

**JOHN NICOLET: EXERCISES AT THE
UNVEILING OF THE TABLET
COMMEMORATING THE
DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF THE
NORTHWEST; HELD ON MACKINAC
ISLAND, JULY 12, 1915**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649139569

John Nicolet: exercises at the unveiling of the tablet commemorating the discovery and exploration of the Northwest; held on Mackinac Island, July 12, 1915 by Various

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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JOHN NICOLET

EXERCISES AT THE UNVEILING OF THE TABLET COM-
MEMORATING THE DISCOVERY AND EXPLORATION OF
THE NORTHWEST; HELD ON MACKINAC ISLAND,
JULY 12, 1915, UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE
MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION AND
THE MACKINAC ISLAND STATE
PARK COMMISSION

LANSING
MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION
1915

NICOLET DAY ON MACKINAC ISLAND.

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A BRONZE TABLET in commemoration of the discovery and exploration of the Northwest by John Nicolet was unveiled with appropriate ceremonies on Mackinac Island, July 12, 1915. The arrangements for the occasion were made by Hon. Edwin O. Wood, a member both of the Michigan Historical Commission and the Mackinac State Park Commission, under the auspices of which organizations the exercises were conducted; and Mr. Wood also generously bore the expenses.

The day was perfect; and the Island was at its best. The speakers' platform was placed near Arch Rock, and the audience was seated in a grove of pines. The air was still, and every word uttered by the speakers was clearly heard.

Mr. John F. Hogun, of Detroit, editor of *The Gateway*, acted as chairman. His introductory remarks were:

THE CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS

Members of the Michigan Historical Commission, the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, Reverend Gentlemen, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The question has been asked over and over again; why does not Michigan pay deserved tribute to those explorers and missionaries who came here several hundred years ago, and opened the way to civilization?

Why has not our state preserved, in tangible form, the names and records of their early achievements so that future generations may know and understand the lessons of their early sacrifices and thus appreciate all the more, the invaluable heritage they left us?

Happily, this question need no longer be asked.

The Michigan Historical Commission, created in 1909 by act of the legislature, is now officially charged with the task of collecting historical relics and compiling historical data of Michigan.

The six members of the Commission, are recognized throughout the country as distinguished authors and historians, eminently qualified for the difficult position they occupy. They have given their services freely and gladly to this noble and enduring work.

To them has been assigned the task of delving into the early records of discoverers,—of collecting, analyzing and compiling the many thousands of pamphlets so that an accurate, complete account of the early history of Michigan may be preserved for future generations. When it is stated that more than 200 names of explorers and missionaries have been accepted as entitled to enter the Michigan Hall of Fame, the task of the Commission may be dimly understood.

In carrying out its purposes, the Commission agreed that the names and discoveries of these early explorers and missionaries should be commemorated by placing memorial tablets throughout the state parks so that we of today and tomorrow, may understand to whom we owe our present civilization.

The assistance, therefore, of the Mackinac Island State Park Commission was solicited and the plans for the Nicolet Day celebration were prepared under their joint auspices. The exercises today, are the result.

When the list of speakers for today's celebration was being prepared, Rt. Rev. Chas. D. Williams, the distinguished head of the Episcopal Diocese of Detroit, was selected to deliver the Invocation. An unexpected summons, however, called him to New York. The Committee was in a quandary. Who could acceptably fill the position?

At this most trying time, Mr. Hirt of Louisville, whose palatial cottage is one of the most beautiful attractions on the Island, came to the rescue by suggesting that one of his guests, a former resident of Detroit, might be induced to undertake the task. The suggestion was gladly received and accepted and Mr. Hirt was empowered to make such arrangements. That he has fulfilled his mission most completely, you will all presently agree.

During many years of experience in Detroit, I, in conjunction with other citizens of that city, had often heard many sincere expressions of commendation concerning Rev. C. D. Woodcock. At that time, he was in charge of one of the most prosperous parishes of the city—St. John's Episcopal Church—and was deeply beloved by his congregation. His deep sincerity, his broad charity, his nobility of character and the pronounced success he achieved in his chosen field, made him widely and favorably known. It was natural that a man of his recognized ability and attainments, should be marked for elevation. His friends, therefore, are not surprised to know that Rev. Mr. Woodcock is now a distinguished prelate, the Episcopal Bishop of Kentucky.



