

Comment by the Editor

IOWA'S FIRST WHITE SETTLER

It is usually a dangerous thing to deal in superlatives; and especially does the historian find that he must be circumspect in saying that any man or town or event was the *first* of its kind. We think we are reasonably safe in saying that Julien Dubuque was the first permanent white settler in what is now Iowa. He arrived with some French Canadian friends in 1788, having made an agreement with the Sac and Fox Indians, and began to mine lead near the site of the town that bears his name. Probably no one will question his permanence, for he continued to work his mines for nearly a quarter of a century, and his bones were laid away in 1810 on a nearby hilltop overlooking the Mississippi.

There are, however, hints of still earlier mining operations by white men. Father Mazzuchelli, who came to the Upper Mississippi Valley in the early thirties, says in his *Memoirs*:

The lead mines to the west of the Mississippi as far as $42\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ N. had been worked at first by Mr. Long, then by his successor in the Indian trade, M. Cardinal, followed then by Mr. Dubuque. This account was given in 1835 by an aged Canadian, an octogenarian, who during the course of about twenty years had been in the service of the last mentioned gentleman.

The names Long and Cardinal are well known in connection with Prairie du Chien where Dubuque lived before crossing the river. John Long made a trip from Mackinac to Prairie du Chien in 1780 to prevent furs deposited at that place from falling into the hands of the Americans. But after setting fire to a building containing furs which he could not transport, he returned to the Lakes and there is no evidence of his ever having crossed the Mississippi. Apparently some time previous to this, Jean Marie Cardinal and his family came to Prairie du Chien and settled. Mrs. Cardinal lived to a ripe old age and when in a reminiscent mood used to tell of the coming of Long and the burning of the furs in 1780, but she seems to have said nothing of lead mines west of the river.

Even though there may have been some truth in the octogenarian's recital to Father Mazzuchelli, these early miners are but shadowy visitors, not permanent settlers, and doubtless the honor of being the first citizen of the land will not pass from the miner of the Mines of Spain.

DUBUQUE AND THE NATIONS

Dubuque's career at the mines is interesting from the standpoint of nationality. He was a French Canadian, who made friends with the Indians and retained a close alliance with them by reason of an unusual personality. He mined the land when it was

under the rule of Spain, and he continued unperturbed when it passed back to French jurisdiction and finally became American soil. His longest allegiance was to Spain and, calling his holdings the Mines of Spain, he secured from Baron Carondelet, the Governor of Louisiana, a Spanish land grant in 1796, which his heirs later made the basis of an unsuccessful claim to the town site of Dubuque.

That he was acquainted with the ingratiating phrases of diplomacy is evidenced by his letter to Carondelet which closes thus:

I beseech that same goodness which makes the happiness of so many subjects, to pardon me my style, and be pleased to accept the pure simplicity of my heart in default of my eloquence. I pray Heaven, with all my power, that it preserve you, and that it load you with all its benefits; and I am, and shall be all my life, your Excellency's very humble, and very obedient, and very submissive servant.

J. DUBUQUE.

And when Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike came up the river in 1805 to gain information for the American government, and applied pointed questions to Dubuque about his mines, the latter replied in such a fashion that the discomfited Pike could only report that "the answers seem to carry the semblance of equivocation."

Verily this first settler of Iowa was a man whose personality is well worth the study of those who find nothing but mediocrity in the history of the Middle West.

J. C. P.