1679 or Not? Historic Contexts of the Du Luth Inscription

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In the 1960s, a boulder was discovered in rural Pine County with the inscription "1679 DU LUTH," referring to the French explorer Daniel Greysolon Sieur du Luth, who visited east-central Minnesota in 1679 and 1680. First documented by Doug Birk in 1981, the site has since received little attention from professional archaeologists, who often assume it to be a hoax. Perhaps as a result, the site has been embraced as genuine by pseudoarchaeology enthusiasts, which in turn has created challenges to discussing it as a subject of serious research. The site is described here and briefly examined within two broad historic contexts. First is the French exploration of North America and the life of Du Luth, because if it is an authentic inscription, it is part of that history. The second is the period after 1679; if the inscription is fake, it must have been created for some reason after the date on the stone. Comparison of evidence from these contexts suggests that there is a greater likelihood of the inscription being authentic than not.

Authenticity is a concept that is central to archaeological research, yet in modern practice, it is rarely an issue that confronts us. Our work benefits from decades of ongoing historic context development and use as an analytical framework, a practice now so ingrained in Minnesota archaeology that we tend to take it for granted. We know what types of diagnostic artifacts, features, and datasets to expect at a Late Woodland habitation site, for example, so our research there starts at a different, more complex level. Questions of authenticity are now generally limited to our public outreach, as with fake artifacts like the Kensington Runestone, or non-artifacts such as unusual rocks.[1] It can be disconcerting, therefore, to encounter potential historic properties that seem to lack a defined historic context. It is difficult to evaluate their significance, and sometimes we are even pulled back to the issue of authenticity itself. Such is the case for the Du Luth Stone in rural Pine County, with its inscription, "1679 DU LUTH" (Fig. 1; Birk 1981a, 1992:11-12).

Whether authentic or not, the inscription refers to Daniel Greysolon Sieur du Luth, a French explorer and trader who came westward across Lake Superior in 1679, and travelled overland from there to visit the Dakota at Mille Lacs and elsewhere. In 1680, he followed the Brule River upstream from the south shore of Lake Superior, to portage into the St. Croix River and descend to the Mississippi (Blegen 1963:46-52; Folwell 1956:22-24; Ross 1960:34-39; Wingert 2011:17-18; Zoltvany 2000). The City of Duluth was proposed in his name nearly two centuries later, in 1855. As discussed below, the explorer's name and title were apparently spelled in various ways in the late seventeenth century, including the one inscribed on the stone. For the sake of consistency, I use the spelling "Du Luth" in this article, while maintaining other spellings when used in place names, quotations and references.

Archaeologists are so comfortable in our system of historic contexts that it can be tempting to reject things too quickly when they seem not to fit. When I initially heard of the Du Luth Stone, for example, my first thought was that the inscription must be fake. Considering further, however, I was intrigued by the immediacy of my reaction. No one questions that Du Luth was indeed here, in what is now Minnesota in 1679. Is it so inconceivable that he left some sort of monument of his explorations? He, himself, said that he was here, as did Father Louis Hennepin (Shea 1880:253-256, 374-377). But this is such an odd monument, if that's what it is: small, unassuming, and in the middle of nowhere. It seems that a permanent monument, if Du Luth left one, would more likely be at his Lake Superior landing, or some equally prominent location. However, the period of early French exploration here, Birk's (1992:7) French Contact Phase from approximately 1650 to 1702, is an incredibly short chapter in Minnesota's circa 13,000-year human history, and it is poorly represented in the archaeological record. If the inscription is genuine, the Du Luth Stone is an unusual and important site. We risk losing that if we reject it so quickly, but the question of authenticity remains.

[1] "My left thumb fits right here."

Figure 1. The Du Luth Stone in November 2009, view to northwest; one-meter scale with 10-cm intervals.

It is impossible to precisely date carved inscriptions or rock art images from examination of mineral weathering. Relative dating is certainly possible, however, and in this sense the Du Luth inscription appears to be "old," but there are simply too many variables (stone type and mineral hardness, exposure to or protection from elements, lichen growth, moisture, changes in local environment through time, etc.) to independently determine an absolute date for the carving's origin. In my opinion, a better sense of the inscription's authenticity, or lack thereof, can be gained from an analysis of historic contexts. This also cannot confirm a calendar date, but it can provide an informed assessment of probability, or at least possibility. While not proof, this is a useful exercise upon which future site investigations can be planned, if warranted, and that is the goal of this article.

Regarding authenticity, there are two primary historic contexts to be considered. First is the period of French contact and exploration into what is now Minnesota, including Du Luth's life and career. If the inscription is genuine, it is part of this history. If, on the other hand, it is fake, it must have been carved later, sometime between 1680 and the early twentieth century, given that the inscription was covered with moss and lichen when discovered in the 1960s. This is the second historic context, which can be subdivided into Native history, the fur trade, logging, cut-over farming, hunting, and recent rural settlement. Other contexts relevant to this question include the broader history and archaeology of European exploration, other examples of carved inscriptions, French historical archaeology in Minnesota, nineteenth century fraud (archaeological and otherwise), and commemoration of Du Luth as a historical figure. I begin, however, with initial documentation of the Du Luth Stone by Doug Birk in

Figure 2. The Du Luth Stone in 1981, photo by Doug Birk.

1981, my observations of the site between 2009 and 2014 amid interactions with pseudoarchaeology, and a brief discussion of the role of context development in historic preservation.

There are two major limitations to this study. First, while I have seen copies of some of Du Luth's writing, comprehensive primary documents research was not attempted. Also, no archaeological excavation was conducted. I visited the site on several occasions with permission of the landowner to do some mapping and to take photographs. My recommendations for potential future archaeological investigations are presented in the conclusion.

Discovery and Site Description

The Du Luth Stone is a sandstone boulder, unmodified except for the inscription, "1679 DU LUTH" (Figs. 1-14). It is naturally embedded in the ground near the headwaters of a minor creek, in a remote area of northeastern Pine County, Minnesota, east of Askov. Doug Birk visited the site on or near October 29, 1981. He reported visiting a burial site with a headstone for Albert Nyer (1888-1911) on that day in the same part of the county, with Lee Hemness, the DNR Wildlife Manager from Hinckley. Given that the sites are located relatively near to one another in a remote area, it is reasonable to assume that they were visited on the same trip. Birk's memos about the sites were both prepared in November 1981 (Birk 1981a, 1981b).

The Du Luth inscription was discovered in the mid-1960s by Nick Worobel, who was deer hunting at the time. Birk's memo of his telephone interview with Mr. Worobel is the only record of the discovery, and except for the legal description, is quoted in full here:

> On November 19, Mr. Nick Worobel of St. Paul, called in response to a letter I sent him on November 5 inquiring about the "1679 DU. LUTH" rock found east of Askov. Mr. Worobel is a Ukrainian refugee who speaks English only haltingly and with a heavy accent. He has a very limited knowledge of Minnesota history.
>
> Worobel bought the parcel where the rock sits … for tax forfeit. His purchase included 200 acres. Sometime between 1964 and 1967 Worobel used the rock as a deer stand. After

about an hour with no results, he became interested in what appeared to be unnatural striations on the side of the rock. Using his hand and his hunting knife, he scraped the moss and lichens from this area to reveal the inscription "1679 DU. LUTH." He said he had no knowledge of who this Duluth was other than the fact that there was a city by the same name.

