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I conclude that this semi-civilized people cultivated the soil; they planted and cultivated certain forest and fruit trees; they cultivated the wild rice; they understood pisciculture and stocked the interior lakes and lived largely on a fish diet; they improved the navigation of rivers leaving lasting monuments of their engineering skill, and they worked the mines for ochers or paints, for the precious metals and for copper.

America has ruins; America has a history; but it must be read in the footprints of this ancient people.

December 2, 1884.

[*Paper L.*]

THE MOUND BUILDERS IN NORTHEASTERN MINNESOTA; THEIR OCCUPATIONS AND ROUTES OF TRAVEL.—*Geo. R. Stuntz.*

The "Mound Builders" who have left such abundant proofs of a comparatively dense population in the Mississippi valley and along its tributary streams have left traces of their occupancy of the country to and beyond the northern boundary of this state. In Town 58 north, Range 16 west, a circular mound 20 feet in diameter and seven feet high, is located at the south side of Esquegamo lake in a very pleasing and beautiful locality, commanding an extensive view of the Mesabi mountains and in common with this class of mounds, so situated as to command a view of the earliest rays of the rising sun. This mound is built from the sand and alluvial soil of the neighborhood. The chain of lakes to the north, extending up the valley of the Embarras river to and through the Mesabi mountains, cannot be surpassed in the beauty of its Alpine-like scenery.

The Embarras river route was the great thoroughfare through which this people reached the mining regions of Vermillion lake, from their settlements on the Mississippi river and their mining towns on Lake Superior. From the Mississippi the route lay through Sandy lake, across the divide to the east Savanna river, a tributary to the great St. Lawrence drainage system. Following this stream down and the St. Louis up, Embarras river is reached and ascended through the chain of lakes before spoken of, to the height

of land and the mountains that divide the waters of the gulfs of St. Lawrence and Mexico from those that flow north into Hudsons bay. Crossing that summit and descending Pike river Vermillion lake is reached. Traditions of the Chippewa Indians inform us that they found these trails in their present condition when they drove the Sioux Indians out and took possession of the country.

Whoever these people were, they have left some traces of their partial civilization and some evidences of their migrations and settlements, as well as of their occupations. They were a commercial people. They navigated the rivers and improved the channels of many of them on their great water routes by rock dams, so as to shorten the portages—a species of slack water improvement that greatly facilitated their travels.

They had settlements at Vermillion lake. They reached these settlements by the route before described. The lakes, seven in number, forming the chain through which the Embarras river flows are connected by stretches of rapid, shallow water. Above the lowest or last lake, as the Chippewa name Esquegamo signifies, the channel has evidently been contracted by piling in bowlders of sufficient size to resist the power of the current and of sufficient height to flood the stream and allow boats of light draft to pass to the next lake. A second and a third rapid has been improved in the same way. At the crossing of the Vermillion road over the Embarras river, in Town 58, Range 16 west, the improvement is very marked; although the dam is not high it is sufficient to enable loaded canoes to pass through two stretches of river, several shallow bays and three lakes, a distance of five miles. The rocks (mostly granite bowlders) are of such a size and so placed as to resist the strongest currents of the spring freshets. They are altogether too heavy to have been transported there by any boat or mechanical rigging known or used by the race of Indians now inhabiting that region. The last rapid on the Embarras river at the head of Wine portage on this route is improved in the same way, and is of sufficient height to flood the stream and make it navigable for nine miles above them. Crossing the height of land on the trail used by the present Indians, a distance of five miles brings us to Pike river flowing into Vermillion lake. This stream is only about two rods wide and about the same size as the Embarras river at the other end of the portage. The Pike would not be navigable for canoes in a dry time, were it not for a similar improvement in

section 17, Town 60, Range 15, as those described on the Embarras river. At the crossing of the Vermillion road in Town 61, Range 16, is another rapid called by the Chippewas, Mukwa-manito-ka-ka-bi-ke, the Black Spirit rapid, shown in the accompanying diagram.

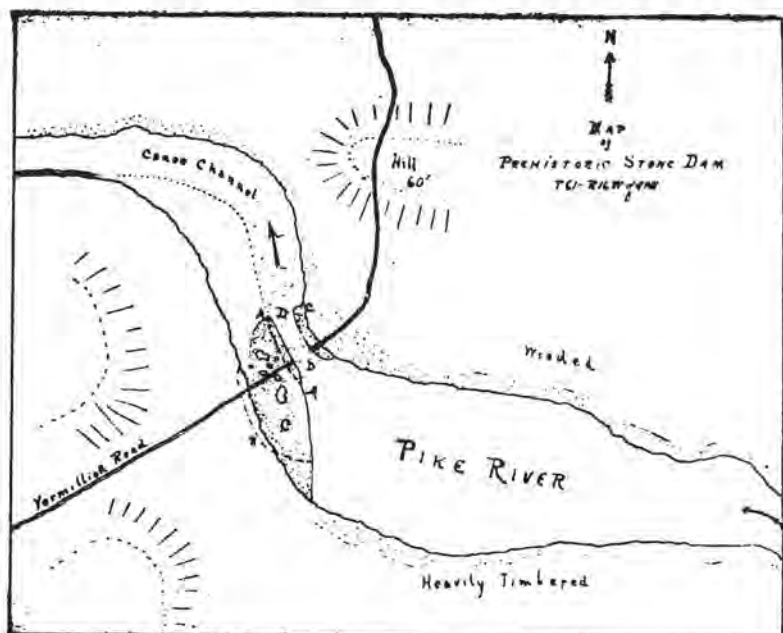


Fig 1. A prehistoric stone dam across Pike river Town 61, Range 16 west, on the old state road from Duluth to Lake Vermillion.

A A, low water portage 75 feet in length; B, high water portage 200 feet in length; C C, rock dam 8.5 feet high containing many large boulders which floods the river and renders it navigable for nine miles above; D D, low water channel with depth of six feet in low water.*

For two miles below the foregoing dam the river runs through alluvial bottom land in a broad sandy channel, shallow in low water; then is reached a rapid 600 feet in length. This rapid has been improved in the same way but differing in construction. The canoe channel is a straight *schute*—there is no zigzagging to throw the water against the banks on either side in order to retard its motion. The grade is uniform from the foot of the rapid to the head, where the walls present the same face up stream as in

*This is doubtless the same dam mentioned in the preceding paper, (Paper K, p. 81.)—EDITOR.

the preceding sketch. The banks on both sides of the stream slope gradually to the water, thus making a trough-shaped channel, navigable in both low and high water.

There is another dam below the last named where the river is crossed by a trap dike flanked by gneiss and mica slates. The rapid at this place is upwards of 1,000 feet long. The height of this rapid is 12 feet.

Similar dams are found on the great northern route from Rainy lake to Grand Portage bay on Lake Superior, the most noted of which are at Gunflint river, in Town 65, Range 4 west, fourth principal meridian.

The fact that these early inhabitants of northern Minnesota cultivated the soil and propagated forest and fruit trees for fibre and for food has already been stated.*

The best fishing stations occupied by the Indians at present are sure to have these groves of oak, linden and plum trees. Some of these oak trees are three to five hundred years old, as can be found by counting their annual rings.

The Chippewa Indians have occupied the country only about 200 years. The Sioux did not cultivate the soil but lived by hunting and fishing.

The mining operations at lake Vermillion have already been alluded to.† What mineral was worked for in this locality has not yet been found out, but probably it was for red and yellow ochers, which are quite abundant near the mines of iron. The Chippewa name for Vermillion lake signifies red ocher and not sulphide of mercury.

There are ancient diggings all along both sides of the international boundary, east of Vermillion, as far as Grand Portage bay, on Lake Superior.

These early inhabitants used a rude article of pottery in which to cook their food. Fragments of this pottery are found near Vermillion lake, identical in composition and appearance to fragments found near the mounds on Yellow lake in Wisconsin, nearly 200 miles distant.‡ They worked the mines by heating the rocks and

*See this Bulletin p. 77—[Paper K.]

†loc. cit. p. 83.

‡The pottery here mentioned by the writer is probably similar to that found by Mr. Henry Mayhew, and described in *Bulletins* vol. 11, p. 379. EDITOR.

dashing water upon them and then pounding them with stone hammers. Ashes and charcoal are found in great abundance in and around these old diggings.

This ancient people explored the Lake Superior region, as well as the mining region that extends across the northern part of Minnesota. A great many, if not all the valuable mines had been prospected and doubtless worked by them. The northern part of Minnesota does not seem to have been densely populated. Their largest settlements were near the most available points for securing a sufficient food supply with which to work the mines and transport such material out of the country as a half civilized people could make available for their wants.

January 6, 1885.

[*Paper M.*]

NOTES ON THE FOREST REGION OF NORTHERN IDAHO.

—*By John B. Leiberg.*

[Read, April 7, 1885.]

During the spring and summer of 1884, the writer made a trip through northern Idaho, and thence on horseback from Spokane Falls, W. T., to Jamestown, Dakota. You are all aware of the great excitement attending the alleged discovery of gold in some of the affluents of the north fork of the Cœur d'Alene river about this time. The journey was undertaken mainly with the view of ascertaining what, if any, were the prospects of mineral wealth in this region. For want of time and other facilities, it was not possible to make systematic or extensive collections of the very interesting and somewhat peculiar flora met with, and the following notes deal mainly with the arboreal vegetation, that being the most conspicuous and impressive feature of the flora of this portion of Idaho.

The mountain system of northern Idaho is mostly made up of the Cœur d'Alene range with its western spurs and branches, which commences at the southern end of lake Pend d'Oreille and runs thence in a southerly direction for two hundred and fifty or three hundred miles, finally losing itself in the main range of the Rockies. Its southern portion is called the Bitter Root mountains