

FUR TRADE OPERATIONS IN THE EASTERN IOWA COUNTRY UNDER THE SPANISH REGIME

As a result of the defeat of French arms by English soldiers and sailors in America and Europe came the evacuation of the Upper Mississippi Valley by French troops.¹ Furthermore, in 1762, one year before the warring nations signed the treaty of peace whereby England won Canada, France by a secret arrangement conveyed to Spain all the vast territory west of the Mississippi River, so that henceforth the Iowa wilderness lay within the jurisdiction of Spanish officials at New Orleans. By this cession of Louisiana to Spain, the French rid themselves of a territory which, by reason of the nearness and commercial rivalry of the English, they had despaired of being able to preserve, and whose possession the greed of French governors and employees had made very burdensome to the government of France.²

But sometime before the Spanish attempted to administer affairs in the new domain, Anglo-Saxons made their appearance in the Valley. As early as 1760 English colonists from the Atlantic coast found their way overland to the Mississippi, and thus preceded British troops: the French in some alarm noted that these "vigilant" English had reached the Rock River and invited the Indian nations to come to trade. Four years later other traders, among them some of Dutch ancestry from Albany, were looking for business in the Wisconsin country. When this region east

¹ See the writer's article in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XII, p. 353.

² Robertson's *Louisiana under Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807*, Vol. I, p. 296.

of the Mississippi was opened to the English, eager traders from the thirteen colonies lost no time in hastening westward to reap the benefits of English domination.³

JONATHAN CARVER

Among the earliest English visitors to the Mississippi was Jonathan Carver, a traveler or explorer who represented that he was a physician and a captain, though he was only a Yankee shoemaker from Connecticut, with serious fur trade propensities. He arrived, in October, 1766, at Prairie du Chien, which he described as a "great mart, where all the adjacent tribes, and even those who inhabit the remote branches of the Mississippi, annually assemble about the latter end of May, bringing with them their furs to dispose of to the traders." The Indians, he adds, sometimes bore their furs southward or to Mackinac as it suited their interest.

Carver came from Mackinac with a large party of English and Canadian traders, and from Prairie du Chien crossed over to the Iowa shore of the Mississippi. There upon the banks of a little river called by the French "Le Jaun Rivière" and designated upon Carver's map as "Yellow River", they took up their residence for the winter. Carver, however, continued his journey northward by

³ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. xvi, 217, 263.

Ignorant of the transfer of the country west of the Mississippi to Spain, many Frenchmen now sought the cover of their flag across the river. Pierre and Auguste Chouteau set up a trading cabin on the site of the present city of St. Louis. Pierre Laclède came in 1764 as the projector of a new fur company and established a station on the same spot. A little later the new settlement of traders was getting Indian trade on the Missouri and on the Mississippi as far north as the Illinois and Wisconsin rivers. There was danger now that all the trade of the Valley would slip away from the English of Canada. "To unsettle this savage regard for their rivals and to rehabilitate this Indian trade so that the seaboard could profit by it, was now a vital question with the English", who soon began to appear in the Valley to wring profits from trade with the natives.—Winsor's *The Mississippi Basin*, p. 433; and Winsor's *Westward Movement*, pp. 23, 24, 25.

canoe, returning in the spring for goods. He seems to have remained in this region for about two years, and certain publishers then gave to the world the results of his travels.⁴

SPAIN AND THE IOWA WILDERNESS

Spanish officials took charge of the affairs of Upper Louisiana in the year 1768. In his instructions to a captain who was to build two forts at the mouth of the Missouri River the first Spanish Governor-General announced that the English (Americans) should not be allowed to come into "his Majesty's territories to trade with the savage tribes", and English subjects should be prevented from entering the Missouri, as well as all other rivers on the right bank of the Mississippi. In May and June, 1769, among the tribes which resorted to the Spanish settlements for trade and presents were the "Ayooua", Sioux, and Sacs and Foxes. Indeed, at the villages near the present site of St. Louis Spanish and French merchants maintained "Magazines" from which they were "enabled with Ease to transport their Merchandise into the interior Parts" of King George's territory to the north, and here some French Canadians even bought their supplies for the Indian trade. English traders were aware that their Spanish neighbors wanted "much to engross all the trade with the Saaks", who seem to have planted a permanent village at the mouth of the Rock River about 1767 in order to prosecute their hunts not only in the Illinois but also in the Iowa country.⁵

PETER POND

Among the English traders of the Upper Mississippi Valley was Peter Pond: the most interesting glimpse of the

⁴ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, p. xvii; and Carver's *Travels*, pp. 50, 51, 93.

