

The First Gazetteer on Iowa

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THE FIRST GAZETTEER ON IOWA

BY M. M. HOFFMAN

It was, of course, Joliet and Marquette, and later that ubiquitous traveler, old Father Charlevoix, who were the pioneers in recording any geographical data on what is now the state of Iowa. Under the Spanish governor-generals some surveys were made both up the Mississippi and up the Missouri. But the earliest recorded description by an American, which we have so far found, that touches in a more or less special manner on what is now Iowa, is *The American Gazetteer*, published in 1797. This volume is unique and intriguing, not only because of its age, but because the trans-Mississippi district was a far-off and foreign and vaguely mysterious country to the compiler, as well as to all the inhabitants of the land east of the Alleghenies. This work, it is almost needless to add, is now well-nigh impossible of acquisition.

The compiler of *The American Gazetteer*, which was printed in Boston, was the Reverend Jedidiah Morse, D. D., a Congregationalist clergyman. Born in Connecticut in 1761, he studied at Yale and was graduated from there in 1783. He studied theology under no less a personage than the venerable and illustrious Jonathan Edwards. His divinity doctorate he received from the University of Edinburgh. Throughout his life he was much occupied by religious controversy with the Unitarians; but he found time for extensive travels, and always was deeply interested in the Indian tribes. He was an active member of the Massachusetts Historical Society and of various literary and scientific bodies, and was called by his admirers in those days the "Father of American Geography." It should be added that he was the father of Samuel F. B. Morse, the distinguished inventor and artist.

Dr. Morse never traveled in the Mississippi Valley nor penetrated into the country across the Mississippi River. In his preface he states a number of his authorities, but from what sources at that early date he drew his data on the Iowa country can only be conjectured. Although the gazetteer was printed in 1797, most of the statistical materials hail from the 1770's and 1780's

and it is probable that the Iowa data come from no later a date than 1785. Spain at that time was, and as far as the future was concerned, seemed to be, forever firmly entrenched in the great Louisiana province west of the Mississippi; Julien Dubuque had probably not as yet opened up his mines in the Iowa hills, and any relations between the cultured centers of Dr. Morse's New England and the vast western wilderness seemed utterly fantastic and improbable.

Those parts of *The American Gazetteer* which pertain to Iowa directly, and unfortunately they are not many, will be quoted and for the most part in full. The descriptions, quaint and vague as they appear, are nevertheless remarkable for their general accuracy.

Of Louisiana itself the gazetteer states:

LOUISIANA, a Spanish province of North-America,¹ bounded East by the Mississippi, South by the gulf of Mexico, West by New-Mexico, and North by undefined boundaries. Both sides of the Mississippi were under the French government till the peace of 1762; when the eastern side was ceded to the king of Great Britain; and the day before the preliminaries of peace were signed, his Christian Majesty ceded to Spain all his territories to the westward of the Mississippi, together with the town of New Orleans; with a stipulation that the French laws and usages should not be altered: this precaution, however, proved afterwards of no avail.

Louisiana is intersected by a number of fine rivers. The greater part of the white inhabitants are Roman Catholics. They are governed by a viceroy from Spain. The number of inhabitants is unknown. . . . The climate is said to be favorable for health and to the culture of fruits of various kinds, and particularly for garden vegetables. Iron and lead mines and salt springs, it is asserted, are found in such plenty as to afford an abundant supply of these necessary articles. The banks of the Mississippi, for many leagues in extent, commencing about 20 miles above the mouth of the Ohio, are a continued chain of limestone.

Of the eastern boundary of Iowa the gazetteer notes:

MISSISSIPPI RIVER. This noble river, which, with its eastern branches, waters five-eighths of the United States, forms their western boundary, and separates them from the Spanish Province of Louisiana and the Indian country. Its sources have never been explored; of course, its length is unknown. It is conjectured, however, to be upwards of 3,000 miles long. The tributary streams which fall into it from the west and east, are numerous, the largest of which are the Missouri from the west, and the Illinois, Ohio, and Tennessee from the east. The country on

¹In these quotations we are following the style of the gazetteer in hyphenating, capitalizing, punctuating, etc.

both sides of the Mississippi and on its tributary streams, is equal in goodness to any in North America. The river is navigable to St. Anthony's Falls without any obstruction, and some travellers describe it as navigable above them. On both sides of this river are salt springs or licks, which produce excellent salt; and on its branches are innumerable such springs. Besides the coal mines in the upper parts of the Ohio country, there are great quantities of coal on the upper branches of this river.

