

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF IOWA.

BY CHARLES NEGUS.

The first conveyance of Iowa soil to the whites, by the Indians, was made in 1788, on the 22d of September. The chiefs of the Fox Indians, Blondeau, Basib-Piar, Ala Austin, Quirneau, Tobaque and Antaque, at Prairie du Chien, signed an article, by which they conveyed to Julien DuBuque, a Frenchman, called by them the Little Night (*la petite nuit*,) "148,176 arpons of land, situated at a place called the Spanish Mines, on the river Mississippi, at a distance of about four hundred and forty miles from St. Louis, forming, in superficies, about twenty-one leagues, beginning at the heights of the Little Maquetois to the heights of the Mesquatie Manque, being in front of said river seven leagues, by depth three leagues, the whole forming the said tract forming the Spanish Mines."

This valuable grant was subsequently confirmed to DuBuque by the Spanish Governor, Baron de Carondelet. Julien DuBuque, after whom the county and city of DuBuque were named, may be considered as the first white man who ever made a permanent settlement in Iowa. DuBuque, though of French descent, had many of the habits and cultivated the disposition of the savages. He took a squaw by the name of Potosa for his wife, associated with the Indians as his companions, and, by familiarity and tact, had a great influence with them.

He died in 1810, and was buried on a high bluff, which overlooks the Mississippi, at the mouth of Catfish Creek. A stone house, surmounted with a red cedar cross, with a leaden door, was erected over his grave, all of which were to be seen in a tolerable state of preservation after the country was settled by the whites. On the cross was inscribed an epitaph which, translated, reads: "Julien DuBuque, miner of the mines of Spain; died the 24th day of March, 1810, aged forty-nine years and six months."

The first treaty ever held by the Government of the United States with the Indians of the North-West, was had on the Muskingum river, at Fort Hamer, on the 9th of January, 1789, and was conducted by Arthur St. Clair, Governor of the territory north-west of the Ohio river, on the part of the United States.

At this treaty the Wyandot, Delaware, Ottawa, Chippawa, and Pottawattamie tribes were represented by their sachems and warriors; and the territory of Iowa was also represented by two chiefs from the Sacs.

The principal object of this treaty seems to have been to make peace and friendship between the several tribes, and to establish and confirm the boundary between the United States and the Indians. It was stipulated at this treaty that the Indians were not to sell their lands to any other nation or person, other than the United States; that if any individual, of either of the parties, should commit murder or robbery on the other, he should be delivered up for trial, and that any person stealing horses from the other party should be severely punished. And the United States received into their friendship and protection the Pottawattamies and Sacs, and established a league of peace and amity between them respectively.

The rapid settlement of Kentucky and Ohio made the navigation of the Mississippi a matter of great consideration to the United States. The mouth of this river being in the possession of a foreign power, caused much inconvenience to those settled west of the Alleghany mountains, in carrying on their trade up and down the river, and it became a subject of great interest to the government of the United States to procure the entire possession of the Mississippi Valley.

On the 21st of March, 1801, Spain retroceded her possessions in this Valley to France. And Bonaparte, showing a disposition to dispose of the territory belonging to France in the West, Jefferson, then President of the United States, though doubting his authority, entered into a negotiation for the purchase of these possessions, and on the 30th of April, 1803, a treaty was concluded by which France ceded to the

United States the whole of her dominion in the Mississippi Valley.

This country had been known as Upper and Lower Louisiana; New Orleans being the capital of the Lower Territory and St. Louis of the Upper. On the 20th of December, 1803, Lower Louisiana was delivered up to the authorities of the United States, and on the 9th of March, 1804, Upper Louisiana was surrendered; and William C. C. Claiborne was appointed Governor of the Lower, and Amos Stoddard of the Upper Territory.

Upper Louisiana embraced within the boundary of her territory what now composes the State of Iowa, at that time a wilderness, the hunting ground of the Indian. Though it had been almost a century and a half since this fertile country, with its numerous navigable waters, had been known to the civilized world, as yet the advance in civilization had made slow progress in the country west of the Mississippi. The long and tedious journey by land, or the slow and laborious work of paddling a canoe, made the settlement of this country an enterprise so difficult and hazardous that none but the most daring would venture the undertaking.

On the 26th of March, 1804, Congress passed an act establishing the boundaries between Upper and Lower Louisiana. The lower country was called the Territory of New Orleans, and the upper the District of Louisiana. The white population of the District of Louisiana, then embraced in that part of the territory which now includes the States of Arkansas, Missouri and Iowa, had recently been somewhat augmented from the old French settlement on the other side of the river, and by Anglo-American adventurers. But the white population, at this time, did not exceed three or four thousand, in the whole District, and emigration to this region was not encouraged by the Americans, for the government of the United States had conceived the idea of reserving this country for the Indians; and the President was authorized to propose to the tribes east of the Mississippi, an exchange of lands for those on the west side of the river.