UNVEILING THE NICOLET TABLET.
NICOLET WATCH TOWER IN HONOR OF JOHN NICOLET, WHO IN 1694 PASSED THROUGH THE STRAITS OF MACKINAC IN A BIRCH BARK CANOE AND WAS THE FIRST WHITE MAN TO ENTER MICHIGAN AND THE OLD NORTHWEST. ERECTED ON BEHALF OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN BY THE MICHIGAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION AND THE MACKINAC ISLAND STATE PARK COMMISSION. 1915.

11



The directing head of any great religious body must be a real man, a true man, a live man, a simple man; great in his life, in his love, in his work, in his broad mindedness. Such are the characteristics of the distinguished gentleman who will deliver the Invocation. I have the pleasure of presenting Rt. Rev. C. D. Woodcock, Protestant Episcopal Bishop of Kentucky.

The Invocation by Bishop Woodcock followed.

THE CHAIRMAN: A few days ago, the sound of a voice came to me over many miles of a thin copper wire. The tones were so clear, that, in imagination, I could see the kindly face of my friend as he called to me, his greetings of good cheer. An ordinary occurrence, you say, yet no sane person, one hundred years ago, would have deemed this feat possible.

The Michigan Central Railroad and the D. & C. steamboats, carry one almost over night from Detroit to this wonderful and historic island of rest. Yet, if men had declared two hundred years ago, that we of today would travel on railroad trains and steamboats, they would have been summarily punished as "witches."

Time, however, brings many changes. Today, gas, electricity and steam are so closely a part of our daily existence, that we give almost no heed to the wonderful possibilities they opened in our lives.

We look about us at the marvels wrought by man; at the great ocean liner, the fast railroad train; the deadly submarine; the flying airship; the telephone, the telegraph and the wireless with their instantaneous means of communication—but we no longer wonder. We accept them calmly—and then as calmly proceed to think of something else.

So it is, that, in our present state of mind, we scarcely realize the conditions that existed three hundred years ago in that part of the country, then known as the "Territory Northwest of the Ohio River," which we of today recognize as the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan and Wisconsin.

This extensive region, embracing the upper lakes and the Valley of the Mississippi, was a vast, unknown wilderness, untouched by civilization. But to be just, we must consider conditions and remember that more white people live today in the city of Detroit, than were to be found in the whole of North America at that time. The country then was new and the inventive mind had not been nursed.

Let us not forget too, that in the 17th century, there were no

steam boats, no railroads or automobiles to carry passengers to distant points. No telegraph, no telephone, no civilization in 1634 in this very spot where we now stand—nothing but wild nature. Travel, of course, was slow and difficult; communication was indeed lacking.

In those early days, men had to walk through the thick underbrush and the wooded forests, carrying their burdens on their backs; or paddle in birch bark canoes over the waters.

Instead of public buildings, private residences, and churches; electric lights and well paved streets; the telephone and the telegraph; street cars and automobiles—all necessary and common adjuncts to an American city today—nothing but wild forests and prairies were to be seen. No habitation except an occasional wigwam.

Who of us would venture into an unknown world, not knowing when, if ever, we would return; traveling through the woods and streams all day and resting under the boughs at night; subsisting on what we could fish or shoot; fearful of the wild animals; deprived of the society of one's own people while all the time exposed to surrounding dangers?

Yes, this is exactly what early explorers had to face day after day.

Theirs was a life of toil and hardship, of facing danger constantly, meeting emergencies calmly and with a never failing trust in the help of the Almighty.

It was a period that tried men's very souls—but they were men. He whom we honor today was of that strong type. And in the final analysis, their success made it possible for the people of New France to come here and develop the vast region around us.

Are they not, then, our benefactors; do they not deserve much at our hands?

Memories of these daring explorers live with us today, in our own beloved state of Michigan. To them we owe all we possess. Their courage, their bravery, their fortitude and perseverance blazed the way for others who followed and builded. We, the citizens of great and prosperous commonwealths, now enjoy the fruits of their daring efforts.

And so, the great state of Michigan, acting officially through the cooperation of the Michigan Historical Commission and the Mackinac Island State Park Commission, decided to recognize in a befitting form, the invaluable services of these early explorers, by placing their memorial tablets in this, the state park of Michigan.