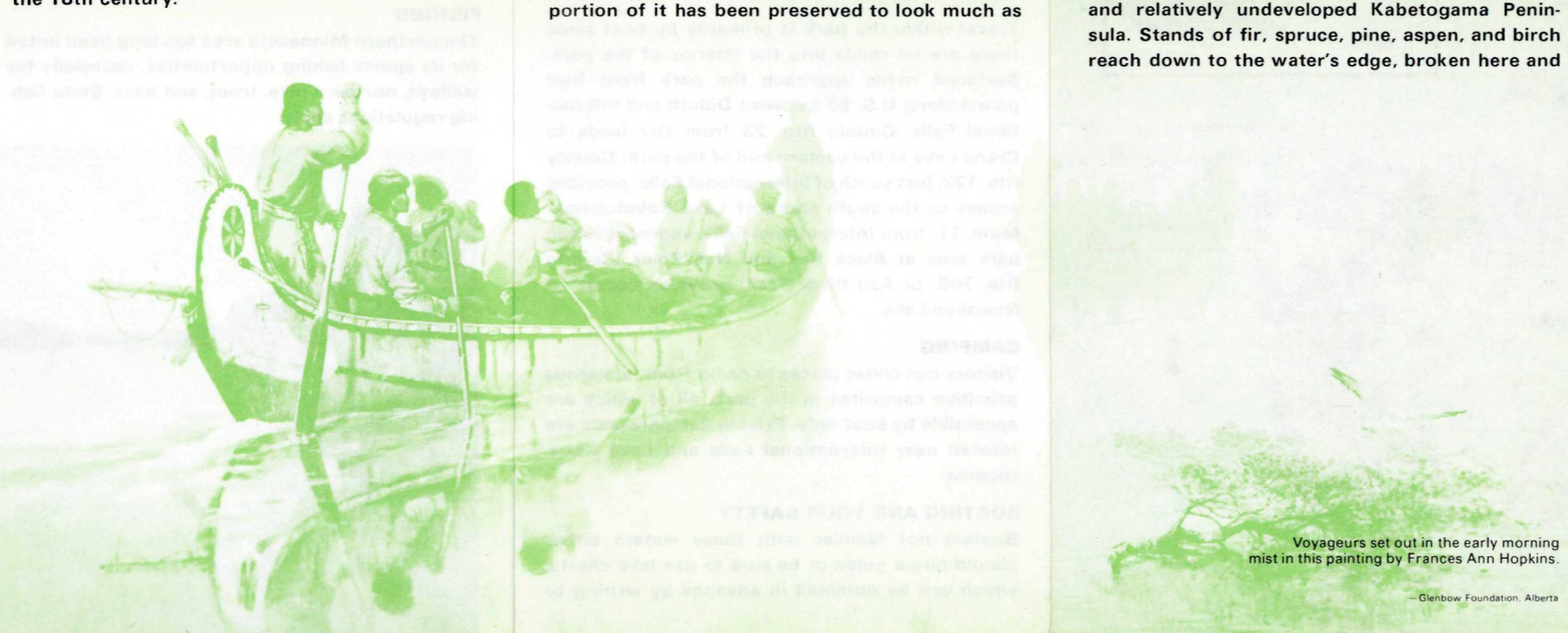
The trading posts and forts of the fur companies were located west of the park, near International Falls. These posts served as the link between Grand Portage, a trading terminal on Lake Superior that is now preserved as a National Park System area, and the remote Northwest.

Altogether, this is a land and water environment of great character, high esthetic interest, and considerable recreational potential. Voyageurs National Park will offer visitors, especially canoeists, a wilderness experience in an historical setting—the world of the voyageurs.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

