

**A VOYAGE ON LAKE
SUPERIOR IN 1826.
A TRIP TO DULUTH
IN 1902; PP. 1-74**

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A Voyage on Lake Superior in 1826. A Trip to Duluth in 1902; pp. 1-74 by Isabelle G. Carpenter

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ISABELLE G. CARPENTER

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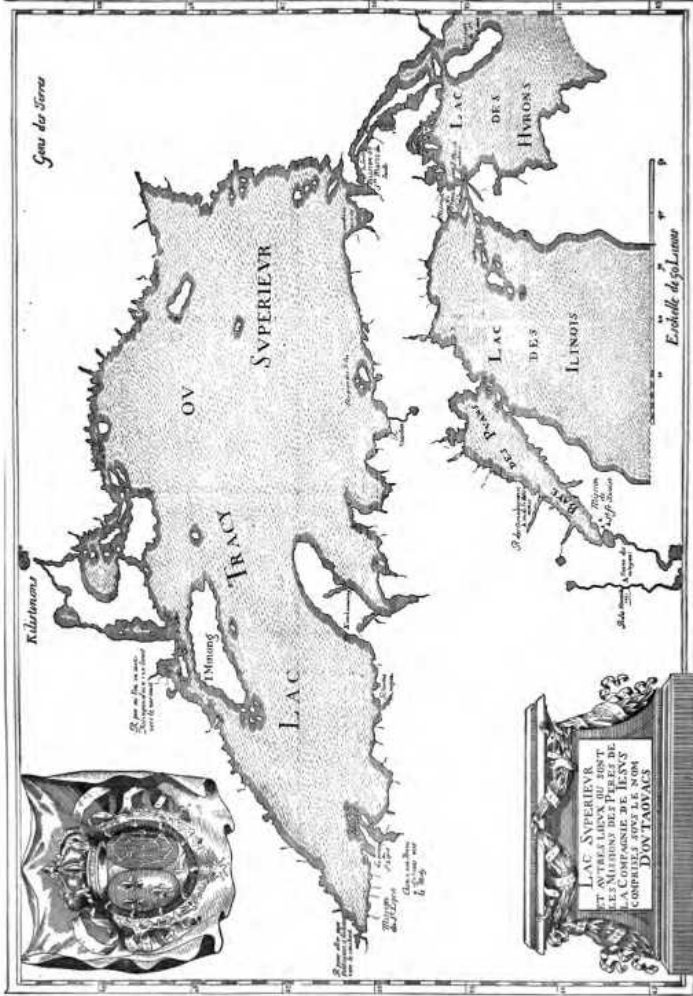
EDITED BY ISABELLE G. CARPENTER.

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INTRODUCTORY.

IN 1825 General Cass negotiated with the Indians of the Missouri and Mississippi Valleys the famous treaty of the Prairie du Chien, whereby the war between the Sioux and the Chippeways, which had existed for two hundred years, was ended, the United States obtaining a considerable grant of land and the territorial boundaries of each nation were permanently defined. This treaty, which was probably the most important of the many Indian treaties negotiated by General Cass, was formally ratified by the Chippeways one year later, at what is now known as "The Treaty of the Fond du Lac." This was accomplished in the summer of 1826, amid the solemn pomp and ceremony of pipe and powwow, at the head-waters of Lake Superior, where General Cass and Colonel McKenney, as government commissioners, with a large following, met the Chippeway chiefs and braves at the American Fur Trading Company's post. Their voyage over the troubled waters of the great lake from Sault Ste. Marie, in canoes and barges, reads like romance, the following outline of which is drawn from the diary of Colonel McKenney, published in limited number shortly after the voyage. The copy of this book from which this narrative is drawn is the property of Mr. D. H. Merritt of Marquette, and thanks are due to him for the opportunity of again giving this interesting story to the world.

The editor is also indebted to the cheerful assistance rendered by the press of the North Country and the Librarian of the Peter White Library at Marquette in furnishing data and information for the proper and full presentation of this work.



A VOYAGE ON LAKE SUPERIOR IN 1826.

ON Monday afternoon, July 3rd, 1826, there entered the St. Mary's River-of-the-North Country four large barges—as barges were then considered—manned by Canadian voyageurs at the oars and carrying as passengers a distinguished company bound for the head-waters of the great lake of the north, to negotiate with the Indians the famous treaty of the Fond du Lac.