And of the western boundary of Iowa it knew but little to record:

MISSOURI RIVER, in Louisiana, falls into the Mississippi from the westward, 18 miles below the mouth of the Illinois, 195 above the mouth of the Ohio, and about 1160 miles from the Balize, or mouths of the Mississippi in the gulf of Mexico. We have not sufficient knowledge of this river to give any correct account of the extent of its navigation. In Capt. Hutchin's map, it is said to be navigable 1300 miles.

Several of the principal rivers within the present state of Iowa are mentioned and briefly described. The Des Moines, that lengthy stream which cuts through the entire state of Iowa and a large part of Minnesota, was hardly known and is labeled and commented upon as follows:

MOIXS, a river of Louisiana, which empties from the N. W. into the Mississippi, in lat. 40 20 N. The Sioux Indians descend by this river.

The name Iowa as applied to the Iowa River, we find spelled in the gazetteer exactly as it is today.

IOWA, a river of Louisiana, which runs south-eastward into the Mississippi, in N. lat. 41 5', 61 miles above the *Iowa Rapids*, where on the E. side of the river is the *Lower Iowa Town*, which 20 years ago could furnish 300 warriors. The *Upper Iowa Town* is about 15 miles below the mouth of the river, also on the E. side of the Mississippi, and could formerly furnish 400 warriors.

The Iowa Rapids referred to are, of course, the rapids above the mouth of the Des Moines River and Keokuk. Of the two Iowa Indian towns opposite the mouth of the Iowa we can find no verification. However, the Indians often shifted the site of their camptowns, and we find partial verification of the gazetteer on Pike's map. Only eight years after the publication of *The American Gazetteer* Lieutenant Zebulon M. Pike made his memorable expeditionary trip to the headwaters of the Mississippi. He marked a village of Iowas "about 10 miles up" on the right bank of the Iowa River. According to the gazetteer both villages would have been on the Illinois side of the Mississippi.

It may be added that an Indian camptown that could furnish 300 or 400 warriors was by no means a small Indian village.

The river that we hail today with the mellifluous title of Wapsipinicon is referred to as:

WIESPINCAN, a river of Louisiana, which empties into the Mississippi, 22 miles above the Soutoux village.

The "Soutoux village" presents at first a slightly puzzling aspect. "Soutoux" might be identified with "Sauteaux" and "Sauteurs," the favorite French appellation of the Chippewa Indians. But as far as is known there had never been any Chippewa villages or Chippewa tribes in this part of Iowa. However, under this name the gazetteer informs us:

SOUTOUX, an Indian village in Louisiana, on the west side of the Mississippi river, opposite to the Nine Mile Rapids, 22 miles below Wiespincan river, and 28 above Riviere a la Roche. N. lat. 41 50.

The Riviere a la Roche is the Rock River which flows into the Mississippi from Illinois at Rock Island. At almost exactly this distance above the Rock River Lieutenant Pike located a Fox Indian village, but unfortunately omitted the name. It was on the Iowa side, above the rapids, at or near the present town of Princeton, Scott County. Of this village Pike wrote: "A little above the rapids of Rock River, on the W. side of the Mississippi, is situated the first Reynard village; it consists of about 18 lodges." As the gazetteer stated that the village was opposite to the Nine Mile Rapids it is indeed striking to hear Major Thomas Forsythe, the Indian agent, speaking in 1819 of "the little Fox village, *9 miles above the rapids.*" (Italics ours.) How and why the existence of this little Fox Indian village in Iowa, and its exact location, should be known at that early date in far distant Boston is an enigma.