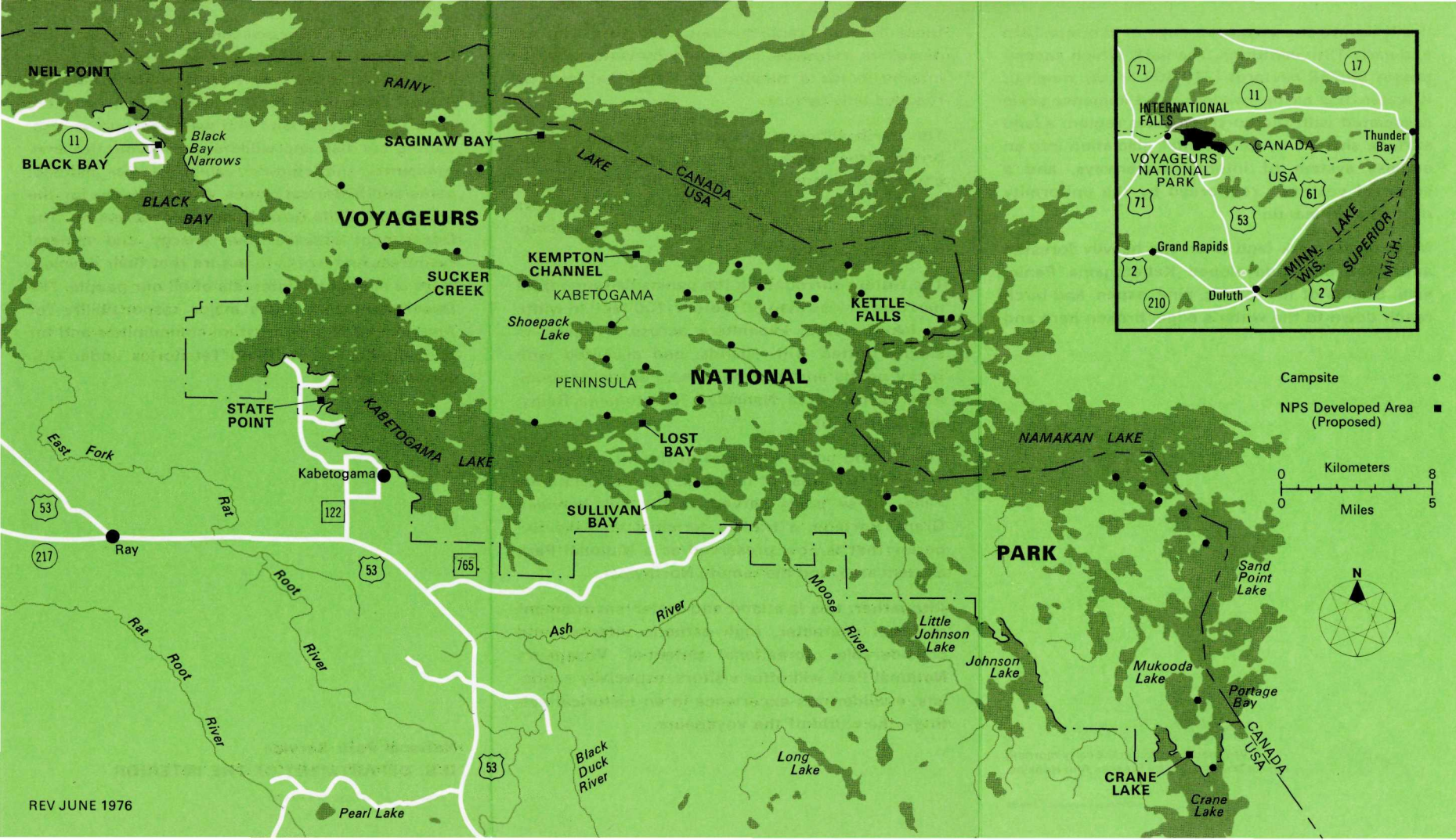
National Park Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

GPO: 1976-211-313/123 Reprint 1976



Voyageurs set out in the early morning mist in this painting by Frances Ann Hopkins.

Glenbow Foundation, Alberta



VISITING THE PARK

Voyageurs National Park stretches along the U.S.-Canadian border east of International Falls, Minn. Land continues to be acquired for this relatively new park, and visitor facilities are still being developed.

Some of the land within the park is privately owned, and there are many private cottages. Please respect the rights of these property holders.

Travel within the park is primarily by boat since there are no roads into the interior of the park. Surfaced roads approach the park from four points along U.S. 53 between Duluth and International Falls. County Rte. 23 from Orr leads to Crane Lake at the eastern end of the park; County Rte. 122, just south of International Falls, provides access to the south shore of Lake Kabetogama; Minn. 11, from International Falls, approaches the park area at Black Bay and Neil Point; County Rte. 765, or Ash River Trail, provides access to Namakan Lake.

CAMPING

Visitors can choose places to camp from numerous primitive campsites in the park, all of which are accessible by boat only. Private campgrounds are located near International Falls and Lake Kabetogama.

BOATING AND YOUR SAFETY

Boaters not familiar with these waters either should hire a guide or be sure to use lake charts, which can be obtained in advance by writing to

National Ocean Survey, Distribution Division, Riverdale, MD 20840. Topographic maps can be obtained by writing to Distribution Section, U.S. Geological Survey, Federal Center, Denver, CO 80225. The large lakes can quickly become very rough, so keep informed about weather conditions. Users of small boats and canoes should be particularly cautious and should be prepared to wait out rough water. State and Federal boating regulations apply.

FISHING

The northern Minnesota area has long been noted for its sports fishing opportunities, especially for walleye, northern pike, trout, and bass. State fishing regulations apply.

ACCOMMODATIONS AND SERVICES

Resort, motel, and hotel facilities are nearby. Boat and canoe rental service are available. Resorts, hotels, and other visitor facilities have or can arrange for guides. Flights to remote lakes and excursion boat rides also are offered.

ADMINISTRATION

Voyageurs National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. The superintendent's address is P.O. Box 50, International Falls, MN 56649.