The District of Louisiana, by the same act dividing the territory, was attached to the territory of Indiana, for political and judicial purposes. But nearly the whole country embraced in the Territory of Indiana, thus formed, belonged to the Indians. The United States being anxious to purchase from the Indians a portion of their lands, took steps to accomplish their object.

On the 27th of June, 1804, William H. Harrison, afterwards President of the United States, and then Governor of Indiana Territory, and by the act of the 26th of March, Governor of the District of Louisiana, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, was instructed by Jefferson to hold a treaty with the Sacs and Foxes, and if possible, obtain from them a tract of land.

In pursuance with these instructions, Harrison, in the month of November, 1804, met at St. Louis, five chiefs from these Indians, and obtained from them a large grant of land.

After acquiring Louisiana, the Government of the United States took measures to explore the newly acquired territory. There was a military post established at St. Louis, under the command of Gen. James Wilkinson, to whom the subordinate officers made their reports. Merriweather Lewis, then Capt. in the first regiment of infantry, and Capt. C. Clark were selected by the President, to explore the unknown sources of the Missouri, and Gen. (then Major) Zebulon M. Pike was chosen to trace the Mississippi to its head waters.

Gen. Pike started on his tour from his encampment near St. Louis, on the 9th of August, 1805, with one sergeant, two corporals and seventeen privates in a keel boat seventy feet long, with provisions for four months. And on the 20th of August, arrived within the present limits of Iowa, at the foot of the Des Moines Rapids.

At this place he was met by William Ewing, (who had just been appointed by the government an agent to reside among the Indians, to teach them the science of agriculture,) with a French interpreter, four chiefs and fifteen men of the Sac tribe, who assisted him in crossing the Rapids.

At the head of these Rapids, on or near the spot where Montrose is built, was a large village of the Sacs. This village must have been recently established, for in 1673, when Joliet and Marquette first descended the Mississippi, they found no Indian settlements on the river; but there was a large settlement of another tribe (the Illinois) of the Aborigines a short distance below on the Des Moines.

Gen. Pike called all the chiefs to his camp, and had a talk with them. He told them "that their Great Father, the President of the United States, wished to be more intimately acquainted with the situation, wants, etc., of the different nations of the red people, in our newly acquired territory of Louisiana, and had ordered the General to send a number of his warriors in different directions, to take them by the hand and make such inquiries as might afford the satisfaction required." Also "that he was authorized to choose a station for their trading establishment, and wished them to inform him if that place would be considered by them central."

At the close of his talk he presented them with some knives, tobacco and whisky.

The chiefs thanked him for his presents, told him "that themselves, their young warriors, and the whole nation were glad to see him among them; that as for the situation of the trading-house they could not determine, being but a part of the nation."

At the close of the council, Pike, with his men, pursued their journey up the river, and on the 23d of August he must have been somewhere near where the city of Burlington is located, if not on the very site, which place he selected as the location for a fort. He described the place as being "on a hill, about forty miles above the River de Moyne Rapids, on the west side of the river, in about 41°, 21 N. The channel of the river runs on that shore, the hill in front is about sixty feet perpendicular, nearly level on the top. Four hundred yards in the rear is a small prairie, fit for gardening; and immediately under the hill is a limestone spring, sufficient for the consumption of a regiment."

This place is laid down on his map at a bend in the river, corresponding with that at Burlington, and is a short distance below the mouth of the Henderson river, which empties into the Mississippi from Illinois. Though it seems that the fort was subsequently built at Ft. Madison, yet from the distance and latitude given by Pike, it could not have been the place first selected by him.

On the 24th, Pike, with one of his men, went on shore to hunt, and following a stream, which they supposed to be a part of the Mississippi, they were led out of their intended course. His two favorite hunting dogs, which he took with him, owing to the heat and tall grass, gave out on the prairie; but, supposing they would follow him, he left them and continued his march to overtake the boat. He struck the river ahead of the boat, where he waited some time for his dogs to come up. But the dogs not coming, and thinking it not expedient to detain his boat longer, two of his men volunteered to go in pursuit of the dogs, and he pursued his voyage up the river, supposing the two men would overtake him. But they got lost on the prairie, and were six days without any thing to eat except muscles, which they gathered from the stream, and would, in all probability, have perished, had they not accidentally fell in with a trader, who was on his way to St. Louis, and gave them assistance and procured a couple of Indians, with a canoe, to take them up the river, and they overtook the boat at the mines of DuBuque.

[To be continued.]

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.