The only other rivers of Iowa described by the gazetteer are those which we still know by their singular Indian name, Maquoketa:

MACOKETH, or *Macoketch, River, Great*, empties into the Mississippi from the N. W. in lat. 42 23'. *Little Macoketh* falls through the E. bank of the Mississippi, about 45 miles above the mouth of the Great Macoketh, and opposite to the old Lead mine.

The same name and approximately the same distances between the two rivers were later mentioned by Lieutenant Pike on his

exploratory expedition up the Mississippi. "The next water is the Great Macoketh, and twenty leagues higher is the little river of the same name." Some of the early French miners and traders had called the smaller stream "Petite Makonite"; but Julien Dubuque referred to it by its presumably original Indian name, "la petite riviere Maquanquitois." The gazetteer places this river on the present Wisconsin side of the Mississippi opposite to the "old Lead mine." Pike, however, correctly locates it at the spot of the lead deposits later known as Dubuque's Mines. That *The American Gazetteer* was so well aware of the existence and the exact site of these mines is not so surprising; they had been described and marked on maps by the early French explorers fully a century before; and they had been rather extensively worked by two Frenchmen, M. Longe and Jean Marie Cardinal, for years before the issuance of the gazetteer.

As far as size is concerned the Little Maquoketa is a very insignificant stream among the rivers of Iowa: still it may have been heard of in Boston during the War of the American Revolution and thus found its way into the gazetteer. Early in April of 1780 a force of British and Indian auxiliaries from Prairie du Chien attacked the miners along the Little Maquoketa. The latter at first held out, but on April 9th laid down their arms. At least seventeen "Spanish and Rebel Prisoners" were taken, the British report stated jubilantly, and "Fifty Tons of Lead ore" were seized and a good supply of provisions was obtained. The banks of this river were a part of the great battlefield in the epic struggle for American independence.

The name of Iowa is found in connection with the Rock River which flows into the Mississippi from the Illinois side and which is sometimes referred to by the gazetteer as the Riviere a la Roche but usually called as follows:

Rocky River, in the N. W. Territory, falls into the east side of the Mississippi river, about 70 miles below the mouth of the Mine river, and 95 miles above the Iowa Rapids. A lead mine extends from the mouth of this river on the banks of the Mississippi, more than 100 miles upwards.

This "Mine river" is the Galena River of today in the north-west corner of Illinois. Le Sueur, the explorer, spoke of it in 1700 by practically the same name—the "River of the Mine";

and so it was marked on the maps of the earliest French cartographers. It was from the mines on the banks of this river that many of the early settlers rushed into Iowa, when it was thrown open as the Black Hawk Purchase in 1833.

Another neighboring river, closely connected with early Iowa history, should be mentioned in the words of the gazetteer:

OUISCONSING, a navigable river of the N. W. Territory; which empties into the Mississippi in lat. 43 33, and long. 94 8; where are villages of the Sack and Fox tribes of Indians. This river has a communication with Fox river, which, passing through Winnebago Lake, enters Puan Bay in Lake Michigan. Between the two rivers there is a portage of only 3 miles. On this river and its branches reside the Indians of its name. Warriors 300.

Of the Indian tribes in what is today Iowa *The American Gazetteer* has but sparse and vague data. Its hazy and inaccurate knowledge of the tribes west of the Mississippi is nicely exemplified in the following excerpt taken from under the caption, INDIANS:

Little is yet known of the Indians in the interior parts of North-America. In 1792, Mr. Stewart, said to be in the employ of the British court, returned from four years travels through the hitherto unexplored regions to the westward. Taking his course west-southwesterly from the posts on the lakes, he penetrated to the head of the Missouri, and from thence due west to within 500 miles of the shores of the Pacific ocean. He joined the interior Indians in several battles against the shore Indians, all of which coming short of his object, the procuring a peace, so that he might explore the continent from sea to sea; after some stay, he returned nearly by the same route he had pursued in going out. Beyond the Missouri, Mr. Stewart met with many powerful nations, in general hospitable and courteous. The Indian nations he visited westward, appeared to be a polished and civilized people, having towns regularly built, and being in a state of society not far removed from that of the Europeans, and only wanting the use of iron and steel to be perfectly so. They are always clad in skins, cut in an excellent manner, and in many respects preferable to the garments in use among the whites. Adjacent to these nations is a vast ridge of mountains, which may be called the Alleghany of the western parts of America, [presumably the Rocky Mountains] and serves as a barrier against the too frequent incursions of the coast Indians, who entertain a mortal antipathy to the nations and tribes inhabiting the country eastward of the mountains.