When Worobel mentioned his find to various persons, at least two (one a lady from some historical group or the post office; the other the present landowner) subsequently examined the rock and also scraped the letters with a knife to clear them of moss. Howard Hamlish is the present owner.

In discussing the rock with a farmer west of his place, the farmer – a Mr. Akland [sic, see below] – was surprised to hear that Worobel had found this rock as he had also seen it sometime earlier. On comparing notes, however, it was learned that Akland was actually talking about another similarly carved rock (same date and name) much closer to his own place. Worobel never saw this second rock. The elder Mr. Akland has since passed away, but his son still lives on the farm said to be the first place to the left at the end of the blacktop heading east of Askov.

It seems likely that Worobel had nothing to do with inscribing the rocks. [Birk 1981a]

The farmer to west was likely Almer Ecklund, who died in 1977 at the age of 71 (*Pine County Courier* 1977). This farm is near the upper reaches of the same small creek, so if there truly is a second inscription it would be in a similar landscape position.

Birk (1992) mentioned the Du Luth Stone in his article, "Putting Minnesota on the Map: Early French Presence in the Folle Avoine Region Southwest of Lake Superior:"

> A rock embedded in the forest floor and bearing the date 1679 and Duluth's name (spelled "Du. Luth") has been found in an upland area of northern Pine County several miles from any navigable waterway. If authentic, that landmark might suggest Duluth or his men spent at least some time exploring the Nemadji-Kettle River country south of Fond du Lac Superior in the winter of 1679 (or later). For example, such a rock could have been inscribed during Duluth's alleged overland journey to Mille Lacs on a route that followed a southerly arc through the Snake River Valley. [Birk 1992:11]

The same article includes a photo of the stone (a detail of Birk's 1981 photo that is presented here as Fig. 2), with the caption:

> The carvings on "Duluth's Rock," a low-lying boulder found in a remote forested area of northern Pine County, Minnesota, are of unknown origin. If authentic, they could help to explain the movements of French explorer, Daniel Duluth, in the western Lake Superior region in 1679. [Birk 1992:12]

The Du Luth Stone received little attention after this initial documentation. Over the years, Pine County residents occasionally inquired about the site. In a reply to one of them, Scott Anfinson (1997a) described the uncertainty he and Birk

Figure 3. The Du Luth Stone and setting in 1981, photo by Doug Birk. The person in the photo is likely Lee Hemness, who took Birk to a nearby historic burial site on or near the same day.

shared:

> Doug is still undecided as to the authenticity of the inscription. He is somewhat bothered that the rock is not near any major stream and that it is an undistinguished boulder that is difficult to find. Most of all, he is bothered by the spelling of Duluth; the original spelling used by the explorer is "Dul Hut." He and I agree that it would be difficult to prove that the carving is authentic, although we cannot say for sure that it is not authentic. [Anfinson 1997a]

Tony Romano was very interested in the Du Luth inscription and the site's preservation, and was frustrated that professional archaeologists would not take it more seriously. A Pine County resident and avocational researcher who contributed greatly to Minnesota archaeology (e.g. Romano 1992a, 1992b; Romano and Mulholland 2000; Wendt and Mulholland 2013; Wendt and Romano 2008), Romano also noted that the stone is near the divide between the Nemadji and St. Croix watersheds. He suggested that the stone marked the end of one route within Du Luth's exploration following the Nemadji and Net rivers to a large wetland complex at the divide, and then down Sand Creek to the headwaters of Wolf Creek (Romano n.d.; Stone 2010).

Site Visits and Pseudoarchaeology

Pseudoarchaeology is an anti-intellectual fringe movement that uses pseudoscientific approaches to promote bizarre claims of, for example, ancient space aliens or pre-Columbian "lost" non-Native civilizations in the Americas. As with other forms of quackery, a common theme is that a conspiracy exists among actual archaeologists and historians to "hide the truth" from the public. The motives of individual practitioners vary, but at its worst, pseudoarchaeology is actively used to promote white supremacist beliefs against American Indians and other Indigenous peoples worldwide (Hoopes et al. 2023:30-31). Beyond being just strange, it is harmful because it seeks to also take the past from cultures that have already suffered dispossession and profound generational trauma through colonialism. Working in Minnesota, I had always been aware of pseudoarchaeology mainly in relation to the Kensington Runestone.

In September 2009, I was told that Tony Romano was very concerned about the Du Luth Stone because the property had recently changed hands. The new owners had bought the parcel for hunting land. They were reportedly alarmed to learn of the stone and did not welcome outside attention. Tony feared that this situation might result in damage to the site, but his health was not good at that time and he could not involve himself further. I felt like I should try to do something, but was unsure of how to proceed because it seemed that contacting the owners could potentially make the situation worse.

A few weeks later, I was surprised to receive a call from Scott Wolter, whom I knew to be a pseudoarchaeologist and co-author/publisher of a then-recent book on the Kensington Runestone (Nielson and Wolter 2006). I had never spoken with him before. He told me that he was interested in the Du Luth Stone, and that he had talked the new owners into letting him visit the property. He invited me to join him. I was reluctant, but because it seemed that this could be my one opportunity, I agreed. I had never been to the site and despite being skeptical, I felt that it was important to see the inscription myself. We visited the site in late November.

When Wolter picked me up, he gave me a copy of his new book, *The Hooked X: Key to the Secret History of North America* (Wolter 2009a). We had a pleasant day travelling to the site from the Twin Cities, and we spoke frankly during the drive about the Du Luth Stone and the Kensington Runestone. He told me that he believed the two are connected through secret knowledge passed down among elites in Europe from the Knights Templar. I told him that did not make sense to me, and that I am certain the runestone is a nineteenth century forgery. He also said that both stones were land claims, and that Du Luth would have known where to come in North America from the Templars.

It is not my purpose here to ridicule the beliefs of others, but it is important to be clear that these ideas are absurd. Pseudoarchaeology is part of the present day story of the Du Luth Stone, but it is unrelated to the real historic context of French exploration in North America. Whether the inscription is authentic or not, Du Luth was not guided by secret Templar knowledge. If there is one common theme in the long history of European and Euro-American exploration of the North American continent, from Columbus to La Salle, Hennepin and Du Luth, to Lewis and Clark, Zebulon Pike, and Schoolcraft, it is that none of them knew where they were going. Countless historical documents spanning centuries clearly demonstrate this.

Figure 4. Detail of the Du Luth Stone inscription in November 2013.

At the site, the new landowners took us to the inscription. Wolter swept the perimeter of the boulder with a metal detector, with negative results. He examined the inscription with a hand lens and pointed out a small indentation above and to the left of the "1" in "1679" (it is visible in Figs. 4 and 5). He identified it as a carved dot, and a coded reference to the Virgin Mary. I am certain that it is not a reference to the Virgin Mary, and this is a good point to mention that there are small natural vugs in the sandstone boulder (Fig. 15). I think that the dot/hole by the "1" is one of them. I suspect that the dot following the first "U" (in "DU") is another (Fig. 10). For this reason, I transcribe the inscription as "1679 DU LUTH" rather than "1679 DU. LUTH" as Birk did (1981a, 1992:11-12).

