

## The Life and Times of Julien Dubuque

by Thomas Auge

Julien Dubuque has been long acknowledged as one of the first white settlers in what is today Iowa. Traders and trappers no doubt had resided in the upper Mississippi region before Dubuque's arrival in the 1780s—the French had been active in the area for more than a century. But most of these early visitors remain nameless and faceless, lost in the recordless past. The life and times of Julien Dubuque, however, can be partially rediscovered.

Earlier attempts to reconstruct the story of Dubuque were limited successes, but a full portrait of the man has yet to be drawn, a portrait that does justice to the nuances of his personality and places him in perspective against the background of his society. What kind of person was Julien Dubuque and what kind of life did he lead in the upper Mississippi Valley nearly two hundred years ago?

The basic facts of Dubuque's life can be summarized briefly. He was born in the Three Rivers District of Quebec Province, Canada. A friend, Nicholas Boilvin (Indian agent at Prairie du Chien), wrote in 1812 that Julien Dubuque and his brother had come to the upper Mississippi 30 years earlier. According to Boilvin, Dubuque served briefly as a clerk at Michilimackinac, headquarters for the fur trade, before

moving on to Prairie du Chien. In 1788, Dubuque obtained an agreement from the Mesquakie\* Indians (although he may have been in the area earlier) that permitted him to work the lead mines in the area now bearing his name. He lived there for 22 years until his death in 1810.

Julien Dubuque was a short, stocky, dark man, known to the Indians as "Little Night." Judging from contemporary accounts and records of his actions, he was suave, pleasant, sociable, even fun-loving. At the same time, his business dealings indicate that he was a shrewd, opportunistic fellow, ready to take a risk and prepared to cut a few legal corners if necessary; in other words, something of a speculator. Consistent with this tendency to speculate was his expansive character, for Dubuque was a man who lived as splendidly as possible and spent lavishly. Finally, he was a person of some education with cultural interests unusual in a frontier society.

Dubuque was not the stereotype frontiersman cast in a rough and unlettered mold. Survival and success in the upper Mississippi Valley in 1800 no doubt required hardy self-reliance, but traits more common to settled communities were necessary also. The Mississippi Valley of Dubuque's day was not a new frontier, just opened to whites. Fur traders had been active in the region for a long time, and if Julien Dubuque lived in a wilder-

\*"Mesquakie" is the tribal name for the Indians called the "Fox" by the French. They are cousins to the Sauk, with whom their activities are associated during this period. They are often referred to as the Sauk and Fox.

ness populated principally by Indians, his world nevertheless had established patterns of social and economic life, an important feature of which was trade—buying and selling.

Before all else Dubuque was a businessman, an entrepreneur, an enterprising, clever man able to gain the confidence and respect of those with whom he dealt—whether they were Indians, merchants of St. Louis, or representatives of the Spanish and American governments. Indeed, his activities and life at the lead mines depended upon the attractiveness of his personality, upon his ability to gain the trust and affection of the Mesquakie Indians.

In 1788, the Mesquakies, who controlled the Dubuque-Galena lead region, gave Julien Dubuque the sole right to mine the area. The agreement made at Prairie du Chien on September 22, 1788, read in part:

... the Foxes [Mesquakies] permit Julien Dubuque called by them the Little Night, to work at the mine as long as he shall please, and to withdraw from it, without specifying any term to him; moreover, that they sell and abandon to him, all the coast and the contents of the mine discovered by the wife of Peosta [*le femme Peosta*], so that no white man or Indian shall make any pretension to it without the consent of Sieur Julien Dubuque; and in case he shall find nothing within, he shall be free to search wherever he may think proper to do so . . .

