

HISTORY ALONG THIS SECTION

1 Murder - In the 1800s Sheriff George Hathaway was transporting a prisoner named Harris. Five days later Hathaway's body was found here and Harris was never heard from again.

2 Chengwatana - The original townsite of Pine City was first called Chengwatana and located along the Snake River on the east side of Cross Lake. This was also the location of a stage station, which one Duluth editor declared was slightly more comfortable and cleaner than the station at Moose Lake. When the railroad was built on the west side of Cross Lake in 1870 the town of Chengwatana packed up and moved.

3 Copper Mining - For a time in the early 1900s it was thought that copper mining might be a potentially bigger business than logging had been. Shafts were sunk in the area but they never were able to extract copper in paying quantities.

4 Cross Lake & Norway Point - Catch glimpses of beautiful Cross Lake and lovely Norway Point at the northernmost tip.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

"Retracing the Military Road from Point Douglas to Superior" by Grover Singley is available online through the Minnesota Historical Society at www.mnhs.org

Michigan Tech University website; <http://ss.sites.mtu.edu/mhugl/> also contains more information.

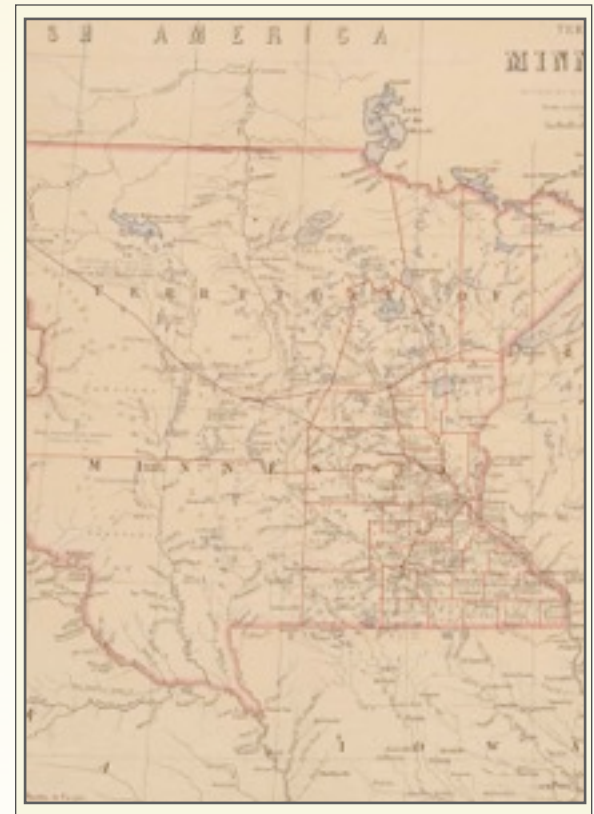
As does the St. Croix Scenic Byway website: <http://stcroixscenicbyway.org>



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THE MILITARY ROAD



THE MILITARY ROAD

The road system of Minnesota Territory had its beginning in July, 1850, when Congress authorized five "Military Roads" and provided funds to start them. Though they were to be surveyed and constructed by the army engineers, officially for the "defense of the frontier", the real reason for building them was to open new land to settlement.



NEAR PINE CITY

Near Pine City, Minnesota, there is an 18 mile long section from Rush City to Beroun Crossing that is signposted with brown "Military Road" signs. Start your drive with a meal at the historic Grant House at 80 W 4th St. Rush City, Mn and then enjoy a leisurely drive through the countryside imagining the view from a stage coach. From the Grant House head east on Rusheba Trail .7 miles. You will join and head north on the government road. It is also possible to take the Government road south here.

Point Douglas to Superior

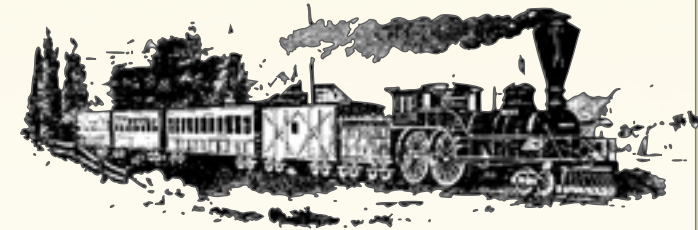
THE BEGINNING

All five were eventually built, but the one running along the eastern edge of Minnesota from the mouth of the St. Croix River to the mouth of the St. Louis River was the longest, most costly, and most important. It connected the head of navigation on the Mississippi with the head of Lake Superior. After 1853, when the town of Superior, Wisconsin was founded, the road became vital to settlers there, since they had no other link with the outside world in the winter months, when the lake was frozen.

For seven long years (1851-57) the engineers worked on the road and never really finished it. Not only were they slowed by pine forests, tamarack swamps, bottomless mud, and rushing rivers that had a nasty habit of washing out bridges -- they also struggled through bureaucratic red tape, political squabbles, and chronic lack of money. Over the years the original route was altered in many places. At the north end it was extended to reach into the town of Superior. The original survey had ended near present-day Carlton. In the middle a wide swing to the west past Rush Lake and Pokegama Lake was shortened to a more direct line east of Cross Lake. At the southern end the original survey ran through Cottage Grove, but Afton wanted it instead, and when the fight ended, the road had bypassed both places.

THE ROAD'S HEYDAY

When the last government money had been spent in 1857, the northern part was still not passable for wagons. Local businessmen invested money to improve it further and to build stage stations. During the 1860s the road saw its heaviest traffic. There was regular stage service, and many travelers went over it, though the 6-day trip was not recommended for women and children.



THE DECLINE

All this ended suddenly in 1870, when the railroad was opened between St. Paul and the new boom-town of Duluth. The last stage traveled over the military road in August 1870. After that there was very little through traffic on it. Many parts remained in use. Here and there long stretches of it were incorporated into county road systems. These have been graded and straightened and the old bridges have been replaced. In a few places the old route has been taken over by major highways; in even more places it has been completely abandoned and can only be followed as a faint trace through the woods --- if at all.