After leaving the site, we visited a historical monument in Askov dating to 1927, and a recent grave marker in the local cemetery. Both monuments are Hinckley Sandstone, and Wolter examined the cut surfaces with his hand lens, concluding that the mineral weathering of each indicated that the Du Luth Stone inscription is older. Based on visual examination alone, I agree with this conclusion in regard to relative ages of the cut stone surfaces. The "1679 DU LUTH" inscription was clearly much more weathered. In his report, Wolter (2009b) did not mention his beliefs about connections between the Du Luth Stone and the Knights Templar or the Virgin Mary, but stated his conclusion that the inscription is most likely genuine. A few years later, the *Northern Pine County* book in the popular "Images of America" series included a photograph of the Du Luth Stone, stating that it was "recently authenticated by American Petrographic Services" (Foster and Troolin 2011:9).

In 2013, Wolter included a section on the Du Luth Stone in his book, *Akhenaten to the Founding Fathers: The Mysteries of the Hooked X*, explaining that he'd learned of it from a person who saw his 2009 film *Holy Grail in America*. His focus was the small holes by the 1 and the first U, which I mentioned above as likely natural vugs in the rock. He presented them now as "dot codes" with connections to stone holes and secret Knights Templar association with the Kensington Runestone (Wolter 2013:72-73, 78, 270-271). Stone holes are also known as mooring stones, which pseudoarchaeologists have long claimed are evidence of Vikings (who apparently did not

have anchors?) sailing across areas of North America where there are no waterways. They are actually drilled holes for blasting apart large boulders (Trow 1998). A pseudoarchaeological pivot from mooring stones to secret codes spread across the landscape does not make more sense.[2]

In the third season of his *America Unearthed* H2 (History Channel) show, which aired in 2014, Wolter featured the Du Luth Stone in an episode called "The Plot to Steal America" (see Colavito 2014 for a recap/critique). The producer, from Committee Films in Chaska, had previously called and asked me to be on the show, but I declined. Doug Birk declined as well. A few months before the episode aired, the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS) was contacted by staff from the Duluth mayor's office, about a proposal by Wolter for the Du Luth Stone to be moved there (Tillman 2014). In a conference call response, MNHS staff (myself included)[3] explained that moving the rock would likely damage the soft sandstone, and it would also destroy the historical integrity of the site including any potentially associated archaeological remains. If the Du Luth inscription is genuine, there is a reason it was made at this location and not at the western tip of Lake Superior. Perhaps ironically, the Du Luth Stone is not about Duluth.

On several occasions over several years, state legislators contacted the Minnesota Historical Society about the Du Luth Stone at Scott Wolter's request. In October 2014, I and others participated in a field meeting at the site with a state senator, and staff and volunteers from the Pine County Historical Society. I assume that Wolter felt the site should be investigated and was frustrated that it was not happening quickly. If so, such frustration is understandable and I share it, but there are thousands of historic properties in Minnesota that warrant investigation, and countless more that are yet to be discovered. It was also difficult (then and now) to argue for investigation and protection of a site on private land that some professional archaeologists do not accept as genuine. It has been kind of a Catch-22 situation, with archaeological investigation needed for the site to be potentially seen as legitimate, but the same lack of information (and recent association with pseudoarchaeology) being the reason for entrenched professional skepticism, making it that much more difficult to mobilize scarce resources for this issue.

Site Observations, 2013-2014

My lengthiest visits to the Du Luth Stone were in 2013 and 2014, to explore the site area in preparation for conference presentations (Mather 2014a, 2015). I took digital photos of the rock and inscription (Fig. 4), as well as the individual numerals and letters (Figs 5-14). In November 2013, the stone was dry, and the inscription was illuminated by direct, late afternoon sunlight. In October 2014, the stone was damp, and the day was overcast. The contrasting conditions make it easier to see different aspects of the inscription. When comparing photos, I initially thought that there had been surprisingly significant lichen growth over the span of just 11 months, but then realized this was actually the difference in the lichen and moss being wet (2014) instead of dry (2013).

Hinckley sandstone is very soft rock. It does not appear that the inscription was carved in a formal way, such as with a hammer and chisel. I think the rock surface would have been pulverized if that was attempted. Instead, it seems to be "written," or scratched in with a pointed tool – perhaps a knife tip or an awl. I did not attempt to clean out the numerals or letters because I did not want to risk damaging the soft stone. In the future, it would be useful to gently remove the lichen and other plant growth as was done at Jeffers Petroglyphs, and scan the inscription to create an electronic rendering (Soderberg 2012; photos of process in Mather 2011:99, 101). For now, based on my handheld photographs, I present descriptions of the individual figures in the order they appear in the inscription in Table 1.

During the November 2013 visit, I also laid out baselines and made a planview map of the boulder and immediate vicinity (Fig. 16). Examining this setting, it is apparent that the boulder is naturally embedded within a shallow, ovate depression. This appears consistent with a curved divot left behind by a large treefall, where soil is displaced from the root ball being yanked up out of the ground when a tree is toppled by strong winds. In this case, there are no remaining traces

[2] The book is highly problematical in other ways – for example, by claiming that Ojibwe Midewiwin ceremonies are derived from Freemasonry, and that the Mandans have ancient European ancestry (Wolter 2013:278-280).

[3] SHPO was originally housed within the Minnesota Historical Society. Since 2018, we have been part of the Minnesota Department of Administration.

Figure 5. Comparison of the numeral 1 in "1679" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 6. Comparison of the numeral 6 in "1679" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 7. Comparison of the numeral 7 in "1679" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 8. Comparison of the numeral 9 in "1679" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 9. Comparison of the letter D in "DU" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 10. Comparison of the letter U in "DU" with possible period or dot, in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 11. Comparison of the letter L in "LUTH" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 12. Comparison of the letter U in "LUTH" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 13. Comparison of the letter T in "LUTH" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Figure 14. Comparison of the letter H in "LUTH" in November 2013 (left) and October 2014 (right).

Table 1. Description of characters in the Du Luth inscription.

Inscription	Character	Figure	Description
1679	1	5	The numeral is formed by a main line that bows slightly to the right. At the top, an angled line forming the cap of the numeral extends downward to the left. This seems oversized, being about a third as long as the main line. There is an area between this shorter line and the main line where the surface of the rock appears to have spalled off, most likely when the inscription was carved. At the bottom, the main line broadens into a bifurcated base of the numeral, which may be two short lines joined together. They angle slightly downward from the main line, but the base is flat.
1679	6	6	The left side of this numeral appears to have been inscribed as a single line, starting at the top and wavering slightly as it curves to the left, and then back right to stop at the base of the numeral. Then, it seems that the short segment of the upper loop was inscribed, and then a second rounded segment to connect with the main arc. It is not clear which of the short segments was made first, but they appear to be of different depths. The result is a thin oval-shaped loop, slightly pointed at the top and base.
1679	7	7	This numeral appears to consist of five individual lines. The starting point for the main vertical line and the top line is the upper right of the numeral. This point appears to be deepest. The top line tapers at the left side. The main vertical line angles downward and to the left for about three-quarters of the numeral's height. From there, an additional, shorter line extends downward and slightly back to the right, where it tapers at the bottom. The crossbar of the numeral appears to be two short lines. One extends straight to the left, and the other slants upward to the right.
1679	9	8	The loop of this numeral is round, and the inscribed line is more broad than most of the other figures. This is most evident at the right side of the loop where the numeral crosses a natural seam in the rock. The base of the loop is pointed where it joins the stem of the numeral, which extends downward and to the left. The depth of the stem is similar to the loop above another natural seam in the rock. Below that point, the stem is shallower, and tapers off.
DU	D	9	The letter has a slightly bowed back, and expands in width from top to bottom. The top of the back is a single narrow line, which broadens about halfway down, with at least two grooves. The arc of the letter joins the top of the bar with a sharp corner, while the bottom contact is more rounded. The arc appears to be a single, curved line, and is relatively wide, perhaps indicating that the cutting tool was held at an angle to make this shape.
DU	U	10	The letter is nearly rectangular. The two vertical bars bend gently to the left in the middle, and the lower horizontal bar connects them in a straight line. It is possible that the left vertical bar was carved first and then continued in the line across the bottom of the letter, with the right bar then added as a final step. The connection with the left bar, while at a 90-degree angle, is rounded, and the connection with right bar is sharp with a point slightly to the right of the bar. Also, the top half of the right bar is a wider cut than the rest of the letter. I included the dot at the lower right of the "U" in Fig 10 because Birk (1981a, 1992) mentioned it and considered it part of the inscription. I suspect that it is a natural vug in the rock.