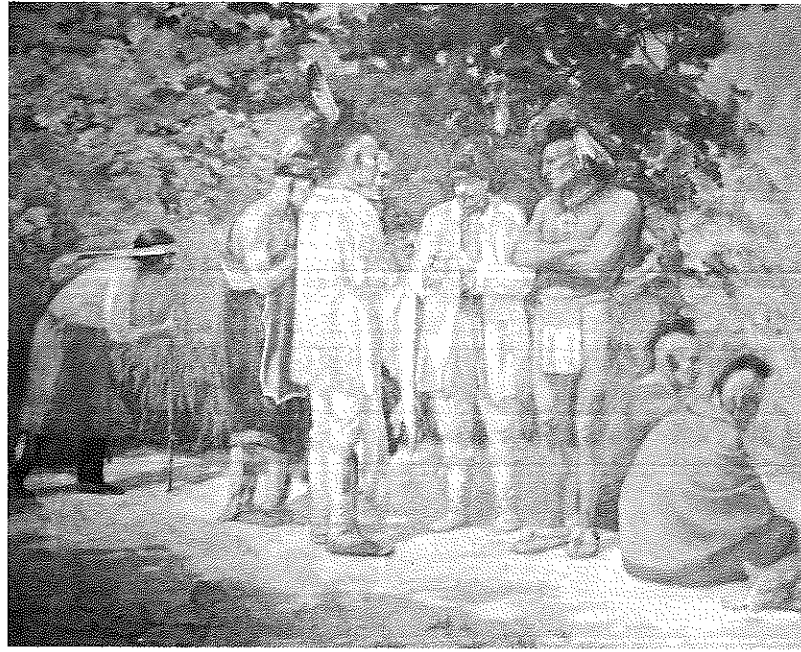
This document set up Julien Dubuque with a permanent Iowa establishment and permitted him to live and to flourish here for 22 years.

The grant by the Mesquakie Indians was a remarkable and valuable concession,

a triumph for Dubuque, one which virtually assured him an important role in the culture of the upper Mississippi. The lead region which the Mesquakies controlled had long been considered a prize of great wealth. The mineral deposits had first been discovered by the French in the late seventeenth century. They were important



*Pictorial representations of Julien Dubuque are almost wholly imaginative since there are no known likenesses of Dubuque that date from his own lifetime. Most images are the pure invention of later artists who were called on to provide pictures for promotional or decorative purposes. This drawing by C. L. Trudell in 1907 appeared on a poster commemorating Dubuque area Old Settlers. It also has been on calendars and in books and magazines. There is no evidence that Julien Dubuque looked like this. On the contrary, this coonskin cap and buckskin rendition is more in line with the Daniel Boone-Hollywood image of the frontiersman.*



*Dubuque appeared as the central figure in a mural executed by a Chicago artist, James McBurney. The mural decorated the walls of the Federal Bank and Trust Company in Dubuque and is now in the possession of the Dubuque County Historical Society Museum at Ham House. M. M. Hoffmann in his *Antique Dubuque* (published in 1930) printed the picture with the information that McBurney "devoted a great deal of time to the study of the dress, artifacts and appearance of the Fox Indians in order to make his subjects conform as far as possible to historical truth." Compare McBurney's Indians with the Catlin rendition on the opposite page.*

enough to be located and identified on maps of the Mississippi Valley drawn in London and Paris early in the eighteenth century. Over the years the mines had been worked by Indians and perhaps a few itinerant whites, but so far as we know never on the scale of Julien Dubuque's operations.

How was Dubuque able to obtain the grant from the Mesquakie tribe? He had, after all, been in the upper Mississippi only a few years and, to the best of our knowledge, had no particular training or experience in mining. (The Indians had known the methods of surface or strip mining for years; Dubuque merely supervised and expanded the operation.) It is possible that he married into the tribe, but

many French traders had taken wives from the Mesquakie Indians without receiving control of the lead mines.

A popular explanation for the grant by the Indians is that he had convinced them he possessed magical supernatural powers. One story relates that he could handle rattlesnakes without harm. Another tells how he threatened to burn the river if the Indians did not give him what he wanted. He allegedly had oil secretly poured on the water which burst into flames when he fired it, to the astonishment and fear of the Indians.

These accounts of his duping the Indians into believing that he possessed magical powers are, however, only legends and do not rest upon reliable eyewitness

accounts. Still, the existence of such legends does indicate that Dubuque's position with the Indians was extraordinary.

Julien Dubuque apparently lived and worked among the Mesquakie Indians for many years without any record of tension or difficulty. In general, the French of the upper Mississippi got along well with the Indians, but Dubuque's situation appears to have been unusually good. Without exaggeration, it can be said that the Mesquakies developed a genuine affection for him, that they not only respected him but also loved him. After his death they buried him on a bluff overlooking the river and built a monument over his grave. Nor was any white man to take his place, for the Mesquakies refused to permit any other to work the mines, going so far as to burn the buildings that Dubuque had erected.

Further evidence of the affection of the Indians for Dubuque is the remark made by Blackhawk, the war chief of the Sauk,

a kindred tribe of the Mesquakie. After his defeat in 1832, Blackhawk was imprisoned for a short time in the East. His return home took him down the Mississippi. Passing the lead mines he noticed whites living there. Sadly he recalled how this had been the land of the Sauk and Mesquakie, which they had given to "their relation," Julien Dubuque. Thus, the old war chief, defeated in a hopeless struggle to prevent the whites from occupying the land of his people, weary and bitter, still referred to Julien Dubuque in terms of affection, as a relative of the confederated tribes.

Evidently, Dubuque exercised an unusual influence upon the Indians, and was trusted, respected, and loved by them. Undoubtedly the attractiveness of his personality played a part, for he could hardly have continued to maintain such an intimate and friendly relationship over such a long period if the rapport did not stem from fundamental character traits. In Du-

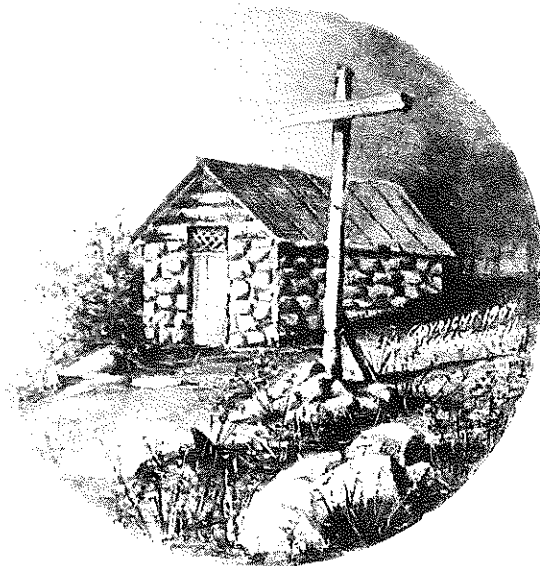


*George Catlin painted these "Sac and Fox" at Rock Island in the 1830s, only twenty years or so after Dubuque's death (from *Letters and Notes*).*

buque's case, familiarity bred respect rather than contempt.

Further insight into Dubuque's character is found in an explanation for his success with the Indians, given by his friend, Nicholas Boilvin. Boilvin wrote: "In the course of a few years he spent a great deal of money by his generous manner of acting, making many presents to the Indians and refusing in many instances to take their furs in exchange, contrary to the custom of the traders among them. By that means he gained the esteem and affection of the Sacs and Foxes . . ." This passage would appear to refer to the period before Julien Dubuque had obtained his concession from the Indians. If so, it offers a plausible account of how he came to be entrusted with the Indians' most valuable possession—the lead mines. If Boilvin's statement pictures Dubuque as a generous man who treated the Indians with unusual kindness, it also implies that he was calculating enough to use this generosity to advance his own interests. In fairness to Dubuque, however, it should be noted that his liberality to the Indians continued after he had taken over the mines, and to such an extent that his financial position was seriously injured.

Julien Dubuque's success at entering the social and commercial life of the growing town of St. Louis is further proof of his attractive personality. This fur-trading center had been settled by French merchants from New Orleans in the 1760s. Although handicapped by many restrictive regulations imposed by the Spanish government, St. Louis became the rival of Michilimackinac in the fur trade, in particular the increasing activity up the Missouri and Des Moines rivers. Julien Dubuque had to ship the lead downriver, be-



*Another drawing by C. L. Trudell, this of Julien Dubuque's actual burial vault. Catlin visited the grave in the 1830s and noted that the pioneer's body had been laid out on a stone enclosed slab, and visitors could peek in the windows to view the skeletal remains.*

cause of the weight, so St. Louis became the terminus where he sold his product. Consequently, while most of the trade of the upper Mississippi continued to go eastward to Michilimackinac, Dubuque turned to the south. The Mississippi became his highway as he made his regular journey with the lead to St. Louis. In the course of these frequent trips down the river, he no doubt established locations where he rested and visited. Personal letters indicate that he occasionally stopped at the great Sauk town of Saukenuk, at the mouth of the Rock River. One letter also makes reference to a prolonged stay, due to illness, at the home of a French trader, Denis Julien, who resided above the lower rapids of the Mississippi near Fort Madison. Certainly, during these years Julien Dubuque must have been a familiar figure to both the Indians and the whites who lived along the banks of the Mississippi.

