

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 22 1978
DATE ENTERED *Approved 4/15/78*

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Chicago Portage National Historic Site

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Forest Preserve District, Northwest corner of S. Harlem Avenue at the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Forest View

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

4

STATE

Illinois

CODE

17

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Cook County Forest Preserve

STREET & NUMBER

536 N. Harlem

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Building

STREET & NUMBER

118 N. Clark Street

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings - Theme V -
French Exploration and Settlement

DATE

1958

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Chicago Portage National Historic Site consists of ninety-one wooded acres and contains the west channel of the Des Plaines River (including Laughton's and Stony Fords) and the west portion of Portage Creek. The park is kept in a natural state with a minimum of development (hiking trails, parking lots, restrooms, picnic areas) and is surrounded by residential and commercial developments.

The focal point of the park is Portage Creek. It is approached by a terraced clearing at the end of which is a commemorative boulder and a glass display case, indicating the significance of the site. A path leads from the boulder to the River.

Portage Creek was a link in the Chicago Portage Route which led from the Des Plaines River through Portage Creek to Mud Lake and from there to the south branch of the Chicago River and to Lake Michigan. Depending on the season, part or all of this route might require a portage. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the Des Plaines River was diverted and no longer joins Portage Creek, causing Mud Lake to completely disappear and Portage Creek to become stagnant (it has also become a receptacle for litter). The accompanying maps demonstrate how the diversion of the Des Plaines River and the growth of Chicago altered the portage.

The expanding urban developments have obliterated most of the evidences of the Chicago Portage. The original condition of its controlling eastern terminus at the mouth of the Chicago River, Fort Dearborn, and related historic sites, including the short portage made possible by the proximity of sources of the Great Lakes and Mississippi drainages at this point generally, has been lost. The study which re-established the route of the portage and its variants in the region revealed that the important portage area at the bend of the Des Plaines retained some of its natural characteristics.

The Cook County Forest Preserve has developed plans to include this site in a larger park area and to identify and interpret its historical and natural elements.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1673; 1836

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Chicago Portage is significant because it was an important key that linked the St. Lawrence and Mississippi River Systems, a principal route by which the interior of the continent was made known and settled. Beginning in the seventeenth century, the portage was on the main route for exploration and trade, and, later, was on an important route over which settlers and goods moved westward. The city of Chicago grew up in the strategic location.

Having heard of the Great Mississippi, the Governor of New France, Count Frontenac, who served under Louis XIV, appointed Louis Joliet to determine into which body of water it emptied and whether it would provide a passage to the South Sea. He was accompanied by Father Jacques Marquette, who carried out missionary work among the Indians. In 1673 they took the Fox-Wisconsin route from Lake Michigan and traveled down the Mississippi as far as Arkansas. They returned, however, by way of the Illinois River to the Des Plaines and Chicago Rivers, thus being the first recorded explorers to pass through the Chicago Portage. In 1683, the explorer LaSalle passed through the Chicago Portage and when he arrived at the mouth of the Mississippi he laid claim to the river and its tributaries for France.

In an attempt to control the fur trade, the Indians took control of the Portage from the French in 1700. It was wrested from them by the British in 1730 and remained under their control until 1783. The Americans then took control and the first Fort Dearborn was constructed in 1803 and the city of Chicago was established in 1833.

When Joliet returned to Montreal, he remarked that if a canal were dug, eliminating the portage portion, boats could easily pass from Lake Erie to the Gulf of Mexico. This is indeed what finally occurred in 1836 with the construction of the Illinois and Michigan Canal. With its construction and with the passing of the fur trade and the Indian, the Portage was no longer needed and was lost to history. Settlers and goods began to pass through to the West and Chicago was established as a city.

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The western terminus of the Portage, which is part of a ninety-one acre park, was placed under the protectorateship of the Cook County Forest Preserve in 1929 and purchased by them in 1950. This acreage was declared a National Historic Site in 1952 and the Cook County Forest Preserve has developed plans to incorporate this park into a larger interpretive area.

