

# THE PALIMPSEST

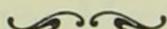
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## Iowa in Louisiana

"We have lived long, but this is the noblest work of our whole lives", declared Robert Livingston, rising and shaking hands with James Monroe and Barbé-Marbois, Napoleon's minister of finance. The United States had just acquired an empire of nearly 828,000 square miles at a total cost of five cents an acre. Livingston believed the treaty of April 30, 1803, would "change vast solitudes into flourishing districts" which would cause the United States to take its place "among the powers of the first rank". In his opinion the Louisiana Purchase was destined to "prepare ages of happiness for innumerable" people who would multiply "in the bosom of equality, under just laws, freed from the errors of superstition and the scourges of bad government."

Since Iowa forms a part of the Louisiana Purchase we may well pause in respectful appreci-

ation of the manifold blessings accruing from the treaty of April 30, 1803. The amazing transformation of a wilderness into a garden is manifest on every hand. In 1930 a total of 2,470,939 people dwelt in Iowa, or nearly half the whole number inhabiting the United States in 1800. The population of Des Moines in 1930 was nearly equal to the combined population of New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Boston — the four largest cities at the opening of the nineteenth century. Philadelphia in 1800, then the second largest city in the country with 41,220 inhabitants, is now surpassed by seven cities in Iowa.

But the negotiation of the treaty did not conclude the acquisition, for Spain had not yet surrendered Louisiana to France. It was not until November 30, 1803, that the French prefect, Pierre Clément de Laussat, received the province from Spain. Twenty days later, on December 20, 1803, Laussat formally handed over the province to W. C. C. Claiborne and James Wilkinson, the American agents, amidst a thunderous salute of cannon. As the French tri-color was presented to Laussat, he accepted with the simple benediction: "May the prosperity of Louisiana be eternal!"

Upper Louisiana still remained in Spanish hands and Laussat, in order to save Napoleon the expense, commissioned Captain Amos Stod-

dard, an American artillery officer, to receive the territory from Lieutenant Governor Dehault de Lassus in the name of France. Captain Stoddard was also empowered to take possession of the country for the United States and serve as civil and military commandant. On March 9, 1804, he crossed the Mississippi from Cahokia to Saint Louis, the capital of Upper Louisiana, with a small force of American troops. Colonel de Lassus received him cordially at the government house and promptly issued the following proclamation:

"Inhabitants of Upper Louisiana: By the King's command, I am about to deliver up his post and its dependencies. The flag under which you have been protected for a period of nearly thirty-six years is to be withdrawn. From this moment you are released from the oath of fidelity you took to support it. The fidelity and courage with which you have guarded and defended it will never be forgotten".

He then delivered to Captain Stoddard "the full possession, sovereignty, and government of Upper Louisiana" with all its "military posts, quarters and fortifications". The official record of the transfer was signed by De Lassus and Stoddard, with Meriwether Lewis, Antoine Soulard, and Charles Gratiot acting as witnesses. On the following day, March 10, 1804, acting

as commissioner for France, Captain Stoddard transferred Upper Louisiana to himself as representative of the United States.

Some of the inhabitants of Upper Louisiana regretted the change of government. Daniel Boone did not enjoy the prospects, for he and other pioneers of his type had become Spanish subjects "to avoid crowds, to get and keep cheap land, to avoid taxes, to hunt big game and to live a simple Arcadian life." Others welcomed the transfer, and Auguste Chouteau called for cheers when the Stars and Stripes were unfurled. Captain Stoddard assured the inhabitants that they would have "popular suffrage, trial by jury, a confirmation of their land titles, a territorial government, to be succeeded by their admission as a State into the Federal Union; and he indulged the hope that Upper Louisiana would become a star of no inconsiderable magnitude in the American constellation." The lustrous star of Iowa, shining in the galaxy of commonwealths evolved from the Louisiana Purchase, must eclipse the wildest imagination of this first American "civil Commandant" of Upper Louisiana and of Iowa.

The principal event during the brief administration of Captain Stoddard was the departure of Lewis and Clark on May 14, 1804, upon their epoch-making journey to the Pacific Coast. The

expedition passed along the western border of Iowa to the mouth of the Big Sioux between July 18th and August 21st. The only tragedy on the entire trip—the death of Sergeant Charles Floyd—occurred just below the present site of Sioux City. The gallant soldier was buried on the top of a bluff which they named in his honor. A lofty obelisk now stands there as a fitting memorial to Charles Floyd and to the Lewis and Clark expedition, which gave to posterity the first detailed and scientific information of the soil, Indians, and plant and animal life of Iowa.

A fortnight after Captain Stoddard took possession of Upper Louisiana, on March 26, 1804, President Jefferson approved an act providing for the government of the Territory of Orleans and the District of Louisiana. The Territory of Orleans, embracing approximately the area now included in the State of Louisiana, was given a special and almost despotic government over which William C. C. Claiborne was to preside as Governor. The District of Louisiana was placed under the jurisdiction of William Henry Harrison, Governor of Indiana Territory, because the western boundary of Indiana Territory was contiguous with the eastern boundary of the District of Louisiana. It was given scarcely a "vestige of self-government." Harrison wielded all the

powers of the executive. In addition he and the judges had authority to make all laws which they deemed conducive to the good government of the inhabitants, and not inconsistent with the constitution and laws of the United States. The civil government of Upper Louisiana was thus founded upon the Ordinance of 1787.

