

Antiquities

Charles Negus

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ANTIQUITIES.

BY CHARLES NEGUS.

In sections thirty and thirty-one, in township seventy-two north range, ten west, in Jefferson county, there is some romantic and picturesque scenery.

Here may be seen the waters of the Cedar, meandering their course along its zig-zag channel, sometimes swift and turbid, overflowing its banks, and attaining the size of a large river; but, most of the time, quietly and gently moving along, as clear as a mountain spring.

On the south side of this stream, the ground is low and level, interspersed with small prairies and groves of timber, with here and there little ponds.

On the north side, the country is elevated and very broken, being intersected by high hills and deep ravines, and at the first settling of the county, for a long distance, it was mostly a forest of wood-land. At one point, for a number of rods, a high bluff comes up to the stream on one side, and a beautiful low prairie of several acres, stretches out from the bank on the other.

At the first settling of the county, the bluff on the north side, from the bed of the creek, for some thirty feet or more high, was nearly perpendicular, and mostly composed of a solid sand stone. This location must have been a place of attraction, and been visited by those who had some knowledge of civilization, long before Iowa was permitted to be settled by the whites. For when this place was first seen by the early settlers of the county, about thirty feet from the bed of the creek, at the point on the bluff most difficult of access, there was discovered, firmly bolted onto the solid sand rock, an Iron Cross, the shaft of which was about three feet, and the cross-bar about eighteen inches long.

A short distance from this place, a little north of east, on the summit of a high ridge, there are a series of mounds, which give indications of having been built by human hands

many years ago. These mounds are from twenty-five to fifty feet across at the base, and from three to five feet high, and on them large trees have grown, which give evidence that they were made long before the Indians gave up their hunting grounds to the white man. They were once, no doubt, much higher than they are now, but have been worn away and flattened down, by the incessant rains of many years.

Since the settlement of the county, this sand stone bluff has been very much interfered with, and it does not now have the majestic appearance of earlier days. Large quantities of rock have been queried out, and taken away for building and other purposes; so much so, that instead of being almost perpendicular, it now presents a gentle slope; and the rock on which was fastened the Iron Cross, was long since undermined, and tumbled down from its elevated position; and the Cross was pried from the rock, and carried away by the seekers of curiosities—one arm of which, at the time of writing these notes, is in the possession of the author.

The mounds are plain to be seen at this time (1867) and there are several witnesses now living, who saw the Cross while it was fastened upon the solid rock; but by whose hands it was put there, or for what object, or when it was done, there is no one to bear testimony; and in all probability, the mystery will never be solved. Devout prayer may have been offered up before this Cross to the ever-living God. Many human beings may have assembled around those bluffs, engaged in religious devotions. This may have been a consecrated spot, where funeral ceremonies may have often and repeatedly been performed; and the last remains of many a father and mother, brother and sister, may have been deposited there, on those craggy summits, and long since mouldered away to their mother earth.

These are imaginations, which pass through the mind; but the real history of these things, will probably never be known.

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