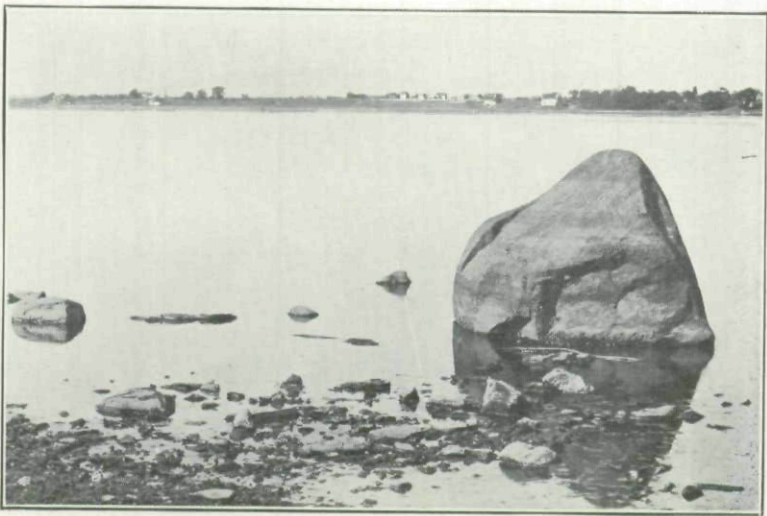




Site of Tesson improvement 1796; building remains are to the left  
center foreground.



Mechanic's Rock, 1912—Nauvoo in the distance.  
Boats took the open channel when water covered this rock.

# ANNALS OF IOWA.

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## HISTORIC SITES TO BE SUBMERGED.

BY J. P. CRUIKSHANK.

While the construction of the gigantic power dam across the Mississippi river at Keokuk will be, when completed, the greatest industrial achievement of the age, and second only to the Panama Canal as an engineering feat, it will cause the destruction of over five million dollars worth of property, including the old government canal, locks and buildings, and cause to be submerged several historic sites and landmarks of more than passing interest to pioneers, early river men and observers of Iowa history in general. Lost property can be restored or it can be replaced by its equivalent or something better, but local history and sentiment require a visible reminder to keep them fully alive, especially in the minds of those born after the pioneer period. However, sentiment must give way to progress, for progress makes history and the latter inspires sentiment. Yet a nation, State or locality should cultivate and cherish a proper sentiment for its historic sites, and if it be not always possible to preserve the important ones, they can and should be permanently marked. Nations, in a measure, grow, progress and flourish, in proportion to their knowledge of and pride in their history, to the end that the good may be emulated and the bad avoided.

It is no discredit to our State that we have no great battlefields to mark and keep green in our memories. To one who is not too militant in his ideas, greater is the glory that there are none of any consequence. While it is not the purpose of the writer to delve in general into the history of the southeastern corner of Iowa and adjacent territory, it is not out of place in this connection to make the bold statement that the locality within a radius of say twenty-five miles of the

town of Montrose at the head of the Mississippi river rapids is richer in history than any equal territory in the State or similarly situated as to adjacent States. The brief mention of some of these historic sites and the facts that have made the region famous in local history will suffice, it is hoped, to substantiate the statement:

The landing of Marquette and Joliet with a party of five voyagers on the west bank of the Mississippi river, in what was evidently the vicinity of the present town of Montrose on the 25th day of June, 1673;

The second settlement within the limits of the State of Iowa, at the site where Montrose now stands, near the close of the eighteenth century, by Louis Honore Tesson, and the planting of the first orchard in the State;

The arrival of Lieut. Zebulon M. Pike at the Tesson settlement on the 20th day of August, 1805;

The establishment of old Fort Madison and trading post about ten miles above the head of the rapids, in 1808-9 by Lieut. Alpha Kingsley, and the continued occupation thereof by a garrison of one or more companies of government troops until the same was besieged by the Indians for the last time, evacuated and burned September 3, 1813;

The construction of the stockade and trading station, sometimes called Fort Johnson, at what is now the town of Warsaw, Illinois, sixteen miles below the head of the rapids, in 1812;

The establishment of Fort Edwards at the last-named locality, in 1814, by Capt. Zachary Taylor, later President of the United States;

