

Germany, who conquered Rome; or the descendants of Huss, of Prague, the first one of the reformers. It was when the state had been builded that these men came from Germany, Scandinavia, Bohemia and Northern Europe, worthy descendants of noble ancestors, and they have united in beautifying the state builded for them, and have ever been recognized as among our best, most enterprising and conservative citizens.

Old Des Moines River Beds

It is hard to think of the Des Moines river, with its wooded banks and clear waters, as having ever been a small edition of the muddy Missouri; but that is what it was many years ago—at least not many years ago as geological time is measured. Not only was it muddy and dirty and ugly to the sight, but its channel was as shiftly as that of the “Big Muddy.” The mound-builder who went to bed at night on the bank of the Des Moines didn’t have the least assurance that the river would be anywhere in the neighborhood when he woke up in the morning.

The fact is that the river wandered around over pretty much the whole surface of Polk county, at one time or another in the last 8,000 years; and the geological evidences are that the channel now occupied is almost entirely different from the original one that was formed when the glacier melted. In Polk county there are many miles of old river bed, and it is believed, although the geological evidences have not been so carefully examined in other counties, that the same is true in the counties to the north and south.

The state geological survey long ago made report on the geology of Polk county, and it was issued about 1898. The work was done by H. F. Bain, associate geologist, and represented one of the most complete and careful examinations that has been made of any county in the state.

Comparatively speaking, the Des Moines is a new

river. There probably was no such stream till after the big Wisconsin glacier melted, and the river formed along the southeastern line of the great sheet of ice, to carry off the waters. At first it was an ill-defined series of ponds and rivulets, but in time it developed into a distinct stream. Its main channel, however, changed at frequent intervals; old courses were deserted in a day, when the water was high, and new ones were cut by the rushing torrents.

The beautiful valley of the Beaver, famed among people who know the attractive drives of Polk county as one of the handsomest valleys in this part of the state, was once the valley of the Des Moines. Drive out on the Beaver road, and it will be found that for miles the original highway traversed the crest of a ridge. On the east can be seen the valley of the present Des Moines river; on the west is the valley of the Beaver. The latter is in many ways the more beautiful; its timber is magnificent, and the valley is a wide and sweeping one, with well marked flood plains; whereas the present valley of the river is poorly marked, geologically, and bears evidences which to the geologist at once indicate that it is a comparatively new channel.

The old Beaver valley was once the channel of the Des Moines, and it was undoubtedly a larger and far more beautiful stream before it changed to the new course. Estimates of the time since the change to the new channel are of course uncertain, but it is known from the evidence presented by the deposits that the change is a modern one—perhaps the Beaver was the main river within time reached by historical records; in all probability the old valley was the main one within 8,000 years, according to Mr. Bain.

The ancient river came down the Beaver valley to the present point of junction with the modern stream, and from this point followed the present course for two or three miles; then it struck off

nearly direct to the east, instead of turning south as the present stream does, and passed around to the east of what is now known as Highland Park. The south branch of Saylor's creek was probably the main channel for some distance. Leaving this, the stream passed around east of the city, and near the present state fair grounds turned south again and effected a junction with the present channel again somewhere not far from Avon.

It is not difficult to believe that the Beaver may have once been the main river, but the layman will not find it so easy to believe that the river once swung around from northeast of Highland park, through what is now the East Side to the state fair grounds. And yet the geologists say there is no doubt whatever that this is true. There may even have been men here when the change was made.

The James Madison Papers

The work of editing and publishing a new and complete edition of the letters and papers of President James Madison and his wife Dolly Madison is being sponsored by the University of Chicago and the University of Virginia. Among those constituting the advisory board for the project is Irving Brant formerly of Iowa City, the well known author of "James Madison, Father of the Constitution," now in several volumes.

Information about the location of letters by or to James Madison or his wife, especially letters in private possession or among uncalendared manuscripts in the collections of public or private institutions should be addressed to The Papers of James Madison, 1126 East 59th street, Chicago 37, Illinois.

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