

# THE PALIMPSEST

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## Iowa under Spain

At the close of the French and Indian Wars, in 1763, the victorious British were forced to choose between Canada and the tiny sugar island of Guadaloupe. Canada was chosen. France also gave up all claim to the Ohio Valley and the land east of the Mississippi with the exception of the island on which New Orleans had been located in 1718. New Orleans and all the country west of the Mississippi, including the Iowa country, had been secretly ceded to Spain in 1762. Thus England and Spain stood face to face on opposite banks of the Mississippi.

Spain remained in technical possession of Iowa from 1762 to 1804 when Upper Louisiana was transferred to the United States following the Louisiana Purchase. From the start Spanish governors had difficulty in gaining the upper hand in New Orleans and the sparsely populated territory along the Lower Mississippi that had been settled solely by the French, who naturally despised their new rulers. North of the Missouri River, a hand-

ful of Frenchmen roamed the wilderness in search of furs and pelts.

It was four years after Spain acquired Louisiana west of the Mississippi before the first Spanish governor, Don Antonio de Ulloa, arrived in New Orleans. After two years of turmoil the French forcibly ejected Ulloa, sending that unhappy governor back to Spain. This incident called for sterner methods, and Spain promptly dispatched Don Alexander O'Reilly to quell the rebellion. O'Reilly arrived at New Orleans in 1769 with a large force of soldiers, shot or imprisoned the ring-leaders of the rebellion, and published twelve regulations which exhibited the policy of Spain regarding the disposition of the public domain by means of land grants. In 1770, his work completed, O'Reilly returned to Spain and was succeeded in the following thirty-three years by the following governors.

Don Luis de Unzaga	1770-1777
Don Bernardo de Galvez	1777-1784
Esteban Rodriguez Miro	1784-1791
Francisco Louis Hector (Baron de Carondelet)	1791-1797
Manuel Gayoso de Lemos	1797-1799
Marquis de Casa Calvo	1799-1800

The names of these men are commemorated in numerous place names between New Orleans and St. Louis, and some (particularly that of Carondelet) are closely associated with Iowa history.

Although Spain gradually took a firm hold of the area between New Orleans and St. Louis, the land north of the Missouri was too remote to gain absolute control. For purposes of administration the Spanish had divided the Territory of Louisiana into districts which in 1803 were: the districts of New Madrid, Cape Girardeau, Ste. Genevieve, St. Louis, and St. Charles. The latter lay north of the Missouri River and included what is now Iowa, although settlement was confined largely to the Lower Missouri River area.

The total population of Upper Louisiana at the time of the Louisiana Purchase was about 10,000, with 1,500 slaves. The area had grown slowly during the Spanish regime but had doubled to 10,000 between 1800 and 1804, largely through the influx of Americans. The latter, doubtless, were more numerous than the French at the time of the Louisiana Purchase.

If settlement in Louisiana below the Missouri River was slow during the Spanish Period, it was virtually non-existent in the Iowa country. Only six names can readily be associated with the area — Jonathan Carver, Peter Pond, Jean Marie Cardinal, Julien Dubuque, Louis Honore Tesson, and Basil Giard. The first two were Connecticut Yankees who came west by way of the Great Lakes and Fox-Wisconsin rivers to Prairie du Chien and the Iowa country.

Prairie du Chien was a sleepy little French and

Indian town when Jonathan Carver arrived there in 1766. After traversing the vast wilderness expanse between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi, Carver was disposed to describe Prairie du Chien as "the great mart, where all the adjacent tribes, and even those who inhabit the most remote branches of the Mississippi, annually assemble about the latter end of May, bringing with them their furs to dispose of to the traders."

Carver's fur-trading companions encamped on a "small river" across the Mississippi from Prairie du Chien which the French called Le Jaun Riviere, or the Yellow River. Carver and two servants proceeded up the Mississippi, where he sojourned two winters in present-day Minnesota and the Lake Superior country. After three years in the wilderness, Carver went to London, England, where he published a book entitled *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North-America, in the Years 1766, 1767, and 1768*. This volume was translated into three languages (German, French, and Dutch) and went into many editions. More than thirty editions have been discovered. Despite such popularity, Carver died in penury and was buried in a pauper's ground until removed through the intercession of his wife and many English admirers.