According to James Soulard who knew him in St. Louis, Dubuque made semi-annual visits to that town. Soulard reports that Dubuque's arrival was an important event for the frontier community, an occasion for festivities. Dubuque's trips to St. Louis were as much social as commercial, and he became a participant in the activities of that village, joining in the dances and balls which were so much enjoyed by the French of the Mississippi Valley. Soulard relates that Dubuque would play the fiddle and dance to his own music. He eventually became associated with the wealthiest and most important citizen of that town, Auguste Chouteau. Doubtless Dubuque's control of the lead mines gave him status in the trading economy of this growing frontier town. In any case, Julien Dubuque was a prominent and respected person in St. Louis.

By 1803, when America acquired the upper Mississippi region in the Louisiana Purchase, Dubuque had established quite a reputation. Prominent Americans, such as Meriwether Lewis, were acquainted with him. Writing to William Clark in St. Louis prior to their departure on the historic expedition to the Pacific, Lewis requested that Clark give his regards to Julien Dubuque. Later, as governor of Louisiana Territory, Lewis included Dubuque's name on a list of the French inhabitants of the upper Mississippi whom the American government could trust to offset British influence over the Indians.

In 1808, the United States government demonstrated its confidence in Dubuque by appointing him Indian agent at Prairie du Chien. The previous agent at that frontier village was John Campbell, a friend of Dubuque. Campbell had become embroiled in a quarrel which culminated in a

challenge to a duel which was to be fought at Michilimackinac. Campbell, leaving for what was to be a fatal encounter for him, asked Dubuque to perform the duties of agent should he not return. When American officials learned of the death of Campbell they immediately wrote to Dubuque to offer him the post of Indian agent at Prairie du Chien. Because of ill health, Dubuque could only serve as Indian agent for a short time and was succeeded by Boilvin in late 1808. Still, for approximately two months in the fall of 1808, Julien Dubuque was the American Indian agent at Prairie du Chien. Nor was this simply a token appointment, for he went to that village, met with Indians, distributed the goods that the government had for them, and filed an official report to the United States government.

Dubuque's prominence in the white community is consistent with what we know of his relations with the Indians. He was able to command the respect and confidence of all. This ability served him well in the trading culture of the upper Mississippi.

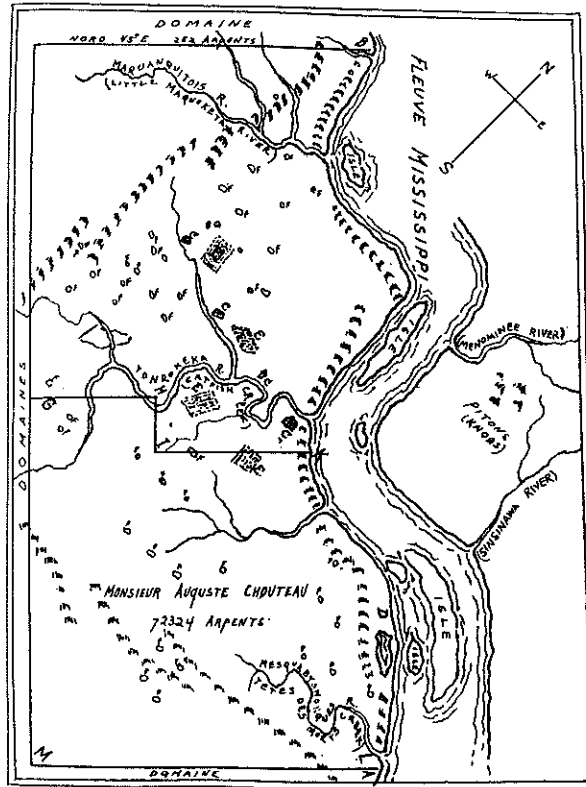
If Dubuque was an attractive personality, he was also a sharp operator, ready to take advantage of any opportunity which came to him. Dubuque's use of his warm personality to obtain from the Indians the right to use the mines brings in a note of calculation and even deceit which lessens the appeal of the man.

A case in point is his efforts to have the Spanish government recognize his right to the lead mines. In 1796, he petitioned the Spanish governor of Louisiana, Baron de Carondelet, asking him to grant Dubuque legal possession of the mines and the surrounding lands. Surely, his desire to base his position on something more substan-

tial than an Indian agreement is understandable, but his request to Carondelet went far beyond what the Indians had granted him. Dubuque in his petition referred to the lead mines as "the Mines of Spain," a title he hoped would influence the Spanish governor favorably.

