

## A Visit to Dubuque's Grave

[On August 10, 1836, there appeared in the *Du Buque Visitor*, Iowa's first newspaper, the following account, by an unknown writer, of a visit to the grave of Julien Dubuque, who was working his mines west of the river before George Washington became President.—  
THE EDITOR.]

Messrs. Editors:— Thinking that a description of this spot, which interested me so much, may not be entirely without interest to some of your readers, I send you the following extract from my journal:

July 16, 1836.— This was a calm and delightful day. Anxious to escape, for a little while, from the bustle and confinement of the town, I procured a horse and started off for the country. I first rode four or five miles west, and then turned south with the intention of visiting Du Buque's grave. After riding four or five miles farther, I came to a beautiful little valley opening upon the river,— which was about two miles or two and a half below town, in a straight course. But the country along the bank of the river is so broken, and the hills are so high and steep, that no direct road has yet been made; and none ever can be except at great expense,— though it is possible that a road may be cut, without much difficulty, just on the bank of the river.

Here I rested a little while, and then inquired where the grave was. I was told it was upon the point just south of the valley. The point did not

appear more than a hundred feet high from my position at the foot of it; but it being too steep for my horse, I fastened him at the bottom, and commenced the ascent on foot. I clambered along as best I could, assisting myself with a stick in one hand and by laying hold of the shrubs with the other. At length I reached the summit, and a scene of singular beauty and magnificence burst upon my view. The place of the grave was the point of a ridge putting in there, which, like the grave, was by itself — alone. The ridge was not less than three hundred feet high, and on one side of it was the fine valley I had just left, and on the other, the mouth of a little stream called the Cat-Fish. The ridge gradually narrows as it approaches the river; and just at the extremity of it, where it is scarcely ten yards wide, and where a precipice of three hundred feet is on the three sides and so near, stands the grave. Beneath me, at my very feet, rolled the broad expanse of the Mississippi. There is but a slight current in the river there and there was scarcely a breeze to disturb its surface, so that it was smooth and beautiful and mirror-like: and as I gazed, delighted, upon it, I almost fancied that

“Lake Lemman wooed me with its crystal face.”

Far above and below, the channel of the river was in full view, but there was no “life upon the waters,”— for, far as the eye could reach, there was no steamer or “white sail” to be seen. But in the little creek which I have mentioned, was a “light canoe”,

— but the *red man* was not there. There were in it two Frenchmen, with their pipes. One of them propelled the canoe, and the other sat quietly in the stern with his rod and line, but, as far as I could see, without success. Then I looked beyond the river, but all I could see was a narrow and apparently very rich bottom, a few houses and one or two excellent farms, and, beyond these, the bluffs, the continuations of the ridges on the western side. These hills must have been once united; but, ages ago, they were disrupted by some mighty and terrible convulsion. It may have been by an earthquake; it may have been by a flood; or the wide space between the eternal hills may have been as it is now, when the universe came from the hands of its Creator, who made the mountains to rise, the valleys to sink, and the rivers to flow.

Two or three miles above, lay the populous and flourishing town which I had just left. But what added its highest glory to the scene, was, that the sun was midway in the western heavens, and the atmosphere was in its finest and purest state of vision, and there was a light wind playing by, as if the Spirit of the Universe was breathing its sweet influence over and around all.

But the grave — what was that? There was no mausoleum nor even a slab of marble there. A stone wall, enclosing a space about six feet long and three wide, two feet high, and covered by a light roof, contains his bones: — though I have been told that the

bones which are seen are not his but those of an Indian. At the head of the grave stands a cross of red cedar, about ten feet high, on the arms of which are inscribed his name, the time of his death and his age. The following is the inscription:—“Julien Du Buque, Mineur de la mine d’Espagne, morait le 24 Mars, 1810 — age de 45½ annees.”<sup>1</sup>

There were many names cut on all sides of the cross. I have often cut my name upon trees, not only in frequented places, but in the solitude of the great woods, where I thought it possible I might visit again. The recollection that my name is engraven there, gives such places an interest which they could have in no other way. In places, too, like this, where room to write one’s name is a common heritage, I have always loved to write mine. And I carved it here upon this cross, where, from the durable nature of the material, it may stand for a hundred years.

I then descended from the hill, and mounting my horse, rode slowly homeward, and arrived in town just as the shades of evening were closing around me.

W.

<sup>1</sup> The baptismal register in Canada gives January 10, 1762, as the date of Dubuque’s birth, thus making his age forty-eight instead of forty-five years.—THE EDITOR.