The settlement in 1820 at Puc-e-she-tuck, now the city of Keokuk, by Dr. Samuel Muir, a noted surgeon in the U. S. Army;

The establishing of a trading post in 1820 by Lemoliese at the mouth of a creek that still bears the name of the French trader, at a point now known as Sandusky;

The settlement two miles above the above-mentioned trading post, by another French trader, Maurice Blondeau, in the same year;



The settlement at Nashville, now Galland, two miles below Montrose, by the families of Dr. Isaac Galland and Dr. Isaac R. Campbell, in 1829, at which point, in 1831, the first school house in the State was built, and the first school taught therein by Berryman Jennings. However, a few scholars were taught at the house of Dr. Isaac Galland the year previous;

The establishment of Camp Des Moines, sometimes called Fort Des Moines, at the site of the Tesson settlement in 1834, with a garrison of three companies of U. S. Dragoons, under the command of Col. Stephen W. Kearney. The barracks were constructed of logs and two or three post wells were sunk, one of which is still in use. It is the only relic left of this cantonment, and will be obliterated by the overflow when the power dam is completed;

The Mormon occupation of Nauvoo, Illinois, opposite Montrose, from 1840 to 1846, inclusive. This sect was led by Joseph Smith, the prophet, who caused to be erected the Mormon Temple, costing nearly one million dollars. The style of architecture was unique and not classical, but original in design. The prophet was assassinated while in jail at Carthage and his followers were practically expelled from Nauvoo and the Temple destroyed in 1846;

In the same block with the old Smith homestead, fronting on the river, at Nauvoo, is the Smith family cemetery. Here lie the remains of the only wife of the prophet, in a brick vault surmounted by a marble slab and almost hidden by shrubbery, vines and weeds. The prophet and his brother Hyrum are also buried here, but the exact spots are only known to the Mormon dignitaries, who have purchased the block embracing the Smith home and the cemetery, and are now actively engaged in raising a fund of twenty thousand dollars for an appropriate monument to mark the holy shrine. None of these Mormon landmarks will be affected by the flood;

Following in the wake of the Saints, there came, in 1849, from fair France, the Icarians, a communistic sect founded by Etienne Cabet, an exile, who gained considerable prominence in his native country as an agitator and writer. The com-

munity purchased and occupied many of the Mormon mansions, installed some excellent factories and undertook to rebuild the dismantled Temple, with the view to turning it into a playhouse or theater. As in every venture of this nature, dissensions arose among them and the greater portion withdrew from the Nauvoo community and settled in Adams county, Iowa, in 1854, and no longer exist as a community.

Returning to the historic sites and landmarks that will be flooded by the forty-mile lake formed by the back water above the dam, the most notable is the site of the old orchard and farm established by Louis Honore Tesson, on a part of the land granted to him by Spain, situated at the foot of picturesque Bluff Park, at the lower edge of Montrose. Tesson was a French-Canadian, who in 1796 obtained from Zeno Trudeau, Lieut. Governor of Upper Louisiana, acting under authority and by direction of the Governor-General at New Orleans, Baron de Carondelet, a grant of about six leagues of land covering the site above mentioned. The right to make the settlement was conditioned that Tesson should exert his influence to bring the Indians under subjection to the dominion of Spain and the religion of the Roman Catholic Church. "The permit required that he plant trees, sow seeds and instruct the Indians in agriculture, etc."

That Tesson planted apple trees, and that this was the first orchard in what is now the great agricultural State of Iowa, there is not a question of doubt. Persons still living have seen it and eaten of its fruit. It has been stated by local historians that the young trees were transported from St. Charles, Missouri, on the back of a mule, and that the original orchard numbered nearly one hundred trees. Inasmuch as they were what are known as seedlings, there is a strong possibility that the seeds were planted in the ground where they grew to maturity and bearing. This orchard was visited by Alexander Cruikshank, the father of the writer, in the fall of 1832, and his statement was that there were about fifteen bearing trees which were quite old and showing signs of decay at that time. Several trees were decayed and gone, and young sprouts were growing from the roots. These after-

ward grew into bearing trees, some of which were alive as late as 1870.