Table 1 continued

Inscription	Character	Figure	Description
LUTH	L	11	The letter consists of two lines. The vertical line was likely carved first, with the top wider than the rest of the letter. After that spalling, the line appears deep and straight down to the lower line. The horizontal line begins slightly to the left of the junction with the vertical. It is not clear if that line was incised left-to-right or right-to-left.
LUTH	U	12	The letter is similar in style to the previous "U" but its form is slightly different. In this case, the left vertical line is bold and straight, and longer than the right vertical line. The right line bows and extends slightly below the horizontal line at the bottom. That line in turn extends slightly past the left vertical line. It may be that the two vertical lines were carved first, and then the horizontal added across the bottom. If this is the case it would make sense for the two "U"s to have been made in the same way, although the details appear to differ.
LUTH	T	13	The letter consists of a long vertical line topped with a short horizontal bar. It is not clear which was added first. There is spalling apparent around the center of the vertical line, and at the center of the horizontal line at the junction with the vertical.
LUTH	H	14	The letter is formed by three lines. Two are horizontal, roughly parallel lines and they are joined by a shorter, horizontal crossbar. The uprights may bow slightly to the right. There is spalling at the center of the left upright where the crossbar slightly overlaps.

Figure 15. Natural vugs (indicated by white arrows) in the Du Luth Stone, on the side opposite the inscription.

of the trunk or roots. For this reason and because of the position of the boulder, I assume that the treefall occurred prior to when the inscription was carved. It seems likely that cobbles and boulders were pulled up with the roots and then settled as sediment built up in the divot over time. Coincidentally, I surmise, the largest of the boulders was left in a position that later offered a suitable surface for the inscription.

Site Setting and Landscape Position

The Du Luth Stone is in a remote area, at a minor watershed divide. It is among the headwaters of small streams that flow southward to the St. Croix River, and other small streams that flow westward to the Kettle River, which itself is a major tributary of the St. Croix. In *The Streams and Rivers of Minnesota,* Waters (1977:166-173) describes this area of "Pine County Creeks" as unconnected to any other watershed, encompassing more than forty small streams.

> The explanation for the isolation of this drainage pocket is found in the subsurface topography. From near Hinckley toward the northeast, a zone of lava bedrock long ago became elevated as a result of earth movements; on top of this elevation, moraines formed as the melting glaciers halted along the zone, leaving a low ridge from which streams now flow north and south. The northern streams enter the Kettle River watershed to the north and west, and the Nemadji watershed to the northeast, but those flowing south drain across Pine County to the St. Croix. [Waters 1977:166]

Standard measures of archaeological potential such as distance to water are difficult to discern in this area. The upper courses of these streams are not depicted consistently on maps, probably because the sources are ephemeral and derived from a patchwork of wetlands around the minor watershed divides. From visiting the area, it appears certain that none of these streams would be navigable, so this would not be a reason for people to be at this location in 1679 or otherwise. MnModel 4 depicts this area of Pine County as "Unknown Site Potential / Poorly Surveyed" (OSA Portal, 2022), which is not surprising. There are very few recorded sites, and little archaeological information available for the area in general.

Historically, the vicinity of the stone was probably old growth pine forest. The area is now vegetated in secondary growth deciduous forest, following nineteenth century commercial logging and forest fires. The landscape surrounding the stone consists of hummocky glacial terrain, but it appears to also have other large, old treefalls, similar to the one containing the stone. Noticing this reminded me of the large pines blown down by straight line winds in 2011, relatively nearby in St. Croix State Park (photo in Mather 2011:96). If a similar event occurred at this location, it was in the distant past given that no traces of the downed trees remain.

Inventory and Historic Contexts

Along with methodology, historic context development is a primary factor separating archaeologists from antiquarians and pseudoarchaeologists. In the mid-nineteenth century, before archaeology existed as a discipline, curiosity seekers dug into earthworks and other sites, creating wild tales of the Lost Tribes of Israel or other ancient "advanced" mound building civilizations who were then tragically killed off by American Indians, implying a justification for the Euro-American dispossession of Native nations that was ongoing at that time. On the Rainy River, for example, Rev. George Bryce (1904:27-29) wrote that the mounds were monuments from peaceful, agricultural "Toltecans" who fled the Aztecs in Mexico only to be later wiped out by the "Sioux" in their new home. The archaeological tide turned in Minnesota when Jacob Brower and David Bushnell (1900) argued based on archaeological and historical evidence that the Dakota were the ancient moundbuilders at Mille Lacs.

Context development as we view it today started in the 1930s with the Midwestern Taxonomic System and the first definition of cultural historical units. In Minnesota, Lloyd Wilford's (1937) classification of Minnesota set the stage for the system that is still in use. Over the course of the twentieth century, North American archaeologists developed the now familiar framework (Paleoindian, Archaic, Woodland, Mississippian) for the Precontact period. Quimby (1966) developed a classification of Great Lakes fur trade sites.

Historic context development is one of the federal responsibilities of the SHPO for each state and U.S. territory. These documents summarize the state of knowledge about a time period or subject as reflected in identified historic properties. They are intended to be updated regularly. In Minnesota, the first comprehensive effort to cre-

