

"DES MOINES."

PROFESSOR PARVIN gives to the ^VDes Moines *Republican* the following statement in regard to the origin of the name of the ^VDes Moines River:—

EDITOR:—In your issue of the 14th of April, I find a call upon myself for the origin and meaning of the name Des Moines. I was absent at the time, hence the lateness of this response.

Your readers will find in Bancroft's History of the United States, Vol. III., page 158, a notice of the discovery of the river Des Moines, with the Indian name therefor. And a fuller and more satisfactory exposition thereof in "Nicollet's Report of the Upper Mississippi River," made to Congress February 16th, 1841, and published in 1843. As this most valuable work is very rare, and but few, if any, of your readers have access to it, permit me to extract therefrom fully the following interesting passages (pages 22, 23) rather than attempt an abbreviation or the use of language of my own.

I am glad to see an inquiring spirit abroad relative to matters touching our early history, and shall ever be happy to aid in their elucidation.

^VT. S. PARVIN.

Iowa City, May 3d, 1873.

NICOLLET—DES MOINES.

The Des Moines is one of the most beautiful and important tributaries of the Mississippi north of the Missouri; and the metamorphosis which its name has undergone from its original appellation is curious enough to be recorded.

We are informed that Father Marquette and Mr. ^VJoliet,

during their voyage in search of the Mississippi, having reached the distance of sixty leagues below the mouth of the Wisconsin, observed the footprints of men on the right side of the great river, which served as a guide to those two celebrated explorers to the discovery of an Indian trail, or path, leading to an extensive prairie, and which they determined to follow.

Having proceeded about two leagues, they first saw one village on the bank of the river, and then two others upon a slope, half a league from the first. The travelers, having halted within halting distance, were met by the Indians, who offered them their hospitalities, and represented themselves as belonging to the Illinois nation.

The name which they gave to their settlement was *Moningouinas* (or *Moingona*, as laid down in the ancient maps of the country), and is a corruption of the Algonquin word *Mikouang*, signifying at *the road*, by their customary elliptical manner of designating localities, alluding, in this instance, to the well known road in this section of the country, which they used to follow as a communication between the head of the lower rapids and their settlement on the river that empties itself into the Mississippi, to avoid the rapids; and this is still the practice of the present inhabitants of the country.

Now after the French had established themselves on the Mississippi, they adopted this name; but with their custom (to this day that of the Creoles) of only pronouncing the first syllable, and applying it to the river, as well as to the Indians who dwelt upon it; so that they would say "*la riviere des Moins*,"—"the river of the Moins;" "*allez chez les Moins*"—to go to the Moins (people). But in latter times the inhabitants associated this name with that of the Trappist monks (*Moines de la Trappe*), who resided with the Indians of the American bottom.

It was then concluded that the true reading of the *riviere des Moins* was the "*riviere des Moines*," or river of monks, by which name it is designated on all the modern maps.

The Sioux or *Ndakotah* Indians call the Des Moines *Inyan-sha-sha-watpa*, or Redstone river—from *inyan*, stone; *sha-sha*, reduplication of *sha*, red; and *watpa*, river. They call the upper east fork *Inyan-sha-sha-watpa-sunkaku*, the brother of Redstone river.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

THE State Historical Society held their fifteenth regular annual meeting at the rooms of the society in Iowa City on Monday, June 23d. M. W. Davis, Esq., Rev. William Emonds, Hon. William G. Hammond, Hon. Thomas Hughes, Robert Hutchinson, Esq., Henry Murray, M. D., Rev. S. M. Osmond, Hon. S. E. Paine, and Col. S. C. Trowbridge were elected members of the Board of Curators for two years. A report was submitted by the board to the society, showing that the officers had not been idle, and that the society had made as much progress as could be expected with the limited means at their control.

After the adjournment of the society the members-elect of the board, and those holding over who were present, organized by the election of Hon. William G. Hammond as president of the board and of the society. Prof. H. S. Welton was unanimously re-elected treasurer, and the former secretary was re-chosen.

On the afternoon of the same day Rev. William Salter, D. D., of Burlington, delivered the annual address before the society in the chapel hall of the State University. The address, which is published in this number of the ANNALS, was commemorative of the two hundredth anniversary of the discovery of Iowa, and was delivered to the audience in a faultless style of oratory, in strict harmony with its scholastic composition.

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