The late Col. J. C. Parrott, of Keokuk, was a Sergeant of the U. S. Dragoons, who were quartered at Camp Des Moines, now Montrose. In a published article, he stated that when the garrison was established there in 1834, there were unmistakable signs of previous occupation by civilized people. In addition to the orchard of a dozen or more seedling apple trees, the ground showed evidence of having been cultivated, and the ruins of two or three adobe chimneys were in evidence. It is evident that Tesson had carried out the stipulations in his grant, as to planting seeds and trees. The exact time of his settlement and subsequent abandonment of the place is not known. Neither is it known what success he had in teaching agriculture to the Indians and converting them to the Roman Catholic faith.

Lieutenant Pike, in his voyage up the Mississippi in 1805, gives an account of his ascending the Rapids in Des Moines:

The channel of which is a bad one is on the eastern side of the first two falls. It then passes under the third, crosses to the west side and ascends that side all the way to the Sac village.\* We had passed the first and most difficult shoal, when we were met by William Ewing, an agent of the United States, residing at the Sac village, to instruct the Indians in agriculture. A French interpreter and fifteen men of the Sac nation came with Mr. Ewing in their canoes, with a United States flag, to assist me over the rapids. Taking a part of my load and putting two pilots in my barge, we soon reached Ewing's house at the village.

From this account, it would seem that the United States had an Indian agency on the Tesson grant, and it is possible that the French interpreter mentioned, might have been Tesson himself.

It was not generally known by the early settlers of Lee county that there was a government agency there at that early date. A search of the proper records at Washington may disclose something of the kind. Tesson does not seem to have made his venture a financial success, as he became in-

\*The Sac village to which he refers was on the Tesson tract.



volved and his grant was sold under judgment at public outcry, May 15, 1803, for \$150.00 to Joseph Robidoux, Tesson's creditor, who sold the same to the Reddick heirs, whose title was confirmed in 1837 by decree of the United States Court. While the grant originally called for six leagues, the title to only one mile square was confirmed in the Reddick heirs. The plat of the town of Montrose comprises this section of land, and is surrounded on all sides except the river side, by a boulevard one hundred feet wide. The Tesson tract seems to be the first Spanish grant in what is now Iowa that was duly confirmed by the United States Government. The site of the old orchard is definitely located and it will be wholly submerged. The Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railway right of way is to be changed from its present location between the old orchard and the river, to one on the west, cutting off a small corner of the orchard site.

Iowa is strictly an agricultural State, unquestionably more so than any other State in the Union. It would be a shame and a blot on her fair name, for her citizens to allow this historic birthplace of her greatest industry to be forever overflowed and hidden from view by the waters of the Mississippi without at least a mound and a marker thereon, safely above the surface of the water. The power dam corporation will be requested to raise a mound on the site of sufficient size and height, and as it can be done without much trouble and expense, it is believed that the request will be readily granted. The Legislature at its next session should be petitioned for an appropriation for a suitable monument or marker. There are public-spirited citizens who would also be willing to contribute to a fund in aid of such a laudable tribute. It should appeal to the Catholic Church of the State and to the Knights of Columbus, on account of the religious and patriotic sentiment, if for no other reason.

Another historic landmark, or river mark, that being the better term, which will be hidden from view by the flooding is what is known as Mechanic's Rock, lying near the Iowa shore about one mile below Montrose. This takes its name from the fact that the steamboat "Mechanic" was wrecked

thereon in 1830. The steamboat "Illinois" was also wrecked on this rock April 20, 1842. It formerly was farther from the shore and within the channel, and during high water was below the surface. It had done damage to a number of boats with inexperienced pilots. The year following the wreck of the "Mechanic," a number of river men, during a period of low water, moved the rock out of the channel by fastening huge iron chains around it, the motive power being twelve yoke of oxen.

Lying at the head of the rapids, for many years it was observed and used as a river gauge and told pilots whether it was safe for boats and rafts to go over the rapids. During low water it stood boldly out, as shown in the cut, but when hidden from view was an indication of a good stage of water and that it was safe for boats to pass over the rapids as they often did even after the canal was constructed.