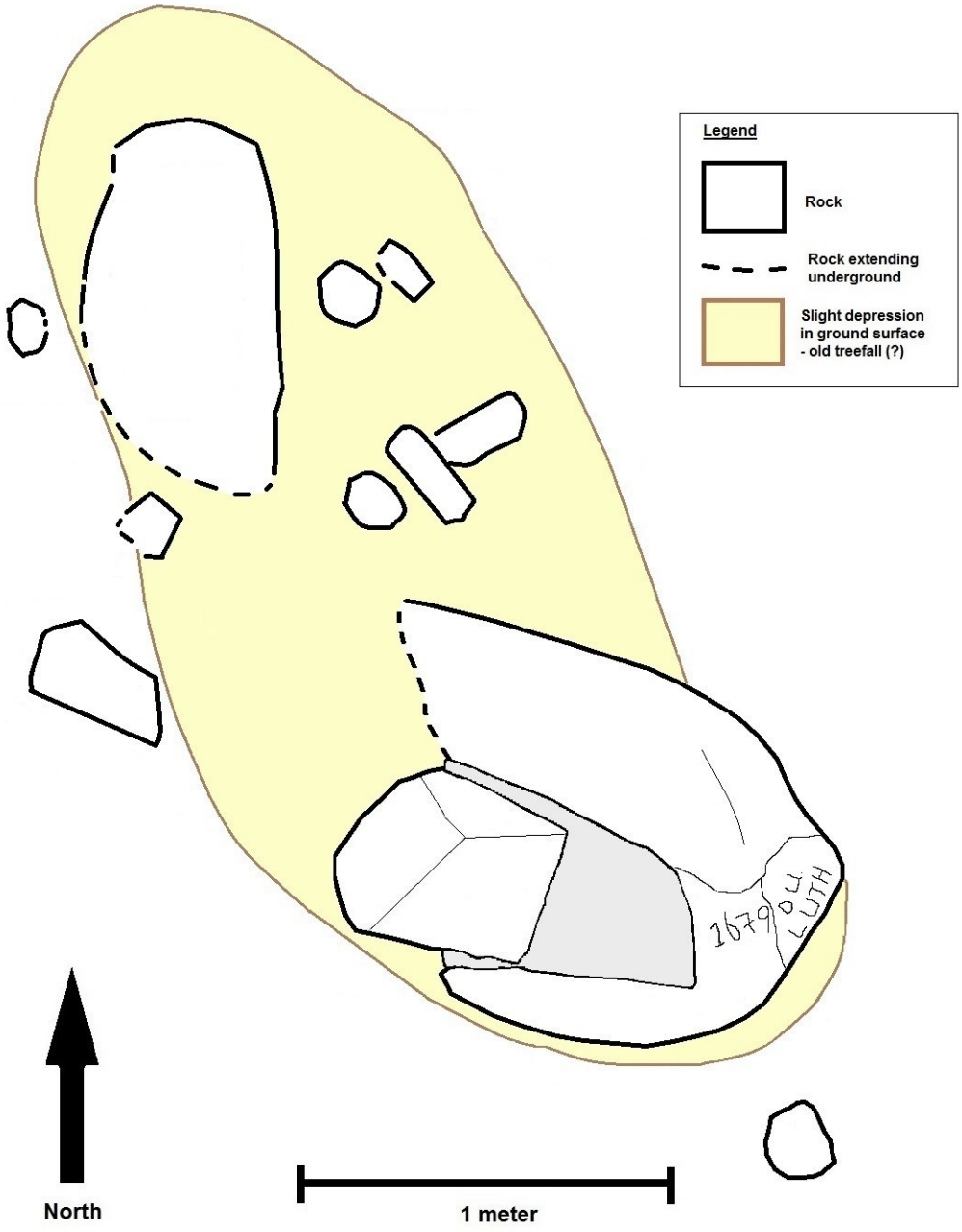

Figure 16. Plan view map of the Du Luth Stone and immediate vicinity, showing depression from a possible tree-fall.

ate historic context documents occurred in the late 1980s (MnSHPO n.d.). Since then, some contexts have been further formalized in Multiple Property Documentation Forms (MPDF), which are National Register documents that present temporal or thematic historic contexts along with summaries of known properties and evaluation guidance to facilitate nomination of relevant sites to the National Register of Historic Places. Examples include Lake Superior shipwrecks, Red River trails, rock art, and the Woodland Tradition (Labadie 1990; Hess 1989; Dudzik 1996; Ar-

zigian 2012), among others. Other contexts have not yet been updated, including the French period in Minnesota.

To be considered in a historic context, sites first must be inventoried, and this illustrates a challenge the Du Luth Stone has faced. In the mid -1990s, when SHPO was creating their first electronic historic properties inventory in Microsoft Access, all available research files and archaeology reports were reviewed to comprehensively assign trinomial site numbers for those that did not already have them. The Nyer grave was assigned alpha site number 21PNd at that time, based on the legal description in Birk's (1981b) memo. However, the Du Luth Stone was not assigned a number then, despite also having a legal description. Birk's memo (1981a) about Mr. Worobel was retained in the "Miscellaneous" file for Pine County, along with letters from local residents asking about the stone, with related notes and correspondence (Anfinson 1997a, 1997b; Hansen 1997; Havlish 1985). The Du Luth Stone now has the trinomial 21PN112. It is archaeological in the same sense as a lone petroglyph, in my opinion, and regardless of any question of authenticity, the site is certainly more than 50 years old since the inscription was covered with lichen and moss in the 1960s.

It is appropriate and useful for researchers to debate the significance and meaning, and the authenticity, of archaeological sites and finds. However, I suggest that evaluation and historic context development is the stage where such arguments can be more meaningful, and that this process is hindered by keeping things out of the inventory. While it is obviously important that additions to the inventory be reviewed and approved, a numbered inventory system is infinite and including something that is clearly cultural (even if its origin is unclear or questionable) does not diminish anything else. After all, the current inventory contains many unconfirmed site leads (alpha sites) as well as numbered sites that were later determined to not be sites (mima mounds, for example). In contrast, exclusion from the inventory tends to make such sites invisible so they are less likely to be considered in later stages of analysis. This challenge is compounded now as researchers are working primarily with computer and online systems, rather than the paper files where each county's uninventoried "Miscellaneous" file was always visible right at the front of the drawer.

Doug Birk (1988) wrote the French period context included in Minnesota's historic context framework (Dobbs n.d.:62-69). The main areas addressed were the northern border as the "Mer de l'Ouest (or "Posts of the Western Sea") and the "Sioux Country" primarily in eastern Minnesota. The context identifies five property types (Dobbs n.d.:63):

1. Fortified entrepots for extended use
2. Temporary outposts including wintering quarters
3. Accommodations used by French at Indian villages
4. Special activity areas such as "transient encampments, seasonal fishing and hunting camps, kill sites, portages, battle grounds, mines, burials, etc."
5. Canoe accident sites or places where items were lost or discarded

The Du Luth Stone is not addressed in any of these, but it would likely fit best as a type of "special activity area." To consider the authenticity of the inscription, I build on these contexts in the sections that follow.

Context 1: Du Luth and French Exploration in North America (1679)

If the Du Luth inscription is genuine, it was carved in 1679 as part of the first clearly documented French exploration into what is now Minnesota.[4] Consideration of this context draws on the history and methods of early European exploration of North America, as well as rare records of exploration markers. Also important are the little known details of Du Luth's life and career, including how he spelled his name and title. I address this first since the spelling has been cited as an issue regarding the inscription's authenticity.

Spelling

In the late nineteenth century, Minnesota historian Rev. Edward Neill (1881:9) stated that "Du Luth's name is variously spelled in the documents of his day." Neill pointed out that Father Louis Hennepin (a native French speaker and contemporary of Du Luth) wrote "Du Luth," while others spelled the name Dulhut, Du Lhu, Du Lut, De Luth, or Du Lud. Neill later (1881:11) quoted Governor De La Barre writing the name in 1683 as Du Lhut (see also Parkman 1880:257).

