

## History of the Rock Island Arsenal

The Rock Island Arsenal has been serving the nation for 150 years, but the history of the Army on Arsenal Island goes back even further. In 1805 Lieutenant Zebulon Pike landed on the island and recommended it be made a military reservation. After the War of 1812, Fort Armstrong was built to provide security in the area and to keep an eye on the Sac and Fox tribes in the area. Fort Armstrong served as the Army's logistics hub during the Blackhawk War of 1832. After the Army left Arsenal Island in 1836, the remains of Fort Armstrong served occasionally as a storage depot, with George Davenport as the caretaker until his death in 1845. Before he died, Davenport supported the push for a rail bridge crossing the Mississippi between Rock Island and Davenport using the island as a step stone. That bridge was completed in 1856 and was the first bridge anywhere over the Mississippi.

In the late 1850s, the Army began looking for a location for an "Arsenal in the West." Because the island was considered Federal property, coupled with the transportation infrastructure, Rock Island became the favored site for the Arsenal. Legislation was signed by President Lincoln on 11 July, 1862 creating the Rock Island Arsenal. During the Civil War the first permanent structure, the Clock Tower Building, was started on the west end of the island while a POW camp took up most of the center of the island. After the war was over, the POW camp was razed with the only permanent reminder being the Confederate Cemetery. Meanwhile, BG Thomas Rodman was assigned as the commander and created his grand plan for a National Arsenal with ten massive limestone shops and a multitude of support structures. Construction began in 1866 with the last shop completed in 1893. The Arsenal was the largest public works project of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Meanwhile, between 1869 and his death in 1871 BG Rodman designed and nearly completed the 21,000 square foot Quarters One, the largest house in the Army, and other housing on the island.

By the early 1890s, RIA was producing nearly everything a Soldier needed from tin cups, to repaired rifles, saddles, haversacks and targets for rifle practice. The Spanish American War in 1898 was the first big test, and the Arsenal came through with flying colors. As it is today the RIA staff in 1898 was nearly all civilian employees of the Army. They ramped up to meet increased requirements and shipped items for overseas movement. The Spanish-American War revealed that the RIA was under-utilized, and in 1903 the Ordnance Department ordered the M1903 Springfield rifle be manufactured. Ordnance also directed that RIA become the Army's artillery manufacturing center. By the time World War I was over the RIA was a hotbed of manufacture creating machine guns, rifles, artillery, and artillery ammunition. However, immediately after the Armistice the RIA cut staff from nearly 15,000 to a low of only 618 in 1924. During that period of cutbacks, the RIA became the Army's tank and armored car development center while continuing to advance Army artillery design.

## ... continuation of RIA History

In 1940 tank development was moved to Detroit, but WWII still saw a massive increase in employment to over 18,600 with the manufacture of artillery, machine guns, and repair parts. In addition the RI Ordnance Depot used the rail transport net to ship repair parts to both coasts and overseas to support our fighting Soldiers.

The personnel drawdown after WWII was never completely reversed. Despite heroic efforts to complete and ship the new 4.2" Super Bazooka to Korea in 1950 and ongoing manufacturing throughout the Vietnam period, Army requirements never again reached the same levels as in WWII. However, RIA remained significant to the Army developing the launch platforms for Army rockets as well as continuing development and production of artillery.

1955 saw a major change with the arrival of the Ordnance Weapons Command, the first higher headquarters on the island. The RIA commander now had his boss on Arsenal Island directing the work of all the arsenals. In 1962 the Weapons Command was raised to a 2-star level, the first time a Major General had their headquarters in the area. This marked the beginning of Arsenal Island's transition from a manufacturing plant to a plant plus a major Federal office complex that has continued to this day. While the Arsenal continued its manufacturing work, more and more of the Army's logistics infrastructure was managed from commands on the island. In the late 1970s RIA developed and began manufacture of the M198 155mm artillery piece, but the plant was becoming obsolete. The late 1980s saw the start and completion of Project REARM, a complete modernization of the shops bringing all of the WWI and WWII shops under one roof and adding state of the art foundry and production areas. The old stone shops then began conversion to office space. This sparked the arrival of even more commands who used the new space. In 2005 the manufacturing plant became a separate entity while Arsenal Island's life support became the responsibility of a garrison manager. For the first time the manufacturing commander only had to worry about manufacturing while others kept the support structure going. In 2011 the First Army arrived on Arsenal Island and for the first time a 3-star General made his home here. While less than half the numbers of 1945, Arsenal Island remains the largest employer in the Quad Cities at almost 8,000 employees and the home to more than 70 federal and commercial tenants.

From humble beginnings as a wooden fort projecting security on the frontier, the RIA grew steadily to its heyday of WWII when the Island reached peak employment and projected its products to the global Army. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the manufacturing plant continues to hum and support the Army while other commands direct Army logistics and mobilize and train Reserve forces to support the Nation. Missions and outward appearance have changed, but the RIA remains the Heart of the Quad Cities, remains in the center of the country, and remains an irreplaceable support installation for the Army and the Nation.



