

Origin and Signification of the Word "Des Moines. "

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Chouteau at his office in St. Louis, for the purpose of learning what prospects we have of securing a share of these valuable papers. We learned with regret that it is not at all flattering. In fact, these documents are likely to be retained permanently in St. Louis. A project is now on foot in that city to celebrate the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase, not by an exposition, but by a meeting of representative people, in 1903, from all of the states into which that territory was divided. As one result of this meeting it is expected that a western historical association will be organized with its headquarters in St. Louis. In that case, these Chouteau papers will not be distributed among the north-western states, as was announced a year or so since, but will be arranged for permanent preservation and turned over to this proposed historical association, as a part of its archives. In the work of arranging the details of this great centennial the Hon. Fred W. Lehman, late of Des Moines, will take a prominent part, and certainly the West does not contain a man better informed or more competent for such an undertaking. But while the writer was in the office of Colonel Chouteau he was shown a business paper in the French language, which bore in two places the signatures of "Aug. Chouteau"—one of the founders of the city of St. Louis, and the head of the greatest business organization of early times in the West—and "J. Dubuque." We believe this is the first time that any Iowa man now living has seen a scrap of Dubuque's handwriting. The chance that Iowa will obtain any paper written or signed by the old pioneer depends upon whether another is found. It is likely, however, that there are others—though the existence among the Chouteau papers of letters by Dubuque is doubtful—and in case there are, one certainly will come to our Historical Department.

ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICATION OF THE WORD "DES MOINES."

In the present number of THE ANNALS the reader will find a very interesting article from the pen of Dr. Charles R. Keyes, in which he presents a highly plausible theory of the

origin and signification of the name of one of our counties, our largest river, and our capital city. These questions have puzzled historical students ever since the term grew into its present application. Dr. Keyes shows how it came about that "the river Des Moines" was thought to mean "the river of the monks." What he believes it did and does signify he sets forth very lucidly. The article is illustrated with three maps which are especially worthy of study and preservation in Iowa libraries. The original copy of the large one was presented to the Historical Department by the Rev. Father Philip Laurent, of Muscatine, after Dr. Keyes had written his article. Many years since, while on a visit to France, Father Laurent secured seven copies of this map, of which this was the only one left in his possession. It certainly possesses great interest, as showing the condition of geographical knowledge at the time it was made, aside from happily illustrating this important article.

THE HISTORICAL BUILDING.

In the last ANNALS we presented a fine cut of the proposed edifice, giving a statement of the progress which had been made looking to its erection. Since that article was written the work has been put under contract and operations begun. At this writing (Sept. 15) the excavations for the foundation are nearly completed, and the laying of the brick walls will soon be commenced. There are three separate contracts for the work. That for the excavations was let to J. M. Stewart of Des Moines; the plumbing and heating was awarded to the Davenport Steam Heating Company; and that for the erection of the structure to the Capital City Brick and Pipe Company—the latter represented by J. B. McGorrick. The Executive Council decided that Le Grand stone should be used for the outside, and Fort Dodge stucco for inside plastering. But for the war the contracts would have been let several months ago; but everything has come around at last and work will doubtless go on as fast as the weather will permit. The building is to be completed by October 1, 1899.

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