Harrisse (1872:176) spelled Du Luth's name as "Du L'hut," but cited Du Luth's own 1685 report as "Memoire du Sr. Daniel Greyselon *du Luth* sur la Décuuerte du pays des Nadouecioux

dans le Canada, dont il fait une Relation tres detaillée, 1685" (emphasis added). This is apparently the title that Du Luth himself gave to the document, including the spelling "du Luth." Note also that Du Luth spelled his surname "Greyselon" in this document, as opposed to the spelling "Greysolon" used by nineteenth century and later historians. Harrisse (1872:177-181) published Du Luth's account, as did Margry (1886:I:20-25). John Gilmary Shea (1880:374-377) published an English translation with his translation of Hennepin's *Description of Louisiana*, and this was reprinted by Kellogg (1917a:329-334). Like Harrisse, Shea himself spelled the explorer's name as Du Lhut but retained "du Luth" in the title of the translated 1685 report. Jacob Brower used "Du Luth" in his *Memoirs of Exploration in the Basin of the Mississippi*:

> Kathio was the name of the great town of the Nadouessioux which Du Luth visited, in 1679, mistranslating the name, or misstating its true pronunciation, and also omitting to describe its actual location, omissions which have required critical and attentive inquiry to resupply. [Brower 1901:xv]

Ross (1938:276) referred to "Daniel Greysolon, sieur du Lhut, whose surname has been honored with innumerable orthographic variations." There was a similar variety in spellings for others in late seventeenth century, such as Joliet/Jolliet, and interestingly, a movement among nineteenth century historians to establish standardized spellings to be used when writing about such historical figures (Kellogg 1917b:67-68). Clearly, the spelling "Du Luth" does not indicate that the inscription is inauthentic. It is within the range of spellings historically known for Du Luth.

Du Luth's Life and Career

Daniel Greysolon was born in Saint-Germain-Leval, in central France, sometime between 1636 and 1640. He was a soldier, a horseman in the French Guard, and fought in the battle of Seneffe in Belgium. Emigrating to New France afterward, he settled at Montreal in 1675. His explorations in what are now Minnesota and Wisconsin occurred in 1679 and 1680, in a secret operation that was not officially sanctioned by the leadership of New France. Leaving Montreal a few weeks before La Salle and Hennepin, he traveled across Lake Superior and then overland to Mille Lacs in 1679. If authentic, this short period is when the inscription on the Du Luth Stone was presumably carved. Du Luth himself described it as an exploration:

> In June 1680, *not having been satisfied with having made my exploration by land*, I took two canoes, with a savage who was my interpreter, and with four Frenchmen, to seek a means of making it by water. For this purpose I entered into a river which has its mouth eight leagues from the extremity of Lake Superior on the south side, where after having cut down some trees and broken through about one hundred beaver dams, I went up the said river, and then made a carry of half a league to reach a lake, which emptied into a fine river, which brought me to the Mississippi, where I learned, from eight lodges of Nadouecioux whom I met, that the Reverend Father Louis Henpin [sic], Recollect, now at the convent of St. Germain, had with two other Frenchmen been seized and taken away as slaves for more than three hundred leagues by the Nadouecioux themselves. [Kellogg 1917a:331-332, emphasis added]

Du Luth's 1685 memoir has been described as a "frustratingly brief account" (*Minnesota History* editor's preface to Dunn 1979:228), and "a brief, soldierly statement" (Meyer 1967:6). It was written to defend himself against charges of being an unlicensed trader. Unfortunately, Du Luth left few written records, being "a few letters [and] a short memoir" (Andrus-Juneau 1941:426). As such, his routes of exploration and activities along the way remain unknown. In 1683, Du Luth returned to the St. Croix River amid French conflict with the Iroquois, and established a supply post near the portage into the Brule and Lake Superior. He later operated a trading post at Lake Nipigon, north of Lake Superior and in 1696 was appointed commander of Fort Frontenac on Lake Ontario. Du Luth died in 1710 in Montreal and was buried at the Recollect Chapel (Marshall 1954:20-21; Dunn 1979).

Du Luth's travels, and those of La Salle and Hennepin, occurred within a race among European colonial nations to find a western passage

[4] Others such as Radisson and Des Groseilliers may have been in what is now Minnesota a few decades earlier but this is uncertain (they were certainly in Wisconsin). Also, unknown coureurs de bois may have been here by the mid-seventeenth century, although there is no historical documentation of this.

through North America for trade with Asia. Local historians in the nineteenth century and later have largely misinterpreted the goals of French exploration, I believe, seeing them from the context of Manifest Destiny with the implication that historical European presence here somehow predicated establishment of the United States and the State of Minnesota. With this perspective, they tend to downplay the odd historical references to saltwater and the Western Sea because they seem nonsensical from a modern view of geography. But of course, Du Luth and his contemporaries had no conception of political units that to them were far in the future. Their concerns were of their own time (cf. Morrison 2007:9-10). The French were only recently aware of the Mississippi River, for example. They did not know where it went but they hoped it would lead them west. The French nation was engaged in the fur trade as an interim measure within global goals of economic expansion. Individual explorers such as Du Luth contributed to this larger goal while also seeking to enrich themselves through stakes in fur posts that would be established at key connection points. For Du Luth, such a place would be the easiest portage between the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds, which is why he searched for it by land in 1679, and by water in 1680.

Because Du Luth famously established diplomatic connections with the Dakota Nation at Mille Lacs, his explorations have largely been overlooked, both in terms of his route and intentions. If authentic, the Du Luth Stone is an important piece of evidence, and could aid a future effort to trace the route and connected activities.

Inscriptions, Monuments, and Exploration Markers

Perhaps especially in Minnesota, archaeologists are instinctively skeptical of inscriptions carved on stones or other objects, and for good reason. It is a fact that anyone can carve anything on any rock at any time. A name and date carved on a stone, for example, *may* provide evidence of that person being there at that place and time. Just as easily, however, an engraved inscription or image can be a hoax, perhaps intended either as a practical joke or a malicious historical deception. Examples of archaeological fraud and "non-accurate" inscriptions are described below, in Context 2. This section presents historical records and archaeological examples of inscriptions, monuments and exploration markers. Some of them are accepted as genuine, while others have been fiercely debated.

Voyageurs are known to have created visual landmarks to guide them along trade routes (e.g. Ahlgren and Ahlgren 1984:3-4). Leaving marks or monuments along travel routes was a well established tradition:

> Europeans' artificial marks identified paths and roads, sometimes in the form of milestones. Travelers carved their initials onto trees and rocks just to say they had been there or, with more deliberation, to claim possession. And marks memorialized events and people, usually in the form of stone slabs or metal plaques carved or imprinted with written inscriptions, the same kind of memorial Europeans erected over graves. [Shoemaker 2004:29-30]

For example, in a 1732 survey in the Pyrenees "…There was no shortage of medieval and more recent boundary markers, including *engraved rocks*, stone crosses and other signals" (Sahlins 1989:86, emphasis added).

There are a few known French or later fur trade inscriptions in North America, including one left by La Salle on the Gulf of Mexico (Foster 1998; see also Weddle 2001:36-39 regarding the Ellington Stone in Illinois).

The Iberville Stone with the date 1699 is in the Louisiana State Museum in New Orleans. It was collected from Fort Maurepas in present day Ocean Springs, Mississippi. More recent in age, in Manitoba, there is an inscription on a rock in black paint referencing William McKay near the site of a former Northwest Company post on Lake Winnipeg, noted in surveys in 1878 and 1910 (Berens and Hallowell 2009:35).

