

NOTES ON EARLY LEAD MINING IN THE FEVER (OR GALENA) RIVER REGION.¹

BY THE EDITOR.

No evidence exists, nor is it probable, that the aboriginal inhabitants of the Upper Mississippi valley made any considerable use of lead previous to the appearance among them of French missionaries, explorers, and fur-traders. The French were continually on the search for beds of mineral, and questioned the Indians very closely regarding their probable whereabouts. The savages, although superstitious with regard to minerals, appear soon to have made known to the whites the deposits of lead in the tract which now embraces the counties of Grant, Iowa, and La Fayette, in Wisconsin; Jo Daviess and Carroll counties in Illinois; Dubuque county, in Iowa, and portions of eastern Missouri. Undoubtedly this is one of the richest lead-bearing regions in the world, and when once brought to the notice of the pioneers of New France its fame became widespread. The French introduced fire-arms among the Northwestern Indians, and induced them to hunt, on a large scale, fur-bearing animals; thus lead at once assumed a value in the eyes of the latter, both for use as bullets in their own weapons, and as an article of traffic with the traders.

¹Not presented as a formal treatise upon this interesting subject. I have but thrown together in outline, as useful material for those who may wish to develop it, these rough notes on early lead mining in the Fever (or Galena) River region, the result of a somewhat protracted investigation, which has not, however, been carried to its utmost possibilities. The field is an interesting one, and deserves to be fully worked, in an historical monograph. An abstract of these notes appeared in the *Report of the American Historical Association* for 1893.