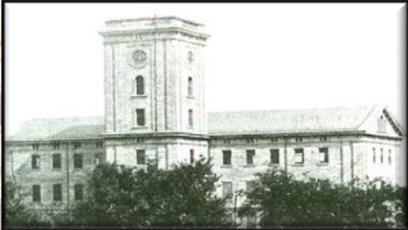
## Rock Island Arsenal

Est. 1862

150th Anniversary  
Celebration



# History of Rock Island Arsenal



1862: Legislation designates RIA as a military arsenal



1919: RIA produces 100 Mark VIII tanks in 286 days



1987: Kingsbury Manufacturing Center completed through Project REARM

1893: BG Rodman's ten stone shops are completed



1950: RIA produces 3.5" Super Bazooka



1962: WECOM brings first two-star command

1989: Original Arsenal buildings designated as a National Landmark



1865: RIA Prison Barracks closes



1943: Peak employment reached at 18,675

1896: Current government bridge built



1898: Arsenal can make anything a Soldier needs



1942: largest Army ordnance warehouse, Building 299, completed

1958: RIA produces Nike Hercules launching equipment



1978: RIA begins production of M198 155mm Howitzers

1918: WWI is only time RIA manufactures ammunition



2011: First United States Army brings first three-star command



1871: Quarters 1 is completed





## Tour Information

### Shuttle Bus to Tour Locations

- Bus Stops:
  - Memorial Park
  - Joint Manufacturing & Technology Center
  - Mississippi River Visitor Center (Lock and Dam 15, Clock Tour & Navy Operational Support Center)
  - Col. Davenport House
  - Quarters 1
  - RIA Museum & Arsenal Attic

### Joint Manufacturing & Technology Center:

Carted tours run every 30 min from 11:30 – 4:00; space limited. No photography or electronic devices. No foreign nationals—ID required.

**Clock Tower:** 1 hr tours; space limited. Times: 11:30, 1:00, & 2:30. Subject to cancellation due to excessive heat.

**Lock & Dam 15:** 45 min tours; space limited. Times: 11:30, 12:30, 1:30, 2:30, 3:30. No foreign nationals – ID required. No photography. No cameras, backpacks, bags, purses or cell phones. Subject to cancellation if wet conditions exist.

**Col. Davenport House:** Self-guided walking tour, open 11:30-4:00. Second story not handicap accessible.

**Quarters 1:** Self-guided tour, open 11:30-4:00. Not handicap accessible. No strollers.

**Also available:** Self-guided tours: 11:30-4:30

- Army Sustainment Command Headquarters building
- Navy Operational Support Center
- RIA Museum
- First Army Headquarters building

## Historical Whole-Island Tours



Non-stop, 45 min tour

Tour times: 12, 12:30\*, 1, 1:30\*, 2, & 2:30\*

Bus starts at 3<sup>rd</sup> St. & Rodman Ave.

\* *Handicap accessible*

## Building 150 Family Activities and

### Cooling Center (11:00-4:00)

- Time Period Games (1862)
  - Jacks 
  - Marbles 
  - Croquet 
  - Egg on spoon races 
  - Sack races 
  - Weaving placemats (make & take)
  - Pick-up sticks
- 1860s Family portraits taken in period clothing 
- Cooling station for families 

## USO Events Memorial Field:

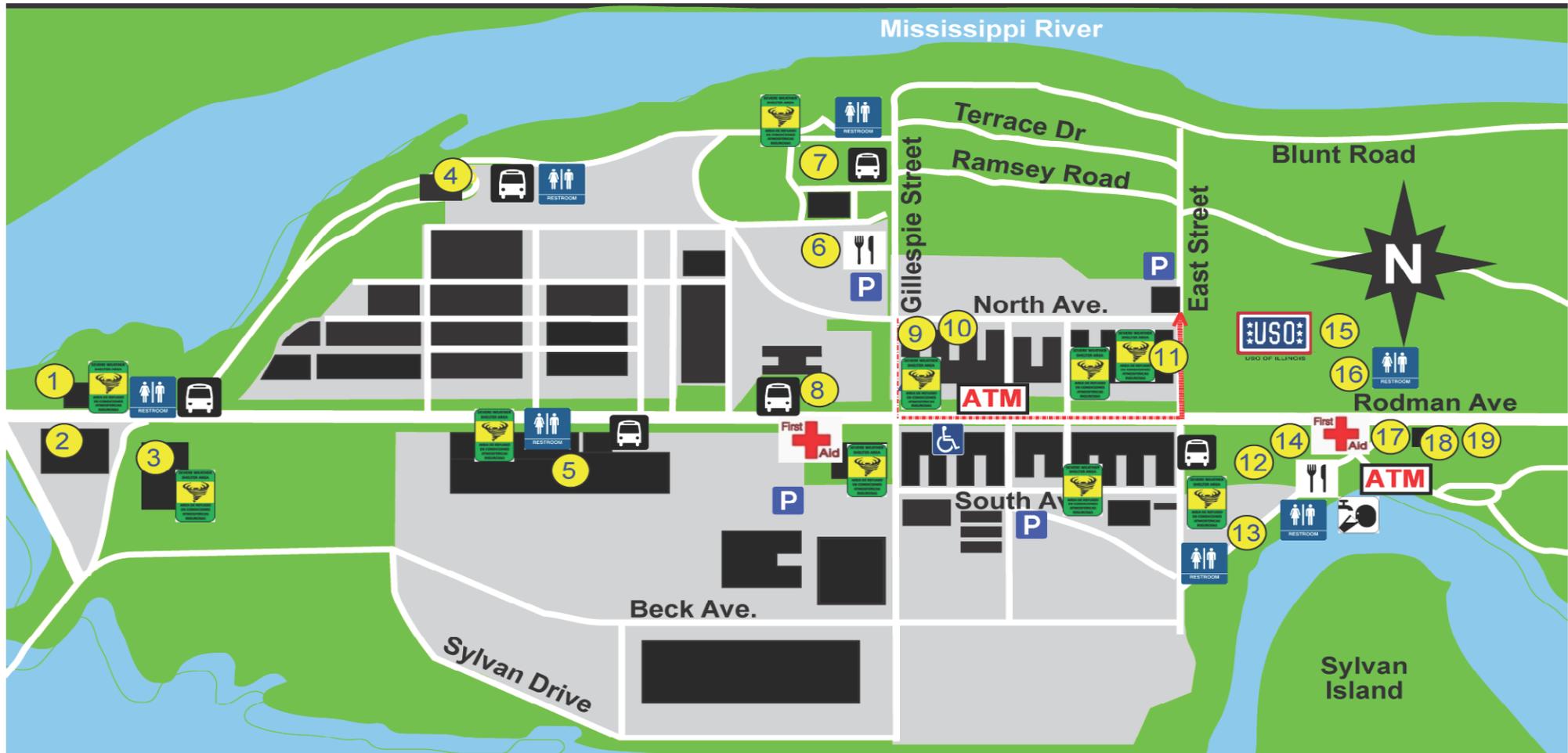


- Chicago Blackhawks Hockey Team Puck Challenge 
- USO Band
- Tug of War Contest
- Military Obstacle Course
- Discovery Kids Tent
- Military Family Resources Tent
- Information Booths
- GM Drive and Ride (21 or older) 
- GM American Pride Camaro

## Schedule of Events:



- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| 8:30am      | Moline/Rock Island/Davenport<br>Gates Open   |
| 8:30-4:45   | Car Show, Rodman Ave.  |
| 8:30-4:45   | Static Displays, Rodman Ave.   |
| 8:30-4:45   | Helicopters On Display,<br>Memorial Field  |
| 9:00-4:45   | Civil War Encampment,<br>Memorial Field East   |
| 10:00       | Parade-Start @ Rodman Ave. &<br>Gillespie St.  |
| 10:00-5:00  | Food Vendors   |
| 10:45       | Golden Knights Jump,<br>Memorial Field                                |
| 11:20       | Opening Ceremony, USO Stage  |
| 11:30-4:45  | Shuttle Bus to Tour Locations  |
| 11:40-12:00 | USO Band, Memorial Field   |
| 12:00-2:30  | Whole-Island Historical Tours  |
| 12, 2, & 4  | USO "Circurious" Circus Show   |
| 12:45       | Road Sign Unveiling/Cake<br>Cutting, USO Stage   |
| 1:10        | USO Band, Memorial Field   |
| 2:00        | Ice Cream Eating Contest,<br>USO Stage (18 or Older)   |
| 3:00        | Recognition Ceremony   |
| 3:15        | USO Band, Memorial Field   |
| 4:45        | Closing/Golden Knights<br>Jump Flag Retreat Ceremony,<br>USO Stage  |



## Legend

- 1. Lock & Dam 15
- 2. Clock Tower building
- 3. Navy Operational Support Center
- 4. Col. Davenport House
- 5. Joint Manufacturing & Technology Center
- 6. Golf Club
- 7. Quarters 1
- 8. Army Sustainment Command Headquarters building
- 9. Arsenal Attic Thrift Store

Parade route

- 10. Rock Island Arsenal Museum
- 11. First Army Headquarters Building
- 12. USO stage
- 13. Helicopters
- 14. Food vendors
- 15. USO activities
- 16. Car show
- 17. Civil War encampment
- 18. Youth games/cooling center
- 19. Confederate Cemetery

## Food Vendors

(cash only)

- |                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| MWR Grill                        | Nancy's Corn  |
| Family Readiness Group bake sale | Beer cart     |
| Sheridan's Island Catering       | Beverage cart |
| Lea's Meats (Festival Cafe)      | Golf Club     |
| Iowa American Water              | El Mariachi   |
| Bayside Smoothies                | Food King     |

Shuttle Stop	History Tour	Parking	Handicap Parking	First Aid/Lost child/Lost & found	Storm Shelter	Water/Misting station	Food Vendors	Rest Rooms
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