It will be difficult to mark this historic rock, as the dam will raise the water several feet above the highest point. It would seem that the Upper Mississippi River Improvement Association and river men would be interested in providing some sort of a marker or reminder of this historic river monitor.

It is said that the unmarked grave of Lemoliese, the French trader and settler, at what is now Sandusky, on the Iowa shore, can be approximately, if not exactly, located by old residents of that locality and that the new water level will cause the site to be flooded. Such being the case, the site should be properly marked as a tribute to this pioneer and for the benefit of posterity.

The government canal, together with the retaining walls and embankments and locks, will be entirely submerged by the lake formed above the dam. The most important government buildings connected with the canal will be demolished and re-erected on new ground. The construction of the canal was commenced in 1868, and it was opened for steamboat traffic in August, 1877. The original cost to the Government was \$4,500,000.00. The additions, dry-dock, buildings, repairs and upkeep, have no doubt cost the Government two or



three millions more. The canal proper extends from Keokuk to Galland on the Iowa side, a distance of eleven miles, and has three locks. The building of the dam will reduce the number of locks to one, which will be constructed at the west end of the dam at the expense of the Mississippi River Power Company.

It is an interesting fact that Lieut. Robert E. Lee, afterwards Commander of the Confederate army, made the first survey of the Des Moines Rapids as early as 1837.

The exact location of the site of the first schoolhouse mentioned probably is unknown to any one now living. Capt. Washington Galland, now living in Keokuk, was a student at the school first taught in this primitive educational structure, but he has reached the age of eighty-five years and is almost completely deprived of his eye-sight. He no doubt can sufficiently remember the location so as to approximately establish the site. It is near the mouth of a small creek that empties into the Mississippi at what is known by the Indians as Ah-wi-pe-tuck (Head of the Rapids) at what was for a long time known as Nashville and later as Galland. On account of its important historical interest and the fact that the State of Iowa has the smallest percentage of illiteracy of all the States, this site should be permanently marked, although there is a doubt whether the exact spot will be overflowed.

To E. R. Harlan, Curator of the Historical Department of Iowa, belongs the credit of first suggesting the marking of all these historic sites, with the exception of the site of the old orchard, that will be inundated by the long, deep lake soon to be formed.

The late Hon. D. F. Miller, a pioneer lawyer of Lee county, nearly forty years ago advocated enclosing the triangular block, known on the recorded plat of the town of Montrose as "Old Orchard" by a substantial iron fence and converting the same into a public park. It was through his instrumentality that George B. Dennison and wife conveyed the title to this Old Orchard block in 1874 to the Mayor and Aldermen of the Town of Montrose, in trust for the Old Settlers Associa-

tion of Lee County, Iowa, the deed for the same being duly recorded. The writer, with others, has long advocated the marking of this site by a suitable monument or tablet, and since it was first known that the demands of industrial progress will flood and hide it from view, such advocacy has almost developed into a mania.

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#### MONTROSE—1847.

This flourishing little town is situated at the head of the lower rapids of the Mississippi—it was selected as a town site by the Sauk and Fox Indians more than seventy years ago, and soon became a village of considerable importance. The well known old Sauk chief Quash-que-me was the chief of the band who resided here. In the midst of its prosperity, and while two other Chiefs of the same confederated tribes of Sauks and Foxes were building up a considerable town on the opposite bank of the Mississippi where the city of Nauvoo now stands, the small-pox made its appearance in the village; its ravages were so alarming, and its fatalities so universal, that the inhabitants, struck with a superstitious panic, and believing that the devil had made his visible residence in their town, all who were able, fled in consternation from the frightful scene, leaving their dead unburied, and the sick and dying to their fate. In 1795 Louis Honrie Tesson made a settlement under the Spanish government a short distance below the town, where are yet to be seen a few old apple trees, the sprouts of the original trees planted by Tesson. Soon after Tesson settled at the old orchard, as it is called, the Indian town at Montrose was rebuilt, but never became as populous as it was at first. When we first visited it, about twenty years ago, its population did not exceed a hundred persons.—*Iowa Advocate and Half Breed Journal*, Montrose, Iowa, Sept. 1, 1847.

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