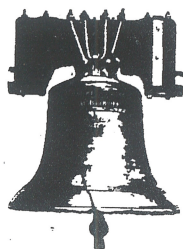


MADRID

AREA



BICENTENNIAL



1776-1976

"Remembrances of Days Gone By"

History of the River Land Grant:

No legislative act ever recorded in the state of Iowa affected the interests of the people of the Des Moines River Valley so much as did an act known as the Des Moines River Land Grant.

The grant was made with the improvement of the navigation of the Des Moines River in mind and it stated that to anyone who could make the Des Moines River navigable, a certain amount of land would be given to whoever accomplished the feat.

The act became law on August 8, 1846, and the man who formulated the act is not known, but as the act passed Congress about four months before Iowa became a state, the grant is believed to have been proposed by A. C. Dodge, who was a territorial delegate in Congress at the time.

The act stated that the grant was made for the improvement of the navigation of the Des Moines River, from its mouth to the Raccoon Fork; and then it further states that "a moiety in alternated sections of the public lands, remaining unsold and not otherwise disposed of, encumbered or appropriated, in a strip of five miles in width on each side of the river be selected within said territory by an agent or agents, appointed by the governor, subject to the approval of the secretary of the treasury of the United States. However, the wording of the grant came under question in the next few years.

In October of 1846, the grant extended only to the Raccoon Fork of the Des Moines River, and by the 17th of December, the territorial authorities designated the odd numbered sections as the land selected under the provisions of the grant.

It was on February 17, 1848, that the provisions of the grant came under question for the initial time. The commissioner of the general land office, in an official communication to the secretary of the board of public works, stated that it was in his opinion that the river land grant extended the whole length of the river within the state. This ruling was the beginning of the confusion, misery and woe of this historic land grant.

On June 19 of the same year, the President of the United States, without regard to these rulings, placed on the market, some of the lands above the Raccoon Fork. The conflict of opinions led to a correspondence between the officers of the state and the United States, which resulted in the announcement from the secretary of the treasury. By reason of the ruling, the commissioner of the general land office directed the receivers of the local land offices to withhold from sale all the odd numbered sections within five miles of the river above the Raccoon Fork.

On April 6, 1850, the boundaries of the grant was questioned again and it came to the attention of President Zachary Taylor who in turn reverted the

matter to the attorney general, Reverdy Johnson. It was decided again that the boundary extended to the northern line of the state.

A legislative act of 1853 provided for the election of officers and also empowered them to enter into a contract with some individual or company to complete the improvements of the river and thus relieve the state of the prosecution of the work. The Des Moines Navigation and Railroad Company was called in to complete the work and for their services, the navigation company was to have all the lands included in the original land grant not already disposed of by the state. This contract was made June 9, 1854 and it no doubt entered into with good intentions on the part of the state officers, but before the state could rid themselves of the company, it was woefully swindled. In fact, the whole river land business from start to finish was poorly managed by the state officers.

Prior to the time of entering the contract with the Des Moines Navigation & Railroad Company, the state had sold 327,314 acres of the land, with the proceeds paid out for salaries, work and materials furnished during the time of improvements. Of the above mentioned land, 48,830 acres were above the Raccoon Fork. The land sold at \$1.25 per acre with the total amount coming to \$409,142.

The D.M.N.&R.C. had charge of the improvements from June 9, 1854, to March 22, 1858. During this time, little progress was made of the improvement and disagreements arose between the company and state. At the conclusion of the settlement, all further thought of making the Des Moines River navigable were abandoned. By this time, the people were completely

disgusted with the navigation scheme and had turned their thoughts toward a railroad.

An act passed the Legislature on March 22, 1858 granting to the Keokuk, Fort Des Moines & Minnesota Railroad company, all the lands included in the River Land Grant not then sold by the state or pledged to the navigation group in the settlement just made. This grant was made to aid in the construction of a railroad from the mouth of the Des Moines River to the north line of the state, provided Congress would consent that the remainder of such lands should be used for that purpose.

At the fall election in 1858, the proposition to divert the remainder of these lands from the original purpose of improving the navigation of the river, to the building of the railroad, was submitted to the people of the state and a large majority voted in favor of it. After this decision, Congress gave its consent that the remainder of the lands might be so diverted.

Work on the railroad was completed in 1860 and about this time another conflict arose and was tied in the Supreme Court entitled "Dubuque & Pacific Railroad Company vs. Litchfield."

In this decision, the court ruled the original river land grant did not extend above the Raccoon Fork. This decision brought the sale of river land and the further extension of the railroad to a standstill.

Questions continued to arise over the land grant as late as the 1890's. Finally, in 1894 an act was passed to indemnify the settlers and the few remaining ones received a small compensation for the homes they were forced to leave. This ended the historic river land troubles extending over a 48 year period from 1846-1894.

Church Notes

St. Malachy's Catholic Church

Saturday, March 13:
5:30 p.m. — Mass
7:00 p.m. — Games and Activities

Sunday, March 14:
8:00 and 11:00 a.m. — Madrid Masses

Tuesday, March 16:
7:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. — Mass
7:30 p.m. — Inquiry Class

Wednesday, March 17:
7:30 a.m. — Mass
6:30 p.m. — Elementary Religious

11:30 a.m. — Church "carry-in" dinner
6:00 p.m. — Youth Service
6:30 p.m. — Adult Prayer-Cell
7:00 p.m. — Evening Worship Service,
Gleason Hackett, Pastor

**The Madrid
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money is used to attain items for ourselves. Money, by itself, is useless. Money needs persons to utilize it, to put it into circulation. So when I hear that famous line, "Money is the root of all evil", I must laugh because there is no way

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a tool. A tool to be used for the good of all men and not the wants of a few. This our challenge and the indictment we must live with.

Ira S. Williams, Jr.