

“MASTERPIECE ON THE MISSISSIPPI”

DUBUQUE, IOWA

THE FRENCH CONNECTION



Julien Dubuque and his Indian wife, Potosa

The town of Dubuque was founded in the 18th century by Julien Dubuque, a French explorer born in Quebec. He was one of the first settlers to arrive in this part of the country that was then home to the Meskwaki (Fox). These Indians lived in bark-covered dwellings while mining the area for lead and carrying on a thriving fur trade with French voyagers along the Mississippi River. Dubuque obtained permission to mine lead on Indian land and became a lifelong friend of the Indian leader, Chief Peosta. Some believe that Dubuque may have married Peosta's daughter,

Potosa. The towns of Dubuque and nearby Peosta are named after these two lifelong friends, and in nearby Wisconsin there is a town named after Potosa. Dubuque's and Peosta's graves are located near each other on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi River.

THE SPANISH CONNECTION

The Fox Indians lived and mined in this area, but their land had been claimed by the Spanish who in turn granted trading licenses to French and British traders along the Mississippi River. Although the Indians had allowed Julien Dubuque to mine lead on their land, he sought official permission from the Governor of Spain in order to continue. In 1796 he was granted legal right to 189 square miles of land which he then called "The Mines of Spain" as a tribute to the Spanish governor. Lead mining remained an important industry in this area throughout the nineteenth century but began to wane after the Civil War. In 1981 *The Mines of Spain* became an Iowa State Recreation Area. Designated as a National Historic Landmark, its many scenic trails are open to the public for hiking, skiing or simply to enjoy the variety of songbirds and wildlife that live there. *The Mines of Spain* is located a few miles south of Dubuque, not far from Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey.



Julien Dubuque monument at the *Mines of Spain*

DUBUQUE DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR



The Shot Tower in Dubuque

During the Civil War (1861-1865), Dubuque became one of the Union Army's best recruiting centers, and hundreds of men were housed and trained for battle here. The historic Dubuque Shot Tower, located near the Mississippi River, was a major source of ammunition used by the Union Army throughout the war. Over 120 feet tall and constructed of stone and brick, the shot tower was built as a tapered square-cut hollow column. Lead was melted at the base of the tower and hoisted up to be poured through a screen at the top. As the molten lead fell, it began to solidify into spherical shaped droplets

that were collected in water troughs at the base of the tower. Once cooled, the solid lead pellets were packaged and shipped off to be used as musket ammunition. Following the end of the war, the shot tower was used as a watch tower and was eventually listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of the few remaining shot towers of its kind in the country.

CATHOLIC INFLUENCE

Dubuque's St. Raphael's Cathedral was the first Catholic Church built in the state of Iowa. Shortly thereafter, the Pope created the diocese of Dubuque which covered an immense area bordered by the Mississippi river and extending north to Canada and as far west as the state of Montana. Its first bishop was Mathias Loras, an immigrant from France whose family had been guillotined during the French Revolution. The new Bishop encouraged large numbers of Catholic immigrants from Europe to settle in Dubuque and the surrounding area. He founded Loras College in 1839 and, at his invitation, Mary Frances Clarke and four other Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary came to Dubuque to establish a boarding school for women which later became Clarke College. In 1846 Bishop Loras visited Mount Melleray Abbey in Ireland and provided the monks with funds to assist with famine relief efforts. Two years later he provided the monks with 440 acres of prairie and timber land for them to found a Cistercian monastery in Iowa—New Melleray Abbey. Over the years the city of Dubuque has become the home of a number of Catholic institutions including convents, schools, hospitals, and Our Lady of the Mississippi Abbey which was founded in 1964 by 13 Cistercian sisters from Mt. St. Mary Abbey in Massachusetts. Today there are 14 Catholic churches in Dubuque and Catholics make up almost 85% of the city's population.



Bishop Mathias Loras monument in Dubuque