The Mesquakies had given Dubuque the right to work the mines for as long as he pleased. Since the Indians continued to live on the land and refused to permit any white successor to Dubuque, it would appear that they did not intend to give him anything more than the right to work the mines until his death. In his petition, however, Dubuque requested that Carondelet grant him legal possession of an area 21 miles long and nine miles wide along the Mississippi. What he sought, then, was ownership of an area of land far greater than the mines, which he could then sell or deed to others.

Clearly, Julien Dubuque was engaging in a common American frontier practice: cheating the Indians of their lands. If Dubuque had succeeded in his efforts to gain ownership of the area of the lead mines the Indians would have lost their land. Some time after his death a group of whites came up from St. Louis to occupy the lead mines. The leaders were John T. Smith and Fergus Morehead, both of whom had bought rights in the Dubuque estate. The Indians opposed their landing and only Boilvin's arbitration prevented bloodshed. The whites withdrew, but had the United States government accepted the legality of Dubuque's claim, these men would have been the owners of the mines. In these circumstances, the American government would probably have forced the Indians to grant possession to them. Considering the Indians' kindness toward Du-



A copy dating from 1843 of Dubuque's original map for his land claim. The circled areas in the upper left, marked "f", show holes dug for mining of lead. The "house and buildings of the proprietor" are in the center, marked "c".

buque, as well as the years he spent living and working with them, his scheme has an aura of duplicity unusual even in dealings with the Indians. In this context, the generosity that Boilvin describes appears much more calculating and contrived.

Carondelet granted Dubuque's petition, but in 1803, Dubuque was faced with the problem of securing American acceptance of his claim. The United States, presented with a multitude of Spanish land grants, set up a Board of Land Commissioners in St. Louis. This Board had to decide upon the validity of each of these grants. It was to this Board that Dubuque had to submit his claim to ownership of the Mines of Spain.

As might be expected, speculation in Spanish land grants was a popular investment in the Louisiana Territory. Never one to miss an opportunity, Dubuque made a second claim for 7,056 acres across from Prairie du Chien where he claimed he had lived in 1785. The Board of Land Commissioners, however, rejected this claim.

Although he had been living at the Mines of Spain for over 15 years and had apparently gained Spanish recognition of his claims, Dubuque remained anxious. No doubt he was aware that the basis of his claim, the agreement with the Mesquakie Indians, did not support his right to the ownership of the large tract of land he sought. To win the suit he would have to act cautiously and shrewdly.

In 1805, Lieutenant Zebulon Pike came up the Mississippi to locate the sources of the river. He also had been instructed to bring back information on the resources of the region that the United States had just obtained. He was specifically ordered to question Julien Dubuque concerning the mines and his claims to them. On September 1, 1805, Pike landed at Dubuque's wharf. While Dubuque received him hospitably, the answers he gave to Pike were evasive, if not false. He greatly understated the amount of lead produced by the mines, and when Pike asked to see the mines, Dubuque told him that they were six miles away and that there were no horses available to take them there, neither of which was true. Dubuque, uncertain as to the strength of his claim, was not going to give information to a representative of the United States government.

A year before Pike's visit, Dubuque had decided upon a bold move which he hoped would assure that his claim would be validated. Deeply in debt to Auguste

Chouteau, Dubuque sold him approximately half of the land covered by the suit for \$10,848.60. He was in need of money and in debt to Chouteau, but this may not have been the principal motive behind the transaction. From then on, Auguste Chouteau, one of the most influential men in all of Louisiana, was financially committed to securing American acceptance of Dubuque's Spanish land claim. Indeed, when the claim was filed, it was in the name of both, with Chouteau listed as Dubuque's partner. Certainly Dubuque's astuteness is well illustrated by this tactic, for it bore immediate results. United States Governor William Henry Harrison had recently negotiated a treaty with the Sauks and Mesquakies which included American recognition that the west bank of the Mississippi belonged to these tribes. Harrison was persuaded by his friend, Auguste Chouteau, to add a clause stating that the treaty did not affect any Spanish land grant in the area. Furthermore, the Board of Commissioners, meeting in St. Louis on September 20, 1806, approved the Dubuque-Chouteau claim. Thus, when Dubuque died four years later, it appeared that he had succeeded in his effort to obtain ownership of a large tract of valuable land in the territory of the Indians. In the long run, however, the claim was invalidated; nevertheless, the maneuvers Dubuque followed to secure legal recognition of his claim provide insights into his character and demonstrate his business acumen.