This site is significant today as the only portion of the historic portage route retaining a degree of the original ambience. The sylvan setting reminiscent of the historic environment constitutes what remains as worthy of protection.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chicago. Chicago Historical Society. Edward T. Bilek, "The Old Chicago Portage, 1673 - 1836," 1967.
The Chicago Portage and Laughton Trading Post Area: "The Waterway West".
 A design study prepared by Wm. E. Rose Associates, Inc., Hinsdale, Illinois, for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, River Forest, Illinois, June, 1975.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 91.2
 UTM REFERENCES

C	1,6	4,3,2,5,9,0	4,6,2,8,0,1,5	B	1,6	4,3,3,3,8,0	4,6,2,8,0,1,5
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	1,6	4,3,2,5,9,0	4,6,2,9,3,1,5	A	1,6	4,3,3,3,8,0	4,6,2,9,3,1,5
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION *BOUNDARY FOLLOWS 1953 PLAT SURVEY - SEE MAP*

The portion south of the C & I W. R.R. (37.6 acres) is bounded on the north by the railroad, the east by Harlem Avenue (Illinois Highway 42-A), the south by the Sanitary and Ship Canal, and the west by the Des Plaines River.

The portion north the C & IW. R.R. (53.6 acres) is bounded on the north by Joliet Road (U.S. 66), the eastern boundary begins at Joliet Road 336' from the Des Plaines River and continues south to the railroad

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Fay L. Hendry, Researcher

10-14-76

ORGANIZATION

Michigan State University

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

2739 E. Mt. Hope Road

TELEPHONE

1-517-337-0443

CITY OR TOWN

Okemos

STATE

Michigan 48864

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

~~As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I~~
 hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE

SIGNATURE

[Signature]

TITLE

Deputy Assistant Secretary

DATE FEB 14 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/10/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

MAR 8, 1978

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

William LeBaron

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ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

- Knight, Robert and Zeuch, Lucius H. "The Location of the Chicago Portage Route of the Seventeenth Century," Chicago Historical Society's Collection, Vol. 12. Evanston, Ill: Mumm Print Shop, Inc., 1928.
- Thwaites, Reuben Gold (ed.). The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents, Vols. 58, 59. Cleveland: The Burrows Company, 1896.
- Hagen, Olaf T. "A Study of the Chicago Portage." Mimeographed. Omaha: National Park Service - Region II, January, 1949.

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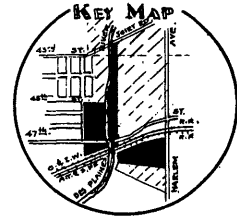
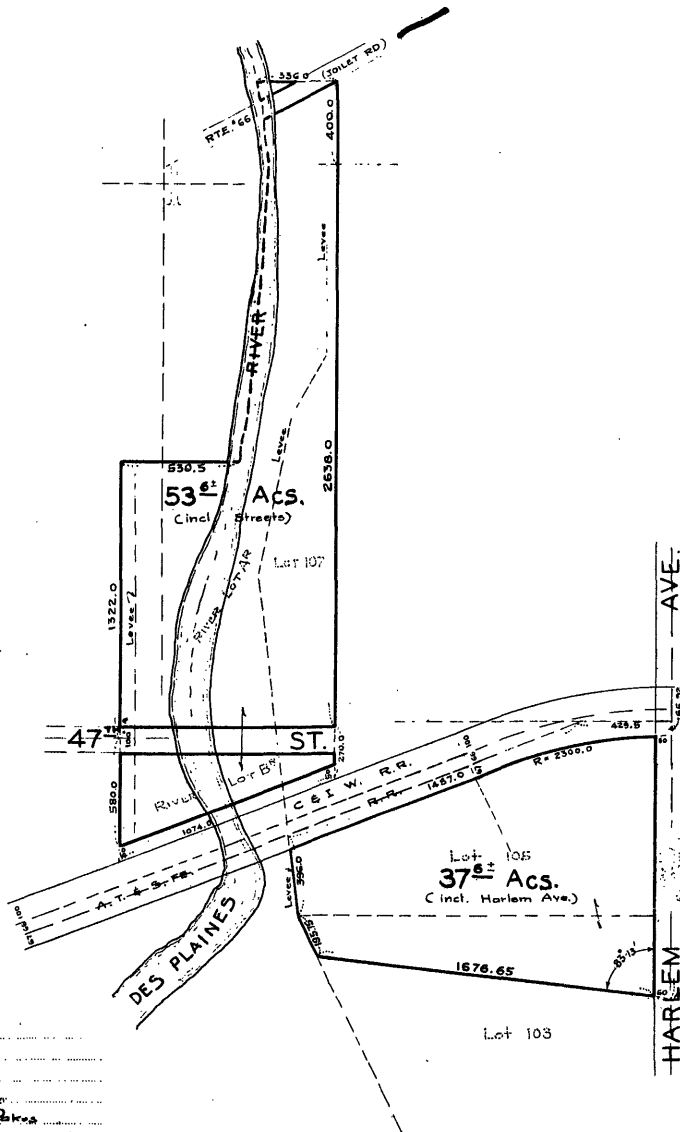
ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