To the Sioux Indians the gazetteer referred above when speaking of the Des Moines River. Several times they are called La Sue and the following serves as their description:

Sioux, or *Sioux*, a powerful nation of Indians, consisting of three different tribes, which can furnish 9,500 warriors; the Sioux, who inhabit the headwaters of the Mississippi and Missouri 3,000 warriors; the Sioux of the Meadows, 2,500; and the Sioux of the Woods, 4,000. The two last inhabit on the head and western waters of the Mississippi, and the Islands of Lake Superior.

The Fox Indians were a very thoroughly Iowa nation for a number of years. The gazetteer refers to them sometimes as Foxes, sometimes as Musquakies, their own guttural title, and sometimes as Outagamies, the name by which they were known to their red neighbors:

OTOGAMIES, an Indian nation in the N. W. Territory, who inhabit between the Lake of the Woods and Mississippi river. Warriors 300.

However, many, if not most, of the Foxes at this time were west of the Mississippi River and in the Louisiana province. And the Sacs were also incorrectly located, the gazetteer believing them still to be clinging to the Green Bay country instead of most of them residing in the Illinois at this time:

SAUKIES, or *Sakies*, an Indian tribe residing at Bay Puan, in the N. W. Territory, near the Minomanies.

The city of Muscatine and Muscatine County are named after the Mascoutin Indians and it is popularly supposed that at some time they had been located somewhere on the Iowa side of the Mississippi. The gazetteer is very vague about the location of their villages:

MISCOTHINS, a small tribe of Indians who inhabit between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi.

In the descriptive matter under the name of another tribe of Indians—the Winnebagoes—we run across the name of one of the earliest New England visitors to Iowa. The Winnebagoes as a tribe came into Iowa many years later, but describing them as they were in the 1760's, *The American Gazetteer* states:

Mr. Carver thinks from the result of his inquiries of the origin, language, and customs of this people, that they originally resided in some of the provinces of Mexico, and migrated to this country about a century ago.

This statement is taken directly from *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America in the years 1766, 1767 and*

1768 by Jonathan Carver, who, like Dr. Morse, was a native of Connecticut. Carver, of whom little is known, was, during his western travels, on the Yellow River in the northeast corner of Iowa in the fall of 1766. Although his book is considered of comparatively little worth by historical authorities today, it enjoyed a great vogue at the time of Dr. Morse's writing activities. Undoubtedly *The American Gazetteer* drew some of its materials about the country west of the Mississippi, including Iowa, from this work; and it is possible that Dr. Morse secured some of his sparse information on Iowa in particular from intimates of Carver in Boston, or from materials which he may have left there.

KOSSUTH VISITS SAINT LOUIS

The Bon Accord, Captain J. L. Bissel, arrived Sunday evening at 10 o'clock, being the second boat of the season. We are under obligations to the clerk for papers of the 10th inst. Kossuth was in St. Louis, having arrived there on the 7th at 2 P. M., from Louisville in the Emperor, Captain Hopkins, who has tendered to Kossuth and suite a free passage, which was accepted. Kossuth intends to leave St. Louis today or tomorrow, and goes to New Orleans, stopping at Vicksburg and Natches. He was received at St. Louis by Mayor Kennett in a short speech, to which he made a corresponding grateful reply. The Kossuth committee made no definite arrangements known to the public beyond the first day. The *Intelligencer* says that Kossuth informed the committee that he did not come there for the purpose of being feasted or to meet with any imposing manifestations of admiration or regard. He had come solely for the purpose of obtaining material aid, and unless he found a likelihood of succeeding in that object, his stay would be very short. He also intimated that before taking any steps himself he would prefer to have a public and more definite welcoming reception than that which had already transpired, in order that he might know how better to shape his course in St. Louis.—*Western Democrat*, Bellevue, Iowa, March 17, 1852. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

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