A last touch needs to be added before the picture of Julien Dubuque as a businessman is complete. Despite his shrewdness, his ability to gain the confidence of others, and the opportunities offered to him by the Indians' grant of the mines,

he was constantly in debt. From at least 1803 until his death he was continually under pressure from one creditor or another. After his death, when Auguste Chouteau, the administrator of his estate, closed the books the assets were \$6,000 short of the obligations.

Considering the extent of Dubuque's business operations, the money he must have realized from his various enterprises, and the largely self-sufficient character of his establishment at the mines, how could this indebtedness have come about? Some notion of his income from the lead mines can be reconstructed from existing records. It appears that annually he sold hundreds of thousands of pounds of lead at a price of 5¢ per pound, which would have provided an annual income in the neighborhood of \$20,000 from the sale of lead alone. In addition, Dubuque engaged in other activities—the fur trade and agriculture—which should have strengthened his finances.

To understand Dubuque's financial position, particularly in the last years of his life, we must keep in mind the significance of his claim for a Spanish land grant. The validation of the claim by the United States would determine to a large extent his economic success or failure. Thus in 1806 when his claim received approval, Dubuque was not only solvent, but even wealthy, for the sale of portions of this mineral-rich land would have provided him with funds beyond the amount of his debts. But, the reversal of this decision in 1811 by the Board of Land Commissioners insured that his estate would not be sufficient to meet the obligations upon it.

Dubuque's relationship with Auguste Chouteau complicates further our understanding of his financial situation, for an

aura of mystery hangs over their partnership. As suggested earlier, the sale of half of his Spanish grant to Chouteau in 1804 may have been aimed at strengthening the case for his land claim with the St. Louis Commissioners. Although the record indicates that a considerable financial sum was involved, it may have been a purely paper transaction with no money actually exchanged. It seems unlikely that Chouteau would pay more than \$10,000 for half of a claim that had not yet been approved by the United States government. Furthermore, there is reason to doubt that he ever paid Dubuque the \$4,800 which remained of the purchase price after Dubuque's debt to Chouteau was subtracted. In an 1807 letter to a St. Louis firm to whom he was indebted, Dubuque referred to funds that belonged to him which would be available after his death. Was this the money Chouteau owed him from the 1804 sale? While we do not have the information to answer this question, we can conclude that the Dubuque-Chouteau partnership was no simple, clear-cut affair, but a further cause of the confusion and ambiguity which surrounds Dubuque's financial affairs.

If many questions remain unanswered concerning Julien Dubuque's indebtedness, there can be no doubt that his style of life contributed to his financial problems. A generous, expansive person, Dubuque was lavish in maintaining his establishment at the mines. He supported a large number of people; many Indians and a number of whites were domiciled there. He was kind and liberal to those dependent upon him. Furthermore, he personally lived in a fashion uncommon to the frontier.

When Dubuque moved to the lead



Auguste Chouteau

mines in 1788, he was one of the few whites living in the upper Mississippi. Aside from the few families living in the little hamlet of Prairie du Chien, the only other permanent white settlement was St. Louis, 300 miles away. Dubuque, then, was in the wilderness, isolated and remote from white settlement and society. Nevertheless, Julien Dubuque did not go native, did not adopt Indian ways and live as a member of the Mesquakie tribe. Quite the contrary, for his style of life resembled that of a feudal lord living on a manor, in the midst of retainers and workers.

Dubuque brought with him from Prairie du Chien ten or eleven Frenchmen to assist him in his mining operations. We can identify only a few of these early residents of what was to become Iowa. Thomas Forsythe, later an Indian agent at Rock Island, mentioned that his interpreter, G. Lucie, had lived with Dubuque for 20 years. Also, the document settling the estate of Dubuque indicated that at the

time of his death two persons, Patrice Roy and Josette Antays, were living at the mines with him, as his servants. In any case, during Dubuque's tenure at the mines, a number of whites lived there with him.