tracks, the southern boundary follows the railroad tracks for 1074', the western boundary begins at that point and goes north 1902', turns east until it reaches the Des Plaines River, the river completing the remainder of the western boundary.

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



Handwritten notes:
A05-3+50
286-1669
2174-2187

Scale: 1" = 400'
District: LYONS
Bought From:
Book: 38-12 Page:
Drawn by: Alex. R. [unclear]
Checked by:
Approved: _____
Surveyor.

STATE OF ILLINOIS,)
COUNTY OF COOK) ss.
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. 1922.

Chief Engineer.

Form No. 10-301
(Rev. 10-74)

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AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Forest View

___VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Cook

STATE

Illinois

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE

The Chicago Portage and Laughton Trading Post Area: "The Waterway West".

SCALE

A design study prepared by Wm. Rose and Associates, Inc., 1975, p. 57.

1"=400'

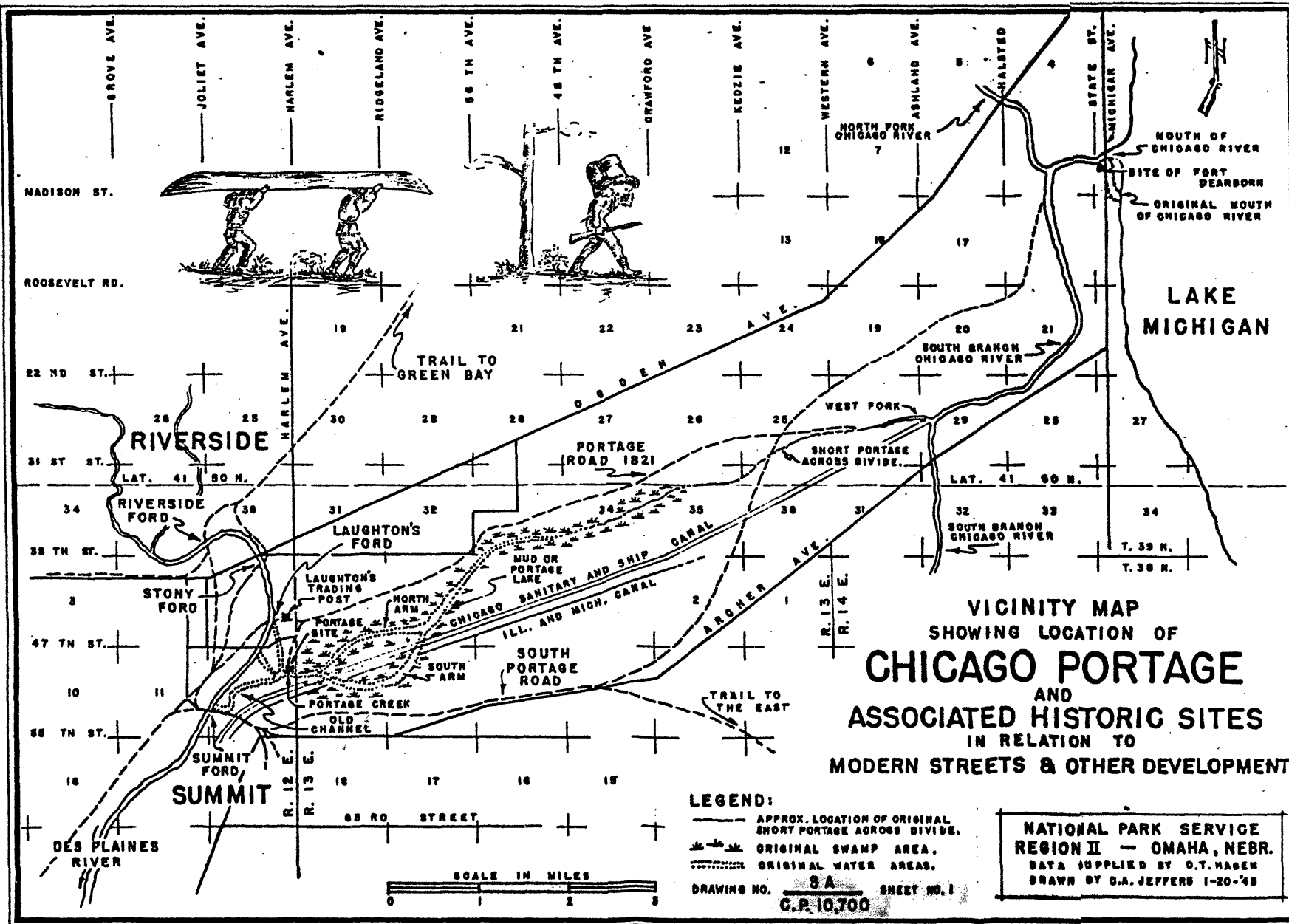
DATE

1953

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



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AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Forest View VICINITY OF COUNTY Cook STATE Illinois