The company was composed of Governor Cass, of Michigan, and Colonel T. L. McKenney, the Government Commissioners; Colonel Edwards and G. F. Porter, the Secretary and his assistant; Colonel Croghan and Major Whipple, Commissary; Christian Clemens, guardian of the "public goods"—the presents for the Indians; Henry Connors, interpreter; Joseph Spencer, J. O. Lewis, James W. Abbot and E. A. Bush; making, with servants and oarsmen, a party of forty-six people. From far down in the lower lakes country the expedition had pursued its toilsome way, encountering the terrors of the waters and laboring manfully against heavy odds, until at the close of this July day it had to look forward to the last and greatest battle of all—the passage of Lake Superior. Long the gallant little fleet had worked against the swift current—the rapids had been met and conquered; the last of them after the night had set in, with the whirling, rushing waters dancing madly on every side. At times it seemed that in spite of the unerring stroke of the skillful voyageurs and the steady eye of the steersman, the whole fleet must be dashed to pieces on the rocks or whirled into eternity at

every turn and pitch of the current. The boats, however, rode safely through, and at two o'clock of the morning of July fourth the fleet anchored at the piers of the ancient village of Sault de Ste. Marie. Tired, hungry and wet to the skin from the flying spray of St. Mary's Rapids, the entire party were soon disembarked and welcomed at the roaring firesides of officers' quarters at the post. In spite of the early hour, the villagers, who had for days been looking anxiously down the river for a first sight of the Government flotilla, were all out to greet the arrival.

The village of Sault Ste. Marie at that time was a tiny settlement on the south bank of the river. Its inhabitants were a few French and English families, a roving population of Chippeways and a military garrison—a forlorn and lonely hamlet, in 1826; but a locality whose very atmosphere has always been heavy with legends and traditions of a shadowy, far-away past. It has for ages—ever since the continent was peopled—been the grand thoroughfare of communication between the lower and upper countries, as far north as the Arctic circle. By this route from the south came those mysterious beings who delved in the earth, far up in the north, for the copper which they scented, by instinct, to know was there, and who, in the very midst of their activity, apparently, disappeared from the face of the earth, leaving no clue to their identity; this way, too, the Indians have come and gone for centuries, followed by the zealous missionary priests on journeys of discovery and conversion; and the voyageur folk, the hunters and trappers who wandered into the trackless wastes of forest and mountain in the interest of the great fur-trading companies. All of these, centuries apart, have made use of the great river of St. Mary as a pathway into the wilderness and home again.

At the Sault great preparation on the part of the Commandant of the fort had been made for the comfort and safety of the Commission, on what even the hardest and boldest sailor did not

hesitate to pronounce a perilous undertaking. Six hundred miles beyond the limits of civilization, in canoes of bark and barges of flimsy wood, was not a matter of slightest consideration. There was to be a military escort, because the Indians were lowering and often actively hostile. The voyageurs were engaged, and on the spot each decorated with a red feather in his cap, while the steersman had two for his canoe—one at the bow and the other at the stern, indicating that his was a craft tried and found worthy. On July 11th everything was ready, everything inspected and tested thoroughly, the supplies and luggage all bestowed, and the party again afloat. As the flotilla swung out into the stream cheers went up from those on shore speeding the party and praying their safe return. The long and final battle with the waters was on again. The rapids fired the first gun with their noisy protest, but as the river soon widens, the oarsmen were able to settle into the rhythmic move and the procession was under full way. Off to the right the Canadian highlands are dimly visible, and the American shore, low and sandy, is thickly set with trees. Gros Cap rears its blue summit in the distance. The prospect is indescribably grand. Around the tip of Point aux Pins the full view of Point Iroquois and Gros Cap discloses the open gateway through which the great waters of Lake Superior have outlet. On up the wide waters of Whitefish Bay swept the canoes and laden barges in a freshening wind, the voyageurs bending to their work, their oars keeping time while the voices kept tune, just as they have for ages in song and story away back on the old river St. Lawrence, where they sing at St. Anne's their parting hymn. It is said that nothing but the most violent stress of weather can quiet the song and merry jest of those volatile Canadian boatmen. The wind rose, but still the fleet kept on, the canoes far in the lead. Around Whitefish Point and into the great lake the canoes worked steadily on, though the wind was coming on to blow a gale and the waves were



INDIAN CANOE.

The illustration on this page is reproduced from "Tear to the Lake," by Thomas W. McManis, published in 1867.