

CENTENNIAL TRAIL

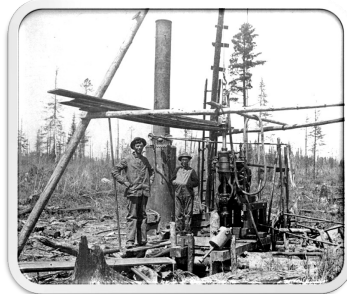
1 The first 1.2 miles of the Centennial Trail is also the Kekekabic Hiking Trail, a 40 mile long trail built in the mid 1930's. Its purpose was to allow firefighters access into the more remote areas of the Superior National Forest.

2 This spur trail leads to the old Gunflint Fire Tower site. The rock foundation of a cabin and remnants of the fire tower are still visible. The trail was re-opened during the Alpine Lake Fire of 2005 so that radio equipment could be placed at the tower site to improve communications. The photo at right is a similar fire tower on the Gunflint Ranger District, Cascade Tower.



Cascade Tower

Steam drill at test pit



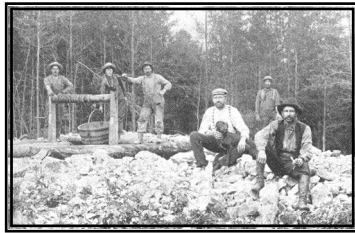
Lindabl Collection

The company wanted to evaluate the purity of the iron deposits as well as explore for gold, silver, and nickel. Only one car load of ore was ever removed. Please use caution around the test pits.

3 Five test pits were opened in this area in the early 1890's by the Gunflint Iron Company, whose major backer John A. Paulsen was the namesake of Paulsen Mine.

4 On the north side of the Kekekabic Trail you will see the tailings removed from the drainage spanned by the bridge. Little is known as to why this was done. The company may have drained the pond so the railway could be built to the test pits.

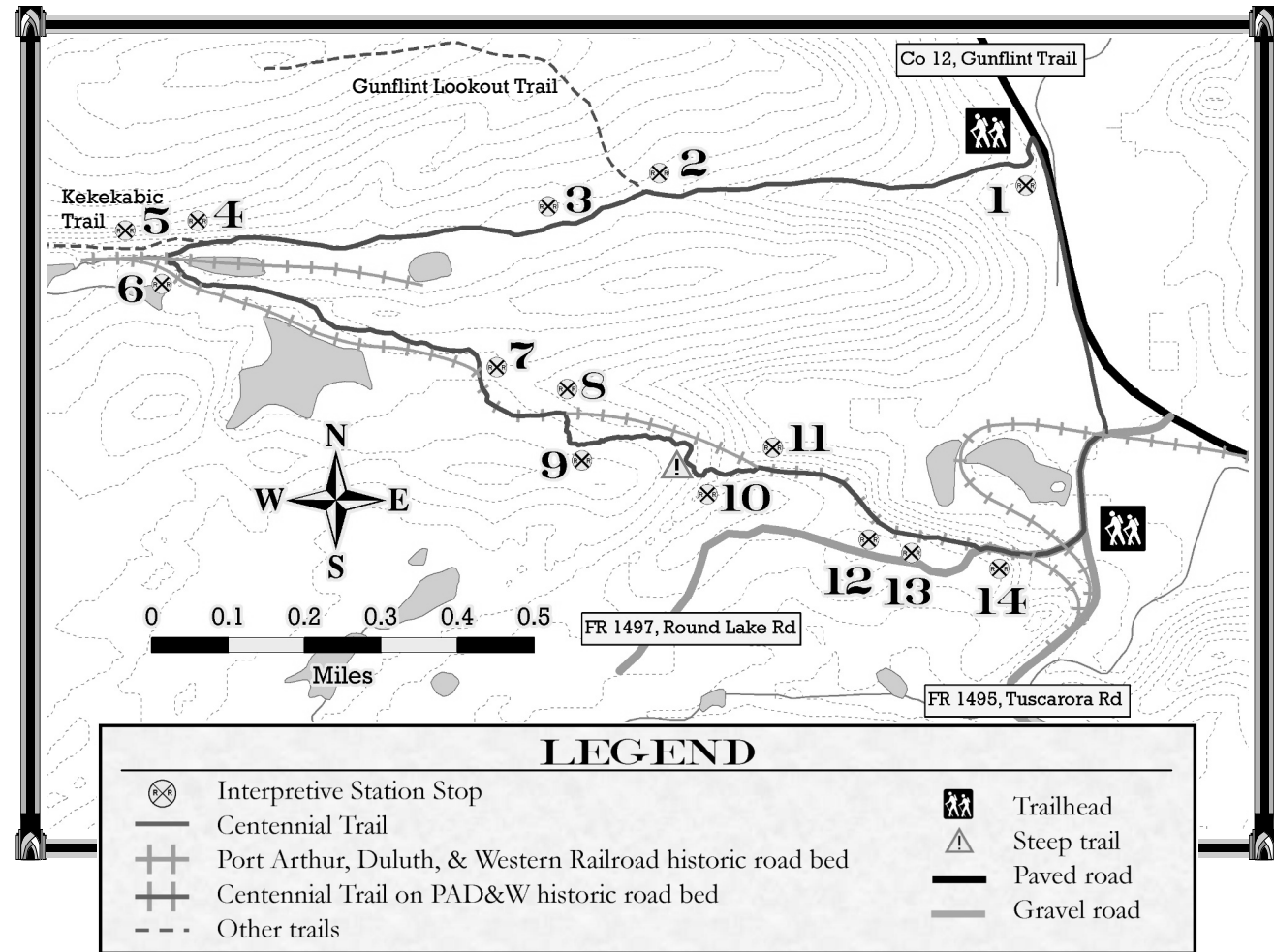
5 The bridge crosses the rail bed near a unique railroad feature: one of two switchbacks on this spur. A switchback was used when the terrain forced a turn too tight for a train to negotiate. A train would pass over a switch to a short spur, then the switch was changed and the train backed up the new track. While this made tight corners possible, it also limited the length of the train to the length of the spur, and made the train have to run in reverse, sometimes for long distances.