From existing records we can identify six buildings which were a part of Dubuque's establishment. These include his house, a couple of storage buildings, a mill, a blacksmith shop, and a building near the river. It often has been assumed that his dwelling place was by the mouth of Catfish Creek, south of the present city of Dubuque, near the Mesquakie Indian village. The inventory of his estate in June 1810, a few months after his death, however, shows clearly that his house was away from the river, in the hills to the north and the west. The inventory begins: "First in an apartment in the north . . ." Here the appraisers found the personal possessions of Julien Dubuque: his clothing, books, dishes, and other furnishings of a house. Evidently, Dubuque's house was north of the other buildings. Furthermore, later in the inventory, the term "at the river" was used to identify another building. From this document, then, we must conclude that he did not live down by the river, but rather in the hills behind it. Since most of his work must have been away from the river, at the mines and the farm, such a location for his house would be practical. Furthermore, land near the river had the reputation up and down the Mississippi, of not being conducive to good health.

The personal possessions of Julien Dubuque listed in the inventory are most revealing. Evidently, although isolated in the wilderness, his house contained furnishings and dishes of some value. Since

the purpose of the inventory was to determine what assets were in the estate, the items listed had to be worth the expense of packing and shipping them down the river to St. Louis for sale. We can thus conclude that the household furnishings were not simply rough, homemade pieces, but included things that must have been purchased elsewhere and were of sufficient value to be saleable in St. Louis. Here we have identified one of the reasons for his debts, for it must have been very expensive to ship furniture, dishes, clothing, and other personal possessions the hundreds of miles into the wilderness.

The most enlightening information in the inventory, however, is that Julien Dubuque had a library of at least 58 books. Included were such works as an encyclopedia of business and art, the works of Montesquieu, and eight volumes on politi-

#### Note on Sources

Previous accounts of Julien Dubuque include the following: M. Hoffmann, *Antique Dubuque, 1673-1833* (Dubuque: The Telegraph-Herald, 1930), 63-126; Joseph Tasse, *Les Canadiens De L'Ouest* (Montreal: Imprimerie Canadienne, 1878), 239-62; M. M. Ham, "The First White Man in Iowa," *Annals of Iowa* (3rd ser.), 2, 5 (April 1896), 329-344; and O. P. Shiras, "The Mines of Spain," *Annals of Iowa* (3rd ser.), 5, 5 (April 1902), 321-334.

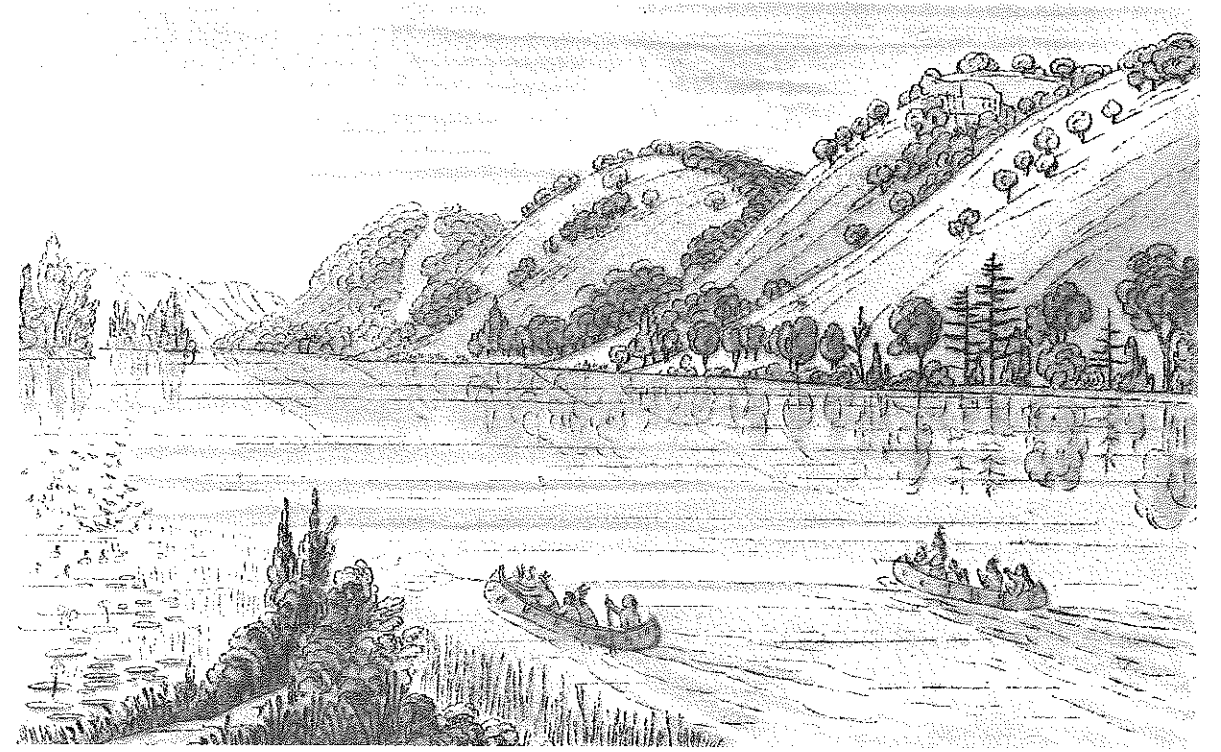
While these efforts have added to our knowledge of Dubuque, they are to some extent vitiated by the limited information available and the lack of trustworthy records. For the most part, these earlier writers depended upon legends, oral accounts of early settlers, journals of travelers to the mines, and isolated letters from Dubuque himself.

