

Comment by the Editor

THE AGE OF IOWA

In a political sense Iowa is young. Indeed, the political history of this Commonwealth is compassed in the span of a single lifetime: it is but a moment in the evolution of political institutions. A little less than eighty-five years have passed since the Territory of Iowa was established. It was scarcely more than three quarters of a century ago that the Territory became a State. Sixty-five years measure the time that Des Moines has been the capital city. All within the memory of men still living.

Physically, however, Iowa is as old as the rest of the world. This region existed ages before the advent of man. Most of the time it was under the sea while tiny clams laid down their shells to form the limestone and the marble for the future dwellings of a nobler race. There were also long periods when the ocean receded and the land appeared. Sometimes the country was a barren waste; again the climate was tropical when giant trees and enormous ferns grew in reptile-infested marshes; and only a hundred thousand years ago the surface of Iowa was covered with glaciers. The geological history of Iowa is measured by incomprehensible eons of time.

In the realm of human history Iowa has a venerable past. The mound builders flourished centuries before the civilization of the Pharaohs of Egypt. On the seventeenth of June it will have been just two hundred and fifty years since the white men first came to Iowa. Louis XIV was then dreaming of empire; Charles II maintained his uncertain seat upon the English throne; while Peter the Great was just learning to walk. The discovery of Iowa by Jacques Marquette and Louis Joliet occurred in 1673, nearly sixty years before George Washington was born and a century prior to the Boston Tea Party.

When William Penn was petitioning King Charles for an American land grant in 1680 Louis Hennepin was voyaging up the Mississippi along the eastern border of Iowa. Ten years before the siege and capture of the impregnable fortress of Louisburg by New England militia in 1745 the Sac and Fox Indians had defeated a French army in the Des Moines Valley. At the time Washington took the oath of office as President of the United States, Julien Du- buque was busily mining lead on Catfish Creek. Iowa is as old as the nation, and older.

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