



NATURAL HISTORY



ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL Installation



Prior to the establishment of a federal presence on the island of Rock Island, the 946-acre slice of land was a resort for the local Sauk and Meskwaki. The rocky terrain of the island jutted as much as 13 feet above the bed of the river. On the lower end of the island were shallow caves that local tribes believe was inhabited by a great white swan spirit that watched over the island.

Rock Island itself was rich land, full of brush and wildlife. The natives picked an assortment of berries, hunted game, and acquired building materials from the island. Situated just downstream at the confluence of the Mississippi and Rock Rivers was the village of Saukenuk (translated: village of the Sauk). Saukenuk was one of the largest post-Mississippian native settlements in North America with some estimates upwards of 2,500. Across the Mississippi River sat a smaller Meskwaki Village of a few hundred. Among these groups were famous names such as Keokuk and Black Hawk.



946-acre island of Rock Island

Previously a native resort

Saukenuk located downriver

Most natives migrated in 1830s

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ON THE LINE