Miners at shaft, Lindabl Collection

6 This test pit is rumored to be 70 feet deep! At low water you can still see the wooden beams used to shore up the pit. They appear to be in very good condition more than a hundred years after they were first set. You are now hiking on a newly built portion of the trail above the Port Arthur, Duluth, & Western. Along the way you will come to a beautiful overlook above an unnamed lake. The railroad ran along the north shore of the lake.

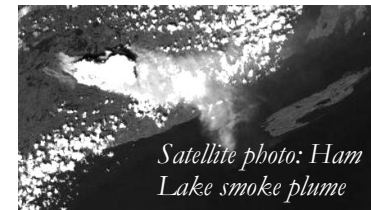
7 The Centennial Trail now follows the historic bed of the PAD&W. Blasted rock was used to fill in the small drainage in front of you to keep the grade of the rail line below a 5% slope. Behind you to the north is a rock cut which supplied material to fill a small valley near stop 4. Mules, more sure footed than horses, were used to pull the rock filled cars along rails to the valley for unloading.



8 You are now leaving the rail bed and will follow a newly built trail which runs along the ridge above you. Watch for spectacular views of areas burned by the 2007 Ham Lake Fire. This fire's smoke was visible from space!

Wear a good pair of hiking boots: the trail's terrain is rolling, with both up and downhill portions. The trail has steep areas and skirts abandoned mine pits; use caution especially with children. Be cautious when walking beside roadways.

9 This overlook is known as TRAMPS Overlook (Trail Restoration and Maintenance Project Specialists). In September 2009, ex-smokejumpers from the National Smokejumpers Association helped build the Centennial Trail. The overlook is named in their honor. From



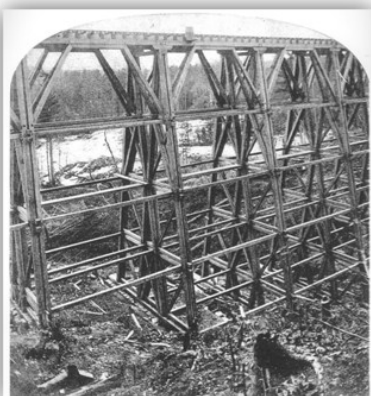
Satellite photo: Ham Lake smoke plume

this vantage point, you can see the Gunflint Trail and Gunflint Lake to the east as well as an excellent view of hundreds of downed trees laying in a west to east direction: damage caused by the windstorm of July 4th, 1999.

“Everybody’s nose was glued to the windows and as the train slowly wound its way up and along the hillside and over an immense chasm on a trestle, out on to the level ground at the mine, many a sigh of relief was breathed.”