In 1749, French soldiers planted inscribed lead plates along the Ohio River, which claimed the land on behalf of King Louis XV. They buried one of the plates "under a great rock, upon which were to be seen several figures roughly graven," which the Iroquois found and brought to their British allies for an explanation. (Shoemaker 2004:31). These plates were similar to the one La Verendrye left on a promontory near the Missouri River at Pierre, South Dakota, in 1743. The discovery site of that lead plate is a National Historic Landmark (Charleton 1990).

In Minnesota, there is a reported (although not confirmed) inscription of a French name and year, on a rock on Point-No-Point of Lake Pepin (Mather 2014:110, 112). More recent in age, from

the 1830s, is an unquestioned inscription by Joseph Nicollet and his party at Pipestone (Scott et al. 2006:81). Perhaps there has been no controversy about that one because Nicollet alluded to it in his journal (Bray and Bray 1976:73).

Context 2: Northeastern Pine County (1680-1950)

This context considers everything after 1679. If the inscription is fake, it must have been made sometime following Du Luth's exploration. We can presumably set aside considering whether the carving was made fraudulently in 1679 or before, although it is worth noting that technically, this is also unprovable. The historic context of archaeological fraud in the nineteenth century is briefly addressed first, before turning to chronological consideration of the site vicinity into the early twentieth century.

Archaeological Fraud and Misleading Inscriptions

When considering the authenticity of an inscription such as this, it is useful to be mindful of nineteenth century archaeological fraud. As antiquarian queries into the past were beginning in North America, fake artifacts were manufactured and sometimes even planted in archaeological sites. This was done for notoriety, to make money, or for unknown reasons, and was common enough to now warrant a historic context of its own.

Prominent examples of fraud in the antiquarian era include the Cardiff Giant, a supposedly petrified 10-foot man "discovered" in New York in 1869. The public could see the giant for paid admission and P.T. Barnum copied the statue for the same purpose. In the Midwest, the Michigan Relics (Stamps 2001) purported to depict biblical scenes in North America, and the Davenport Tablets (McKusick 1991) in Iowa perpetuated the racist myth that an ancient lost race, instead of American Indians, built the then-abundant earthworks. In Minnesota, of course, we have the Kensington Runestone (e.g. Blegen 1968; Michlovic 2010), which some pseudoarchaeologists want to connect to the Du Luth Stone.

It is worth noting that non-accurate inscriptions can also be carved for other reasons. Plymouth Rock in Massachusetts provides a classic cautionary tale of a boulder with an inscription (the date "1620") that was carved sometime later to commemorate a historical or even legendary event. There is no evidence that the Pilgrims actually saw or knew of this boulder when the *Mayflower* arrived in the New World, and as a tourist attraction the stone has been moved and modified an unknown number of times (Philbrick 2006:75; Zackowitz 2012).

A key difference in the modern history of the Du Luth Stone is that remarkably few people have seen it. Unlike the obvious fakes, no one to my knowledge has tried to promote or profit from it. Also, as mentioned previously, unlike the fake artifacts of the nineteenth century, the Du Luth inscription has apparent signs of age such as weathering and antique numerals.

Native History

At the time of Du Luth's exploration, east-central Minnesota and western Wisconsin were in the territory of the Dakota. The Ojibwe were already in the western Great Lakes, and were intermediaries for the Dakota to establish direct contact with the French (Westerman and White 2012). By the mid-eighteenth century, there was a period of hostilities as the Ojibwe moved into eastern and northern Minnesota, and the Dakota removed from these areas. The St. Croix River was a focus of Ojibwe life in relative proximity to the Du Luth Stone. Native communities were active partners in the fur trade through the early nineteenth century, with North West Company and XY Company posts in the vicinity supported by the Ojibwe.

French presence in the midcontinent ended long before this period of more intensive fur trade activity under the English regime. While both Dakota and Ojibwe communities had active interest in the fur trade over close to two centuries, there is no apparent incentive for them to create a fake Du Luth inscription. Similarly, there seems to be no reason for English or American fur traders to do this. Therefore, it seems reasonable to shorten the period for a potential fraudulent inscription to begin in the middle nineteenth century.

Minnesota Territory and Statehood: Logging and Farming

When the Minnesota Territory was established in 1849, the western side of the St. Croix River, including the vicinity of the Du Luth Stone, was part of Washington County, which extended from St. Paul straight north into what is now Carlton County (Gilman 1998/99:156). Later, the stone was likely included in "Buchanan County," which

occupies much of present day Pine County, which was established in 1856. While Washington County still exists along the lower St. Croix River, nothing remains of Buchanan County or its proposed county seat of "Fortuna," which was later the location of Sandstone (Brown 1922:242-243; Folsom 1999:279).

The Port Douglas – St. Louis River military road (21PNaw) crossed the Kettle River near the current alignment of Interstate 35. This road was authorized by Congress in 1853, and the route was surveyed in 1854-1855 (Singley 1974:19-21; see also Anfinson 1998/99:257-258). Establishment of the Sault Ste. Marie Canal in 1855 opened Lake Superior to oceanic shipping, and needed a railroad connection. The Minnesota legislature incorporated the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad in 1861, but construction did not begin until after the Civil War had ended. The line was reorganized as the St. Paul and Duluth Railroad in 1877, was later absorbed into the Northern Pacific railway system (Koop and Morris 2006:E4).

The nearby town of Sandstone was established in 1885, when quarries were established on the Kettle River (Singley 1974:20). Closer to the Du Luth Stone was Partridge, founded in by Dutch settlers in 1889 (Schoone-Jongen 1993). These settlements, and the countryside surrounding the inscription, were devasted by the Hinckley Fire of 1894, which was exacerbated by unusually hot and dry weather following decades of unsustainable commercial logging (Brown 2006; Forester 2004:113-114). Partridge was reestablished as Askov in 1906 by Danish People's Society although it is an outlier among Danish settlements in Minnesota, which otherwise cluster near the state's southern and western borders (Qualey 1950:27-28).

On both sides of the St. Croix, many of the settlers were of Scandinavian origin, and got on with establishing their lives without, apparently, dwelling on the history of the early French fur trade two centuries before:

> The settlers of this county are, for the greater part, Swedish and Norwegian emigrants, an intelligent, moral and religious class of people who, while they cherish the traditions, manners, customs and language of their native country, still readily adapt themselves to American institutions, taking kindly to our common school system and to other distinctive features of their adopted country. A liberal spirit has characterized these people to building roads, bridges, school houses, churches, and making other public improvements. They have succeeded well also in their private enterprises, the cultivation of farms and the building of homes. [Folsom 1999:230-231]

In the early twentieth century, the southern boundary of the Fires of 1918 encompassed the vicinity of the Du Luth Stone. Like the previous conflagration of the Hinckley Fire, this was the legacy of nearly a century of unregulated logging leaving slash and unchecked fires burning throughout the region. It appears that the immediate vicinity of the inscription was certainly logged in the late nineteenth century if not earlier. The General Land Office survey in 1867 identified nothing at that location (MHS0511, Minnesota Maps Online), and the 1874 Andreas Atlas shows forest in this and surrounding townships. The closest cultural features are the railroad west of the Kettle River, and town of Kettle River itself (Andreas 1874:183). The Pine County map shows lumber camps in the general vicinity. "Tozler's Camp" is located about five miles to the southeast. "Fox's Camp Big Spring" is identified on the Kettle River, about 15 miles to the southwest (Andreas 1874:162). A logging railroad crossed the township where the Du Luth Stone is located and lumber camps were plentiful in the nineteenth century (Cordes 1989).