⁵ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 13, 24, 74; and *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 290, 291, 299, 300, 305, 306. See also the *Iowa Historical Record*, Vol. XVII, p. 316.

Iowa country at this early time has been preserved for us in the narrative of this Yankee from Connecticut. At an early age, as he relates, "the same Inklanation & Sperit that my Ansesters Profest" caused him to become a "Solge" (soldier) and later to go west. Of his experiences in the Far West of that day he wrote a journal the orthography of which, as indicated above, is simply Yankee dialect rendered to suit the tastes of the most advanced advocate of phonetic spelling. Unlettered though he was, Pond somehow acquired a vocabulary by means of which he gave expression to his thoughts and ideas in one of the most remarkable records of early American life in the Great Valley. Traveling by the Fox-Wisconsin waterway late in 1773, he described the Fox Indians,⁶ tarried at one of their villages near the mouth of the Wisconsin, and camped later upon the Iowa shore. To quote his own words:

After Suplying myself with such Artickels as I wanted and they Had to Spare I gave them Sum Creadeat [credit] and Descended the River to the Mouth which emteys into the Masseippey and Cros that River and Incampt. The Land along the River as you desend Appears to be Exalant. Just at Night as we ware Incampt we Perseaved Large fish Cuming on the Sarfes of the Water. I had then a Diferant trader with me who had a number of Men with him. We were Incampt Near Each other. We Put our Hooek and Lines into the Water and Leat them Ly all nite. In the Morning we Perseaved thare was fish at the Hooeks and went to the Wattr Eag [water's edge] and halld on our line. Thay Came Heavey. At Length we hald one ashore that wade a Hundered and four Pounds — a Seacond that was One Hundered Wate — a third of Seventy five Pounds. The Men was Glad to Sea this for thay Had not Eat mete for Sum Days nor fish for a long time. We asked our men

⁶ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, p. 330, where he declares:

"They are Insolent to this Day and Inclineing Cheaterey thay will if they Can Git Creadit from the trader in the fall of ye Year to pay in the Spring after thay Have Made thare Hunt But When you Mete them in Spring as Know them Personeley ask for your Pay and thay Will Speake in thare One Languge if they Speake at all Which is not to be understood or Other ways thay Will Look Sulkey and Make you no answer and you loes your Debt."

How meny Men the Largest would Give a Meale. Sum of the Largest Eaters Sade twelve men Would Eat it at a Meal. We Agread to Give ye fish if thay would find twelve men that would undertake it. They Began to Dres it. The fish was what was Cald the Cat fish. It Had a large flat Head Sixteen Inches Betwene the eise. They Skind it — Cut it up in three large Coppers Such as we have for the Youse of our men. After it was Well Boild thay Sawd it up and all Got Round it. Thay Began and Eat the hole without the least thing with it But Salt and Sum of them Drank of the Licker it was Boild in The Other two was Sarved out to the Remainder of the People who finished them in a Short time. Thay all Declard thay felt the Beater of thare Meale Nor did I Perseave that Eney of them ware Sick or Complaind."

Next morning they recrossed the river to Prairie du Chien where traders, especially Frenchmen, and Indians rendezvoused each fall and spring before they dispersed for the hunt and chase. Pond stayed ten days and dispatched nine clerks in different directions. Of the games played by the French and the Indians and of the life of the town he wrote: "The french Practis Billiards — ye latter Ball. Hear the Botes from New Orleans Cum. Thay are navigated By thirtey Six men who row as maney oarse. Thay Bring in a Boate Sixtey Hogseats of Wine on one . . . Besides Ham, Chese &c — all to trad with the french & Indans." Pond reported success in the fur business.⁷