This article benefits from more direct and reliable sources which have permitted a fresh interpretation of Julien Dubuque. Volumes 14, 16, and 17 of C. Carter (ed.), *The Territorial Papers of the United States* (Washington: United States Printing Office, 1950) contain letters by Dubuque, his associates, and government officials. Most valuable were unpublished documents from the Missouri Historical Society, in particular those from the Pierre Chouteau Jr. Collection. Of these, the inventory made of Julien Dubuque's estate by Pierre Chouteau Jr. in 1810 is the most revealing. Xerox copies of these documents are available in the Loras College library, Dubuque, Iowa.

An annotated version of this article is available in the files of the Division of the State Historical Society, Iowa City.

cal science. Considering the general level of culture on the frontier, where important and prominent men were sometimes illiterate, the presence of books in the Dubuque household is revealing. As the earlier description of his personality implied, Julien Dubuque was no illiterate frontiersman, but a relatively educated person with intellectual interests. His letters are well written and correct both in grammar and spelling, not necessarily the rule for the frontier society in which he lived. These furnishings and books were apparently brought to the mines only at great expense and trouble, evidence that they were important to him.

Included in the inventory of his house were women's clothing. Does this tell us that he was married? If so, to whom? Here again the records fail us. There are legends concerning his marriage to the daughter of an Indian chief. There is indisputable evidence to indicate that he was married, at least in the informal sense that this term was used in the French Mississippi Valley culture. Several personal letters to Dubuque make reference to Madame Dubuque. Who she was has escaped the net of history, for we have no means of identifying any particular person as his wife, but we can surmise that his wife may have been a Mesquakie Indian woman. This type of marriage between a white man and an Indian woman was common in the upper Mississippi of that time. These arrangements were quite informal and easily broken off. Certainly it is difficult to believe that Dubuque could have lived for 22 years in the midst of the Indians without contracting such a union. Evidence that Madame Dubuque was an Indian woman can also be inferred from the absence of any reference to her claims



A view of the Mississippi near Dubuque's mines, by George Catlin (from Letters and Notes).

in the estate at the time it was settled. If our conclusion is correct, after Dubuque's death his Indian wife returned to her people, taking with her any children that might have been born of their marriage.

In March 1810, at the age of 48, Julien Dubuque died. He had been in bad health for some years. In 1808, when he declined the post of Indian agent on the grounds of ill health, he described his sickness as a lingering illness. Like so much of the life of Julien Dubuque the precise nature of his malady will never be known, but his death temporarily marked the end of white residence in the area. More than 20 years were to pass before substantial numbers of white men crossed the Mississippi to occupy the land where Julien Dubuque had lived and worked.

Such were the life and times of Julien Dubuque, a half a century before Iowa became a state. Whatever else can be said,

he was an unusual and interesting personality. So often, accidents of history push to the front of the stage men and women whose personalities do not measure up to the roles they are given. They are of interest to us not for themselves but because of the circumstances which placed them in a particular place at a particular time. Julien Dubuque, aside from his early arrival in Iowa, is of interest as a remarkable person in his own right. In his quarter of a century in the upper Mississippi, Dubuque established himself as an influential and prominent person, both to Indian and white. He lived as lord of the manor in the midst of a wilderness and maintained a standard of culture quite out of keeping with the primitive world around him. Certainly not everything about him is admirable, but his achievements are unusual enough to warrant a footnote in the pages of American history. □