As old growth forest disappeared, northern Pine County settlers tried farming in the rocky cutover land, some finding success in growing rutabagas near Askov. Farther east toward the St. Croix River, logged areas returned to young forest in secondary growth, with eventual establishment of parks and wildlife management areas in the early twentieth century. Archaeologist W.C. McKern described the region at the time of his excavation of the Clam River Mound in Wisconsin, in the 1930s:

> At the present time the trees with lumber value have been almost wholly eradicated through lumbering activities, and have been largely replaced by small sandy farms, with here and there a surviving stand of jackpines and an occasional second-growth white pine or hardwood. Fish in variety and turtles are plentiful in both lakes and streams; deer, bear, and smaller game still abound; ducks and geese are present in great numbers during migration periods; wild rice, once dominating the shallower lakes, is still harvested to a lim-

> ited extent; and wild berries, particularly blueberries, are still abundant. The Indians who occupied this area and enjoyed its bountiful resources at the time of first contact with the European invaders are now represented only by visitors from nearby reservations eastward in Wisconsin or westward in Minnesota. [McKern 1963:6]

The township where the Du Luth inscription is located was established in 1907. It was always sparsely populated and it was heavily logged (Cordes 1989). It is now vegetated in secondary growth forest and has been maintained as private hunting land since at least the mid-twentieth century.

Du Luth Commemoration

The City of Duluth was named in 1855, and founded in 1857, one of many imagined and remote townsites in the Minnesota Territory after the Treaty of 1854 (Woodbridge and Pardee 1910:86-87). The name was a tribute to Du Luth and evocation of the past. Perhaps oddly, an interest in Du Luth as a historical figure led to artistic commemorations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, poet H.L. Gordon inserted the French explorer into the old tale of Maiden Rock on Lake Pepin, as the Indian maiden Winona's tragic love interest (Gordon 1891). Also, Mrs. Stella Prince Stocker of Duluth wrote a historical play in four acts titled *Sieur du Lhut*:

> Its action centers around incidents in the career of this most notable figure among the French explorers who ventured into the wilderness about the head of Lake Superior during the seventeenth century. The narrative follows the scanty historical records that are available as closely as the exigencies of dramatic production permit, but the thread of romance that runs through the play is pure fiction. The traditions and customs of the Chippewa Indians, who are so closely connected with the early history of Minnesota, are embodied in the various scenes; and Chippewa melodies, of which the author has been for a number of years an enthusiastic collector, furnish the incidental music. The play was given its first presentation at Duluth on June 22 under the auspices of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae. The vivid and faithful picture which it gives of the period portrayed makes it, however, well worth production in localities other than the one with which the name of its central figure is identified. [*Minnesota History* 1917:200-201]

Monuments were also placed by the Greysolon Dulhut and Daughters of Liberty chapters of the Daughters of the American Revolution, in some cases referencing Du Luth's explorations, such as the memorial tablet placed at Fond du Lac (*Minnesota History* 1923:243). Like the artistic commemorations, however, the stone monuments to Du Luth were not concerned with actual historic properties except by speculation, so there was seemingly no effort made to find such places.

Interpretation and Comparison of Contexts

Considering these broad historic contexts, I believe that it is most probable that the Du Luth Stone is a genuine artifact. For one thing, the inscription is clearly "old," with obvious weathering, lichen growth and antique script. While the script could certainly be faked, the first two traits would be impossible, or at least extremely difficult, to mimic. Also, in my opinion, the stone's remote landscape position and historical obscurity further argue against it being a forgery. If it was intended as a monument, it was a personal one to Du Luth and his party, marking a location where they had been. It may have also been intended as a message to other explorers, showing that Du Luth was there first.

Du Luth was a fur trader and explorer who visited what is now Minnesota in 1679 and 1680. He did so at risk of political censure but in hopes of personal gain through establishing a foothold in future trade routes. Toward this end, he focused on the geography immediately west of Lake Superior. Existence of the Mississippi River was only recently known to the French, and it was hoped that its course when explored would provide access to the Pacific Ocean, the ultimate prize that would facilitate trade to Asia as had been envisioned since before Europeans knew of the North American continent. This is why explorers' accounts, including Du Luth's, often dangled references to salt water somewhere farther west, either as an outright fiction or as an answer to leading questions asked of Native nations, who in the midcontinent were likely not interpreting this as a search for an ocean. So Du Luth was operating within a centuries-long erratic push across the continent by Europeans, who were in competition at both a national and a personal level.

While Du Luth did not specifically mention carving an inscription in his brief writings, the presence of this one seems consistent with the historic context of French exploration in North America – or at least it is not contradicted by it. When considering the second context however, there is no clear candidate for someone who might have faked it. The most intensive activity in the vicinity of the stone was in the logging days. The loggers did not create monuments of their own, and would seem to have little reason to create a fake one for someone else. In short, when considering the two contexts, an argument that the inscription is fake is not supported by any evidence. The only seeming explanation would be that an anonymous person could have done it for some personal reason and not told anyone about it, but even if we were to accept that, it would have to have been long enough ago for the inscription to become weathered, and covered by lichen and moss by the 1960s. Considering the inscription as authentic and connected to Du Luth's 1679 exploration seems far more plausible. If it is an exploration monument, as seems likely, it was probably not the only one, which makes the reference in Birk's (1981a) memo to another stone with the same inscription all the more interesting.

Future Work and Preservation

Finding seventeenth century French artifacts near the Du Luth Stone would strongly support the argument that the stone is genuine. However, it is important to recognize that not finding such artifacts would not demonstrate the opposite. The explorers may not have stayed at this location for longer than the presumably brief time it took to carve the stone. Even if they camped there overnight, archaeological evidence of their stay would be slim, and the odds of finding a diagnostic artifact unlikely. Nevertheless, it is worth looking, in my opinion, and I hope that such an investigation can occur in the future. Likewise, I also believe that it would be beneficial to survey this area of Minnesota for similar monuments and related sites. Very little is known archaeologically about this part of the state.

It would be hard to find sites related to Du Luth's exploration. There were few people, moving across the landscape in a limited timeframe. The specifics of the route are largely unknown. There are precedents, however, including the archaeological search for the Lewis and Clark exploration (Saraceni 1998) and in Minnesota, the possible discovery of one of Joseph Nicollet's campsites at 21CW173 on Roosevelt Lake (C. Hohman-Caine and G. Goltz, personal communication, 2023).

> [T]he archaeological visibility of the presence of an alien group in a region depends on the number of foreigners and the duration of their stay at any one place. Archaeologists must admit that it may be quite difficult to document the presence of a very small, very mobile group, but the evidence of the Lewis and Clark expedition indicates that careful research ultimately reveals such evidence. [Feder 2002:146]

On its own, I believe that the Du Luth Stone is likely eligible for the National Register of Historic Places as an object. However, I think more detailed development of these comparative historic contexts would be useful to support the argument. On the basis of what we know now, I suspect that the stone is eligible under Criterion A, for its role in the broad patterns of fur trade history and exploration, Criterion B for association with Du Luth himself, and Criterion D for its information potential. Ideally, an archaeological investigation would occur prior to a nomination, provided that the landowners agree. If supporting archaeological evidence can be identified in the vicinity of the stone, it would bolster the significance, of course, but also make the focus of nomination a site rather than the stone alone.

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