RIVALRY FOR THE TRADE OF THE IOWA COUNTRY

English traders were doing their utmost to win the patronage of all the upper tribes, including the Sacs and Foxes who were now dwelling in villages upon the Upper Mississippi, for in June, 1777, a Spanish official entered into negotiations with the English commandant relative to the surrender of ten Missouri prisoners held by them. Cruzat reported that the Sac and Fox tribes of four hun-

⁷ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 338, 339, 341.

dred and three hundred warriors, respectively, were well inclined toward the Spanish and more favorably disposed to Spanish and French hunters than to those of the English district, notwithstanding the more liberal presents of the English; that the "Hayuas" (Ioways) of two hundred and fifty warriors dwelt eighty leagues from St. Louis "on the shores of the Muen [Des Moines] river", but their hunts brought no money into Spanish pockets because they carried on trade with merchants "who are introducing themselves into that river from the English district"; and that the Sioux, two hundred and thirty leagues away, also bartered their furs for English goods brought to them "by way of the Muen river through the district called Fuzch". The Ioways at that time probably maintained a village near the northwestern corner of Van Buren County about where the town of Iowaville now stands.⁸

These were the years in which England was fighting to put down rebellion in the American colonies, being forced to push the struggle as far west as the Mississippi Valley. In the spring of 1779 C. Gautier, a French-Canadian subject in command of two hundred and eight Indian allies of various tribes, descended the Mississippi from Mackinac in his haste to aid Hamilton in the southern Illinois region. At the Rock River he met with a band of Sacs whose chief stopped up his ears when Gautier spoke on behalf of the British. This chief laughed at the British for threatening to deprive the Sacs and Foxes of their traders if they aided the "Bostoniens" (Americans), and answered that he and all his own warriors held their arrows for the support of the rebels. These Sacs also made Gautier release one hundred and twenty men: "if they had been strong enough they would have seized me and given me over to the Bos-

⁸ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 134, 136, 145, 146; and *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 363, 364, 365. The writer has discovered no clue to the origin of the name "Fuzch".

tonias." Gautier had not gone far when news came of the capture of Hamilton by General Clark and the Americans.⁹

The Spanish policy of excluding English traders from Spanish territory became more and more impracticable: the Governor of Upper Louisiana domiciled at St. Louis in 1770 informed his superior, Bernardo de Galvez of New Orleans, that Fort San Carlos at the mouth of the Missouri River had outlived its usefulness and that "it would be advisable to establish another fort at the entrance of the Mua [Des Moines] river", because English traders followed the course of this stream and thus penetrated with comparative ease to the headwaters of the Missouri. De Galvez answered that the Crown could not spare a garrison of two hundred men for the purpose, but that he would lay the proposition "before His Majesty so that he may determine what may be his royal pleasure." And he added: "I charge Your Grace meanwhile to endeavor to prevent the English from entering said rivers, and to see to it that they do not entice our Indians, this being a matter that is so straitly charged in the instructions carried by Your Grace."¹⁰

During the year 1779 Spain declared war against England — at a time, therefore, when the latter's American colonies were waging war for independence. In the struggle for peltries Mackinac traders had suffered many injuries at the hands of the Spaniards who were only trying to maintain their share of commerce with the Indians. To kill two birds with one stone the English commandant at Mackinac planned an expedition against Spanish St. Louis and the American rebel George Rogers Clark. That the ripples of the American Revolution reached the Iowa country and that the English troops stooped to wring aid from

⁹ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XI, p. 126.

¹⁰ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, p. 166.

the Indian tribes are facts which may be gathered from a letter written by an educated French trader, Pierre Provost, who informed Clark early in 1780 that British Indians had brought "two collars and two Bostonnise [American] scalps" to intimidate the Sacs and the Foxes. The allied tribes postponed their answer until after a meeting "at the River des mouins" with a certain Joseph Calvé, "a Trader and an employee in the Service of the King for the tribesmen". Provost further reported to Clark that the Mackinac traders "at the River des Moins tell the Savages that they regard you As The meanest of wretches saying everything against you . . . and advising the Savages to Pillage".¹¹

Seven hundred and fifty men — traders, servants, and Indians — proceeded down the Wisconsin to Prairie du Chien where they were joined by several traders at the head of Indian bands. In April, 1780, an American trader's armed barge-load of goods and provisions with twelve men was seized and plundered off the mouth of Turkey River on the Iowa side. At the lead mines seventeen Spaniards and rebels were made prisoners. English traders were promised the exclusive trade of the Missouri, but the Sacs, "who have been debauched by the Rebels on account of their lead mines, & by the Traders in their country," and other Indian allies deserted the expedition so that the proposed attack on St. Louis proved to be little more than a useless foray.¹²

Cruzat complained late in 1780 that the "Aioas" (Ioways), doubtless excited by the English, had corrupted the Otoes of the Nebraska country, and that, as the English

¹¹ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 404-406. Joseph Calvé was a trader employed by the British as military agent among the Sacs and Foxes. On account of his treachery the English called their expedition to St. Louis "a sham attack". See *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XI, p. 109, 134, 154, 155.

¹² *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XI, pp. 151, 152, 154, 155, 156.

gave so many presents to all the tribes, they obtained whatever they wanted, and accordingly the Spanish could not compete with them on even terms. The Sacs surrendered thirteen British medals and three banners and got sixteen Spanish medals and ten flags in return; while the Foxes asked to be taken under the protection of the Spanish flag.¹³

The Spanish Governor at St. Louis received instructions in 1781 "to keep Mounseur Boucher de Mombrun, with a detachment of forty militiamen, on the Misisipi among the Sac tribe forty leagues from that village, . . . in order to observe the movements of the enemy and to win the affection of the tribes". The place referred to here was no doubt the Sac village just above the mouth of the Des Moines River near the present town of Montrose. That de Monbruen served his Spanish masters with "valor, zeal, and experience" for several years at this post may be gathered from a complaint of the English in 1783: "There is a Mr. Moumbourne Bouché, a Canadian in the Mississippi with a Gang of Moroders, whom annoy the Traders very much, by exacting Goods &c. He is Commissioned by the Spaniards". Even so, some five hundred Sacs, Foxes, and Ioways had visited the English as Mackinac.¹⁴

Trade with the Indians continued to be the chief occupation of a large part of the population of St. Louis after the American colonies established a government independent of the mother country. The fact that many traders and hunters of His Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain, engaged Americans or at least persons residing east of the

¹³ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, p. 414, 419, 422, 423, 424; and Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 175, 199, 202, 203.

¹⁴ *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XVIII, pp. 419, 422; and Vol. XII, pp. 60, 66. See Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 198, 201. Some Canadians were on the point of deserting their English superiors to join De Monbruen when their plot was discovered.

Mississippi evoked an ordinance prohibiting this practice and providing a penalty of a fortnight in prison and a fine of fifty pounds of peltries. The Mackinac Company and the North West Company, organized about 1784, consisted of practically the same British firms but the former operated almost entirely south and west of Lake Michigan in American territory, reaching also the Indian tribes of Spanish Louisiana in the Iowa country, especially upon the Des Moines River. In 1786 the English reported that war between the allied Sacs and Foxes and the Sioux brought so much harm to the "Furr Trade" that presents only could buy off the combatants. Sometime before 1792 the Spanish Governor-General asserted that the only way to keep the English out of the country was to construct "two strong posts on the Mouis and San Pedro Rivers". Later the Spaniards expected to gain much from friendly relations with the Ioways, the Sacs, and the Foxes, because these tribes could prevent English traders from using the Des Moines and also keep the Osages of the Missouri country from resorting to the traders on this river.¹⁵

Such was the rapid advance of the restless Americans westward, and so well known were their habits of adapting themselves to life in the wilderness that Baron de Carondelet in his military report of 1794 declared: "A general revolution . . . threatens Spain in America, unless it apply a powerful and speedy remedy." All signs indicated that American ambition centered upon the free navigation of the Mississippi and the rich fur trade of the Missouri. And so the Governor of Louisiana proposed a very extensive plan for the fortification and defence of the

¹⁵ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 248, 332, and Vol. II, p. 50; and *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XII, pp. 77, 78, 80, 85, and Vol. XVIII, pp. 439, 441. The North West Company is frequently mentioned when the Mackinac Company is meant as in the *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society*, Vol. III, p. 170.