3 MAP REFERENCE

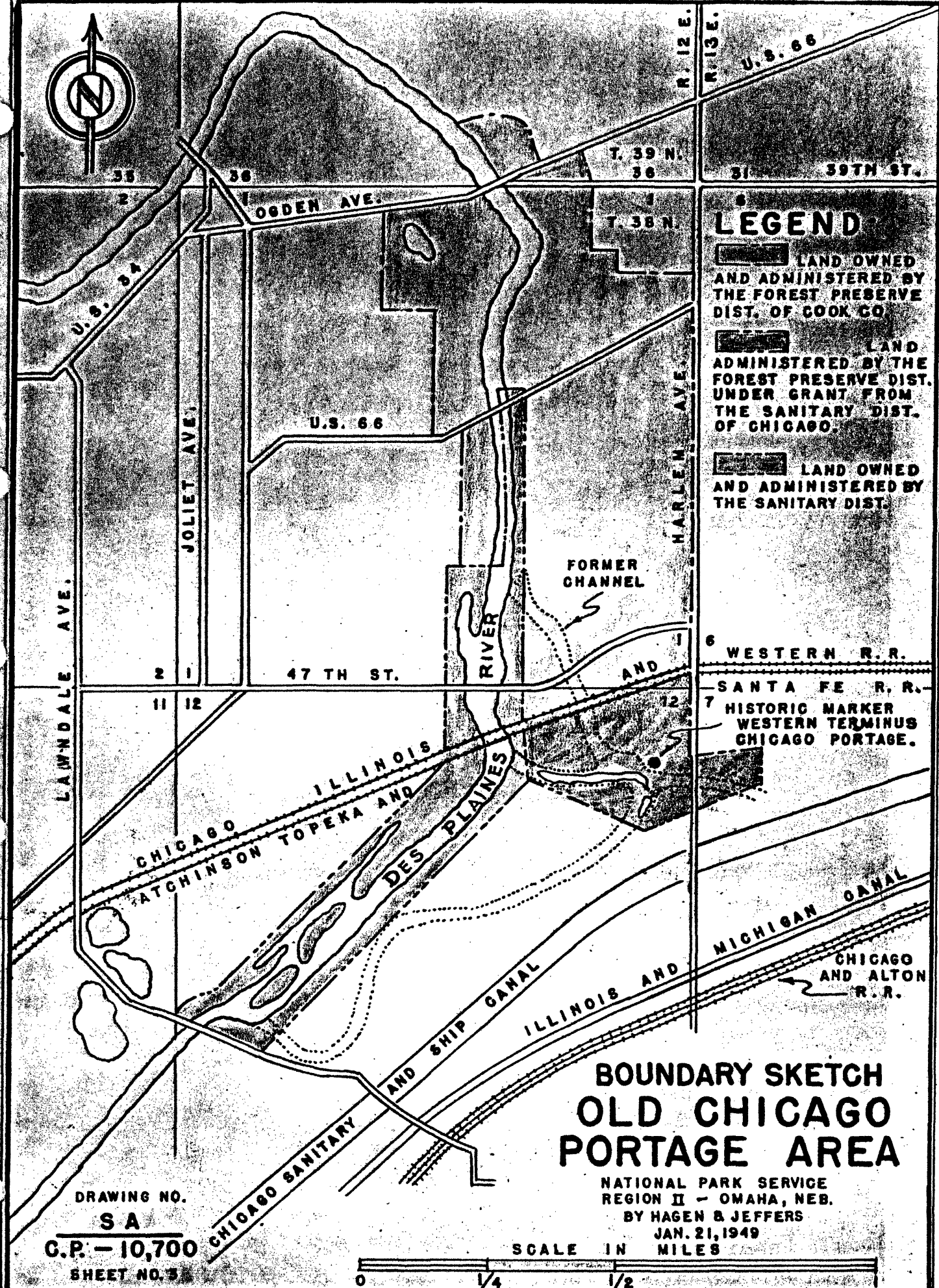
SOURCE "A Study of the Chicago Portage" by Olaf T. Hagen

SCALE 5/8" = 1 mile DATE 1949

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TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

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2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



LEGEND

LAND OWNED AND ADMINISTERED BY THE FOREST PRESERVE DIST. OF COOK CO.

LAND ADMINISTERED BY THE FOREST PRESERVE DIST. UNDER GRANT FROM THE SANITARY DIST. OF CHICAGO.

LAND OWNED AND ADMINISTERED BY THE SANITARY DIST.

6 WESTERN R.R.

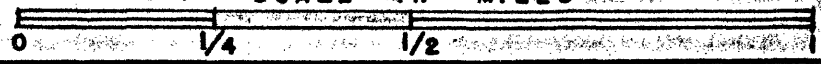
7 SANTA FE R.R.

7 HISTORIC MARKER WESTERN TERMINUS CHICAGO PORTAGE.

**BOUNDARY SKETCH
OLD CHICAGO
PORTAGE AREA**

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
REGION II - OMAHA, NEB.
BY HAGEN & JEFFERS
JAN. 21, 1949

SCALE IN MILES



DRAWING NO.
S A

C.P. - 10,700

SHEET NO. 3

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CITY, TOWN

Forest View

VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Cook

STATE

Illinois

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE "A Study of the Chicago Portage" by Olaf T. Hagen

SCALE 1" = 1/4 mile

DATE 1949

4 REQUIREMENTS

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2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES