

Death of a Pioneer

The Daily Journal, Muscatine. January 17, 1857.

DEATH OF A PIONEER.—Col. John Vanater, the founder of this city and its oldest inhabitant, died at his residence last night, aged about 68 years. He came to this place in 1835, when the only mark of civilization on the spot was a small Indian trading house kept by an agent of Col. Davenport of Rock Island. He bought Col. Davenport's "claim," and the following year laid off a town which he called Bloomington. He labored under some disadvantage in bringing the place into importance from the rivalry of Geneva, a town laid off at a point three miles above this city, under the auspices of Dr. Reynolds, who exerted considerable influence from being a member of the Territorial Legislature. But the superior location of Bloomington finally gave it precedence over its rival. The site of Geneva is now marked by only a few dilapidated houses, while Bloomington (now Muscatine) is a city of 10,000 inhabitants.

Col. Vanater was one of the earliest pioneers to this portion of the West. He resided in the vicinity of Keithsburg, Ill., previous to coming to the west side of the river. We have heard him say that he visited the site of the present city of Muscatine as early as 1828, in company with roving bands of Indians, when the place was designated by the name of "Grind Stone Bluffs" by boatmen and the few other white men who chanced to pass this way on their journeyings through the wilderness. Although possessed of a warm-hearted, generous and hospitable disposition, he retained to the day of his death much of rudeness and uncouth manners of the backwoodsman and seemed averse to the refinement of civilization and took but little interest in the various improvements by which he had been surrounded since the settlement of the country. Thus he voluntarily denied himself the influential position which he might otherwise have occupied in the community. But he has "gone the way of all the earth," and it becomes us to forget his faults and cherish only his virtues.

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