colony from New Orleans to the source of the Great River. For the protection of the industrious merchants of St. Louis and to secure them in an immense fur trade with the Missouri River nations against the English subjects of Canada "who usurp that trade and daily introduce themselves in greater number upon said river and among the nations living near it", Carondelet recommended a strong stockade. With reference to the Iowa country he urged the following plan:

A fort garrisoned by fifty men on the St. Pierre [St. Peter's] River, which is one hundred and twenty leagues from St. Louis, and another fort on the Des Moines River, forty leagues from the said St. Louis, could entirely cut off all communication of the English with the savage nations of the west bank of the Mississippi, and of the Missouri—a trade so rich that notwithstanding the enormous distance of five hundred and more leagues of wilderness to cross with their merchandise and the furs which they receive in exchange, the London companies which engage in it do not fail to reap profits of a hundred per cent.

If the two forts above mentioned were established, many settlers would flock to their vicinities, both from our settlements and from Canada, and the banks of the Ohio. Within a few years they would have several posts in those districts more populous than that of St. Louis at present, and could serve to protect the part of Louisiana higher on the Missouri from the usurpation of the English and Americans.

I consider that if four companies be detached from the battalion of New Madrid for St. Louis, and from which detachments would be provided for the St. Pierre and Moine [Des Moines] Rivers, they would suffice to cause the dominion of Spain to be respected throughout Upper Louisiana. And should his Majesty consider it proper for those detachments to be recruited from foreigners who should offer to serve five years in them provided that a constant ration be promised them, and who should be married or should marry and devote themselves to the cultivation of the soil for another five years during which they would be compelled to serve as militiamen, I am convinced that that battalion would always be

full. That would obviate the great difficulties and save the great expenses necessary to transport the troops by the river to places so remote.¹⁶

Despite this enthusiastic recommendation nothing seems to have been done by the Spanish government to impress English Canadian subjects with the strength of Spain's rights in the territory west of the Mississippi. In 1794, however, Andrew Todd, a "young and robust Irishman", obtained from Baron de Carondelet a grant to carry on the exclusive trade of all the upper Mississippi. He had been operating from Mackinac in Spanish territory and his goods had fallen into the hands of the Spaniards who promptly confiscated them as contraband. Todd, in his attempt to recover these goods or the proceeds, won such influence over Spanish officials that they were persuaded to give him the exclusive trade privilege in return for a duty of six per cent.

Carondelet hoped that Todd's competition with English traders from Montreal would force the latter out of the upper country altogether. In two years' time "Don Andreas" sent a vast quantity of goods up from New Orleans and got back furs and peltries for the export trade. He also proposed "to enlist young men in Canada for his company, and at the end of their enlistment it was supposed that they would remain in the Spanish settlements, and thus an increase of the population would be secured" for Louisiana; but Todd fell a victim to the yellow fever in 1796,¹⁷ and so English and Canadian traders were once more practically alone in the field. In 1796, James Mackay, a Scotchman,

¹⁶ Robertson's *Louisiana under Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807*, Vol. I, pp. 298, 299, 335-337. English merchants even attracted the Omaha Indians to the St. Peter's River. See Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. II, pp. 187, 191.

¹⁷ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. II, p. 255; and Houck's *History of Missouri*, Vol. I, pp. 330, 331.

made a voyage of discovery up the Missouri for the newly-organized Spanish Commercial Company of St. Louis and among other things reported:

The traders of the River Monigona [Des Moines] have sent twelve horses laden with goods to trade with the Panis [Pawnees] and the Layos [Loups] on the Chato [Platte] River. The caravan crossed the Misuri in the month of last December. I would be glad to be able to deal them a blow on their return.¹⁸

War broke out again between Spain and England late in the year 1796: Carlos Howard, an Irishman in the Spanish service, got orders to defend St. Louis against a threatened attack by British forces and also to send a reconnoitering party up the Mississippi to destroy and capture English trading canoes, "the goods in which may be divided, half to the king, and half to those who compose the expedition." In the spring of 1797 an Englishman reported that English traders at Prairie du Chien "were nearly pillaged by the Saques & Renards headed by some Traders from St. Louis with authority from the Spanish Commandant of that place". Two years later these same Indians appeared at Amherstburgh, Canada, to convince the English of their unshaken attachment and of the injustice of the reports.¹⁹

SPANISH LAND GRANTS IN THE IOWA COUNTRY

Closely connected with the history of Spain's attempt to exclude all but Spanish subjects of Louisiana from trade with the Indian tribes west of the Mississippi River, indeed as an assertion of Spain's dominion over this vast fur-bearing region, was the Spanish policy of granting tracts of land to private individuals to promote settlement and cultivation.²⁰ In the Iowa country which lay in Upper

¹⁸ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. II, p. 191.

¹⁹ Houck's *The Spanish Regime in Missouri*, Vol. II, p. 128; and *Wisconsin Historical Collections*, Vol. XII, p. 107, and Vol. XVIII, pp. 449, 457.

²⁰ See Pelzer's *The Spanish Land Grants of Upper Louisiana* in *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, Vol. XI, pp. 3-37.

Louisiana Spanish officials made some grants which later formed the basis of the first land titles.

A French-Canadian, Julien Dubuque, had prevailed upon several Fox chiefs to permit him to live among them and work certain lead mines. For eight years he and his men labored industriously, but realizing that the Indian grant of land in Spanish domain might not fully establish him in this rich lead district, Dubuque applied to the Spanish Governor-General in 1796 for a formal recognition and confirmation of his rights. As "your Excellency's very humble, and very obedient, and very submissive servant", Dubuque begged Carondelet for the peaceable possession of a strip of land about twenty-one miles in length along the Mississippi and nine miles wide, in what is now Dubuque County: to this tract he had given the name, he alleged, "of the 'Mines d'Espagne,' in memory of the government to which he belonged."²¹

Upon the receipt of this petition Carondelet turned for information to Don Andreas Todd, the Irishman who then held the sole privilege of trading with the tribes in Upper Louisiana. This merchant gave answer that so far as he was concerned, he saw no reason why the Governor-General should not comply with Dubuque's request, provided "the grantee shall observe the provisions of his Majesty relating to the trade with the Indians; and that this be absolutely prohibited to him, unless he shall have my consent in writing." The grant was accordingly made subject to these restrictions²² and Dubuque continued in possession until his death in the year 1810.

²¹ Dubuque's petition may be found in *American State Papers, Public Lands*, Vol. III, p. 678.

²² *United States Supreme Court Reports*, 16 Howard, 224. The question whether Julien Dubuque obtained merely peaceable possession or absolute ownership was decided many years later in favor of the former contention, though the United States Land Commissioners in 1806 judged Dubuque's claim to be a complete Spanish grant.

Don Carlos Dehault Delassus, Lieutenant Governor of Louisiana, made a grant of 6808½ arpents, or about 5860 acres, to Basil Giard, a French-Canadian friend of Julien Dubuque. This man erected cabins upon the site of the present city of McGregor in Clayton County, opposite the old village of Prairie du Chien. On this tract six miles long, east and west, and one mile and a half wide, Giard seems to have dwelt: part of it he had under cultivation from 1796 to 1808.²³ Like Julien Dubuque he no doubt carried on profitable trade with the Sioux and Sacs and Foxes who then hunted in the Iowa country.

More can be told of the Spanish grant of the 30th of March, 1799, to Louis Honoré or Tesson. Zenon Trudeau gave him permission to make a settlement within Sac and Fox territory upon 7056 arpents of land, on the site of the present town of Montrose in Lee County. This permit, translated from the French, reads as follows:

Mr. Louis Honoré is permitted to settle at the head of the rapids of the River Des Moines, and having effected his establishment he will write to the Governor General to obtain the concession of a suitable area in order to validate said establishment, and at the same time to make him useful in the trade in peltries in that country, to watch the savages and to keep them in the fealty which they owe His Majesty; his conduct in this respect is to serve him as a recommendation to be favored by the Government in such a way as to let him have the benefit of whatever he may do to contribute to the increase of the commerce in which he is to participate; and in that respect he will be permitted to treat with all the savages who dwell upon that bank of His Majesty's domain, and to permit

²³ *American State Papers, Public Lands*, Vol. III, p. 332. Delassus made the concession to Giard in November, 1800, and the United States Board of Land Commissioners confirmed the grant in 1816. About this time Giard died, leaving two daughters Lizette and Mary and a granddaughter, Felicite, the child of Angelie Suppiennee Giard. The land which descended to them later became involved in the courts as the result of conflicting conveyances. Not until July 2, 1844, was the grant patented by the United States government. See 5 *Iowa Reports*, 97, 98; and *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 256, p. 14.

no other trader as competitor except he have a passport signed by our hand.

Tesson built cabins, cultivated a small patch, planted an orchard of apple trees, and lived upon his claim from 1798 until 1805, but sometime during these years his estate was sold under an execution and came into the hands of an assignee, Joseph Robidoux, as the following document shows:

By virtue of the orders received from Mr. Charles Dehault Delassus, lieutenant colonel of His Catholic Majesty's armies and lieutenant governor of Upper Louisiana, and in the capacity of attorney for Mr. Joseph Robidoux, and in the presence of two attending witnesses, Pierre Dorion and Louis Millet, I went to the house of Mr. Louis Tesson, alias Honore, about six leagues above the river "des Modens", and in his presence I have seized, &c.

When Robidoux died in 1810, all his property was disposed of at the church door in St. Louis, and Thomas F. Riddick became the owner of what he believed to be a square league of land. His heirs in 1839, however, secured a United States government patent for only six hundred and forty acres, which is said to be the oldest land-title document in the State of Iowa.²⁴

Another Spanish land grant was claimed by Julien Dubuque before his death in 1810: he produced a concession of Delassus to François Cayolle, dated August 13, 1799, and Cayolle's deed of conveyance of 7056 arpents of land situated just north of Giard's "between the mouth of a river Jaune [Yellow] and another river [Bloody Run] which empties in the Mississippi about one league lower down

²⁴ See Salter's *Iowa: The First Free State in the Louisiana Purchase*, pp. 46, 47; *American State Papers, Public Lands*, Vol. III, p. 345; and *Senate Documents*, 1st Session, 29th Congress, No. 256, p. 13. The fact that the United States confirmed Spanish grants to Giard and Tesson was later urged as a reason why Dubuque's claim also should be recognized.

For the documents translated from the French see *House Documents*, 3rd Session, 27th Congress, No. 38, pp. 42, 43.

said Mississippi, so as the said tract make a quantity equal to a league square, but to include both rivers". Two witnesses testified that they had seen a large house and a garden upon this land for eight or nine years, but despite Dubuque's evidence the Board of Land Commissioners at St. Louis decided to reject the claim. A similar fate befell the claims of William Russell of St. Louis to 700 arpents of land somewhere between Jefferson, Missouri, and old Fort Madison, and two tracts of 1200 arpents and 800 arpents somewhere between old Fort Madison and the Spanish Mines.²⁵

Private traders with small log cabins or stockades no doubt were many at this early day, but Giard, Tesson, and Dubuque, so far as is known, were the only settlers with definite habitations in the Iowa solitude. Back to the Spanish grants to Giard and Tesson reach the chains of title of many real estate owners in Clayton and Lee counties to-day. Despite the efforts of other claimants no further Spanish grants in the Iowa country could be proved to the satisfaction of the United States Land Commissioners and the federal Supreme Court.

Such were features of the contest waged between Spain and England as rivals for the control of the fur-bearing region of the Upper Mississippi, especially to the westward. Moreover, the youthful government of the United States in 1798 was said to covet Florida and Louisiana — Spain's property, and the acquisition of this territory was declared to be an ambition "fathered by the English" who

²⁵ *American State Papers, Public Lands*, Vol. II, p. 451, and Vol. III, pp. 364, 369. Russell based his right and title to 312 tracts of land upon Spanish and French grants and conveyances from the original claimants. He succeeded in getting only thirty of his claims confirmed — as to the remainder he could prove no acts of ownership.

As the reader may judge, information about the Spanish land grants and their first settlers is very meager indeed: the whole story is yet to be told.

saw in it an extension of commercial glory. Consequently, Spanish officials in the West anticipated an Anglo-American alliance and another war, and so the home government at Madrid had reason to hand Louisiana back to France in 1800.²⁶

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²⁶ Robertson's *Louisiana under Spain, France, and the United States, 1785-1807*, Vol. I, p. 350.