A second Connecticut Yankee, Peter Pond, arrived at Prairie du Chien in 1773, three years before the outbreak of the American Revolution.

Although perhaps the poorest speller ever to describe Iowa, Pond has left an indelible record of his brief sojourn in Iowa. Prairie du Chien appeared to be a "Very Handsum" spot to Pond. "Hear the Botes from New Orleans Cum. They are navagated By thirtey Six men who row as maney oarse. Thay Bring in a Boate Sixtey Hogs-eats of Wine on one. . . . Besides Ham, Chese & C — all to trad with the french & Indans." After catching three gigantic catfish near present-day McGregor, Pond set out from Prairie du Chien with two traders for the St. Peters, or Minnesota River. Along the Mississippi they found plenty of "fat Gease and Duks with Venson — Bares Meat in abundans." After a winter in the wilderness in what is now Minnesota, Pond returned to Prairie du Chien whence he made his way back east by way of the Wisconsin, Fox-Green Bay route.

Although neither Carver nor Pond spent any time in Iowa, their written records were more colorful and complete than the four men who followed them and spent a longer time in Iowa. Spain seems to have restricted her interests to the region below the mouth of the Missouri River. She did consider locating a post (Fort Monbrun), apparently near the present site of Montrose in Lee County, but evidently it was never established. The cost in personnel and money was probably too great for Spain to undertake such a dubious venture, compared with the assured

wealth to be gained in Central and South America. Spanish cupidity would certainly have lured them to the Iowa country had the rewards been there.

The third man associated with the Dubuque area was Jean Marie Cardinal, a French Canadian fur trader. Legend has it that Cardinal was the first white man to settle at Prairie du Chien, probably about the time that the French and Indian wars began. While in the north woods, Cardinal killed two Englishmen during a quarrel and fled to southern Illinois in 1763. He lived at St. Philippe for a time but later moved to St. Louis. Cardinal ranged deep into the Upper Mississippi country and far up the valley of the Missouri. He appears to have stumbled on Nicholas Perrot's old mines around what is now Dubuque and determined to work the diggings. The outbreak of the American Revolution may have served as a spur to such activity.

Unfortunately, the British, to retaliate for the loss of Vincennes to George Rogers Clarke, determined to attack St. Louis. They captured an armed Spanish barge near the mouth of the Turkey River and pushed on to the lead mines. Cardinal and a few of his companions appear to have escaped, fleeing downstream to warn St. Louis inhabitants of the impending British attack. Jean Marie Cardinal lost his life in the defense of St.

T R A V E L S

THROUGH THE  
INTERIOR PARTS  
OF  
NORTH-AMERICA,

IN THE  
YEARS 1766, 1767, and 1768.

By J. CARVER, Esq.

CAPTAIN OF A COMPANY OF PROVINCIAL  
TROOPS DURING THE LATE  
WAR WITH FRANCE.

ILLUSTRATED WITH COPPER PLATES.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR;

And Sold by J. WALTER, at Charing-cross, and  
S. CROWDER, in Pater-noster Row.

M D C C L X X V I I I .

Louis, probably the only Iowan to give his life in the cause of American independence.

It is a curious fact that none of the men associated with the Spanish period in Iowa were Spaniards. Carver and Pond, the two Connecticut Yankees, were still subjects of the British crown. Cardinal — and the three men destined to receive Spanish land grants, were all French Canadians. Spain thus held control over the Iowa country by extremely tenuous reins.

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that there were no permanent settlements in Iowa during the Spanish regime that carried over into the American period. There was some lead mining by both Cardinal and Julien Dubuque but relatively little fur trading. Nevertheless, the Spanish land grants, and the colorful personalities associated with them, are the most tangible evidence that the Spanish held Iowa for almost four decades. Their presence is also attested by the place names associated with the Spanish regime in Iowa history.

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