-Passenger account of an excursion to the Paulsen Mine, Ft. William Journal, Jan 7, 1893

10 The valley in which you are standing was once spanned by a 500 foot long, 80 foot high white pine trestle. Think back to the 1890’s and imagine the work that went into building such a structure. Much of the work was completed by Italian immigrants from Canada. The valuable logs may have



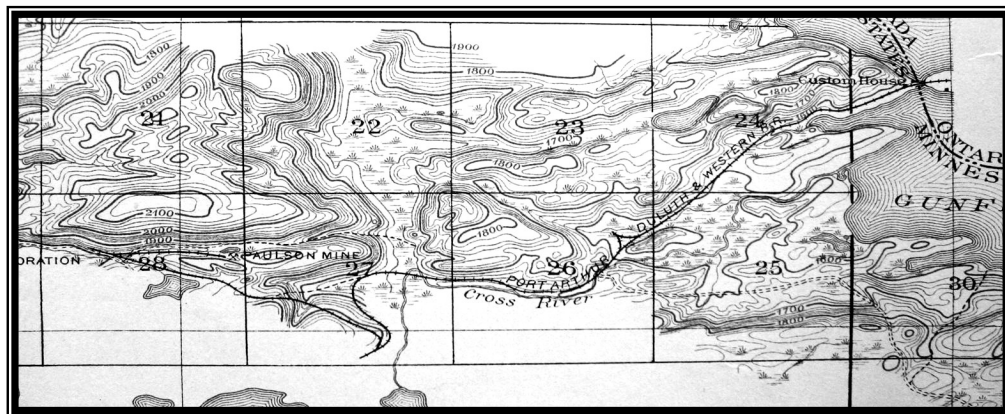
1890’s trestle, Lindahl Collection

been salvaged in the early 20th century after the railway was abandoned, but there are also reports that it burned in the wildfires of 1894 and 1898. If you explore this chasm you can still find evidence of the holes which held the mighty white pine supports. Imagine a train passing above your head over a century ago!

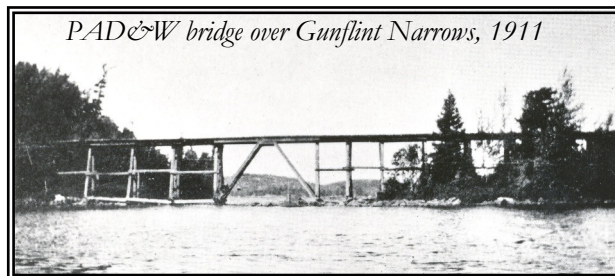
11 Once again, the trail is laid on the historic PAD&W rail bed. Turn and look west towards the rock outcropping 500 feet away. Picture yourself laying out the railway, trying to figure out how to get from where you are standing to the outcropping. The terrain is much too steep for switchbacks. A log trestle was the answer.

12 Feel the cool and damp air? You are entering a 200 foot rock cut which now harbors a microenvironment of ferns and mosses. This cut rarely sees the sun’s rays. Rock debris from this cut was used to fill the valley at your next stop, making the ‘rock trestle’ at signpost 13 the largest human constructed feature of the trail.

1904 USGS Quadrangle map



13 Beneath your feet is the highest and largest of the ‘rock trestles’ built along the Port Arthur, Duluth, & Western. Look to the north and see a succession of beaver ponds. The original rail bed ran between the two ponds. The windstorm of 1999, followed by the Ham Lake Fire of 2007 were devastating events from a human standpoint. From this overlook, however, you can see the rebirth of the forest as new growth fills in the niche created by storm and fire.



PAD&W bridge over Gunflint Narrows, 1911

14 You have come to the end of the portion of the trail that follows the PAD&W road bed. From here, the railroad cut through the woods to another switchback along what is now the Tuscarora Road. It then returned to curve between the beaver ponds you saw earlier before heading east to the bridge at Gunflint Narrows and Canada. Your route will follow the trail on to the Round Lake Road, turn left, and follow the road to the snowmobile trail. You will eventually link up with the Gunflint Trail and the trail-head of the Centennial Trail. Please use caution when hiking along roadways!

**Need more information?
on the web at: www.fs.fed.us/r9/superior**

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CENTENNIAL TRAIL

PORT ARTHUR, DULUTH & WESTERN RRY.

STATION STOPS



All Aboard! You are pulling out for a 3.3 mile trip along the Centennial Trail. A portion of the trail traces the historic route of the Port Arthur, Duluth & Western Railroad (PAD&W). The railway was built to access the Paulsen Mine. As you hike, look for station stops marked by signposts and GPS waypoints matching the numbers in this guide.

Historical sites such as the PAD&W and the Paulsen Mine are poignant reminders of the struggles and accomplishments of bygone eras. They are also fragile and susceptible to looting and vandalism. Help preserve this area for generations to come by leaving no trace: take only pictures, leave only footprints. Remember, artifacts and historic sites are protected by federal laws making collection of artifacts or damage to sites possible felonies.

Enjoy the trail, and your trip into history.