Governor Harrison arrived at Saint Louis on October 1, 1804. Upper Louisiana had been divided into five districts—New Madrid, Ste. Genevieve, Cape Girardeau, St. Louis, and St. Charles—and Harrison appointed administrators over each. The District of St. Charles embraced all the country north of the Missouri River including what is now Iowa. This vast hinterland, stretching northward to the British possessions and westward to the Rocky Mountains, contained 765 inhabitants, including 55 slaves. For the administration of this empire Governor Harrison appointed Colonel Return J. Meigs as Lieutenant Governor or Commandant of the District of St. Charles. Francois Saucier was named Presiding Justice of the Court of Common Pleas and Quarter Sessions, and Daniel Morgan Boone, Francois Duquette, and Robert Spencer were appointed associate justices. Rufus Easton was designated Attorney General and Edward Hempstead, Clerk.

The most remote settlers in the District of St. Charles might be denominated Iowans, for they lived north of the mouth of the Des Moines River. Louis Honoré Tesson was situated two hundred miles from St. Charles, a tedious journey for Sheriff Mackey Wherry if he had been ordered to evict the father of Iowa horticulture. When Julien Dubuque sold 72,324 arpents of his land to Auguste Chouteau of the District of St. Louis on October 20, 1804, he found it necessary to journey over four hundred miles down the Mississippi in order to transact his business. Basil Giard held a Spanish land grant opposite the village of Prairie du Chien, five hundred miles from Saint Louis. Giard had received his grant on November 20, 1800, almost two months after the signing of the treaty whereby Spain retroceded Louisiana to France.

On November 3, 1804, Governor Harrison made a treaty with five drunken, irresponsible representatives of the Sauk and Fox Indians whereby all the land between the Mississippi and the Illinois and Fox rivers as far north as the Wisconsin was ceded to the United States. It was Jefferson's plan to extinguish Indian titles to land east of the Mississippi and to remove the red men westward across the Father of Waters. Millions of acres of land were thus relinquished

by a few Indians, with no instructions to negotiate a treaty, for \$2234 in presents and an annuity of \$1000. This incident provoked the enmity of Black Hawk and his Sauk Indians toward the United States during the War of 1812, and was a remote cause of the Black Hawk War.

Although Harrison was a popular man, the people of the District of Louisiana thought the capital at Vincennes was too far away. Accordingly, on March 3, 1805, President Jefferson approved a bill whereby the District of Louisiana was to be "known and designated" after July 4th as the "Territory of Louisiana" with officers residing in the Territory.

It was Governor Wilkinson who dispatched Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike to the headwaters of the Mississippi with instructions to explore the Mississippi River from Saint Louis to its source, select sites for military posts, treat with the Indians, and find out what he could about the British traders in the Iowa country. Pike recommended the hilly country about Burlington and McGregor as suitable for the erection of forts. Tesson's apple orchard, Dubuque's lead mines, and Giard's farm were the only evidences of white settlers in Iowa. Pike estimated the Sauk and Fox Indians at 4600 souls and the Iowas at 1400. He considered the prairies incapable of being cul-

tivated and suggested that they be left to the wandering savages who then occupied them.

Governor Wilkinson aroused such bitter antagonism in the Territory that Jefferson finally removed him from office on March 3, 1807. Meriwether Lewis succeeded to the governorship, but his untimely death on October 11, 1809, was followed by the appointment of Benjamin Howard as Governor in April, 1810. When the Territory of Orleans was admitted as the State of Louisiana in 1812, Congress changed the name of the Territory of Louisiana to the Territory of Missouri. At that time the population of the whole enormous region numbered about 22,000. Howard continued as chief executive. On March 12, 1813, however, Governor Howard resigned his post and William Clark was appointed Governor. Clark had served as brigadier-general of the Missouri militia and Indian Agent for the entire Territory following his return with Lewis from the Far West. During the War of 1812 he established Fort Shelby at Prairie du Chien. It was Clark also who dispatched two expeditions up the Mississippi which were repulsed at Rock Island. At the conclusion of the war he conducted a series of councils with the various Indian tribes, among others, the Sauk and Fox, who signed important treaties in 1815 and in 1816. It was during 1816

that John C. Sullivan surveyed the northern boundary of Missouri, a line which ultimately became the southern boundary of Iowa.

When Missouri was admitted as a State in 1821, all the land to the north and west was left as unorganized territory without a government of any kind. During the next thirteen years, Indian treaties were made, troops were transported from post to post on the upper Mississippi, travelers passed up and down the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, leaving graphic though fragmentary sketches of the pristine loveliness of our eastern and western borders. A few settlers actually made their way into the Half-breed Tract, but the Fox Indians kept fortune seekers away from the rich lead mines of Julien Dubuque. The Black Hawk War and the Treaty of 1832 were followed by the first influx of settlers into the Black Hawk Purchase on June 1, 1833. During the months that followed, squatters slowly filtered across the Mississippi. By the summer of 1834 probably three thousand settlers had moved into the Black Hawk Purchase, but no civil government was in force to guide or restrain them.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN