



ASC History Newsletter

This month
in military
history...

1776: Public Notice urges recognition of "humane ladies" of the Rev

1862: President Lincoln shuffles the Union command

1864: Union's Red River Campaign begins in Louisiana

1918: 1st cases reported of deadly influenza epidemic

1941: FDR signs Lend-Lease

1942: Truman Doctrine is announced

1967: Heavy battle rages during Operation Junction City

> "Battle Between Sioux and Sauk and Fox" painting by George Catlin

DAVID SEARS ON ARSENAL ISLAND

During the period of 1836-1862, numerous interested civilians attempted, with some success, to settle on portions of Rock Island. Settling attempts in the area were not a novel notion, yet, prior to 1836, the ability to settle peacefully had been hampered by the presence of the Indian tribes in the area. Squabbles back and forth ensued betwixt the U.S. government and the Indians, creating cause in 1816 for the creation of Fort Armstrong, and ultimately ending with the Black Hawk Purchase of 1832. This purchase moved the threat of Indian hostilities to west of the Mississippi, and the War Department removed the garrison at Fort Armstrong. Fort Armstrong was completely abandoned in 1836, although the government retained Rock Island as a government reservation. However, the squatters that remained considered Rock Island to be part of the public domain, especially after the military departed the island.

By 1854, private citizens, in disregard to government objections, erected a variety of buildings on Rock Island. These citizens did not fit the stereo-typed "dirt poor" pioneer squatter found in contemporary literature and films. Instead, many of the "squatters" on Rock Island were successful businessmen. They included David B. Sears, Huntington Wells, Charles Atkinson, and Joel Wells. These men were responsible for platting out a large town in 1843, which

they named Moline. However, this was not David B. Sears' greatest accomplishment. Preceding Moline, Sears' constructed a mill-dam in 1842 across the south channel of the Mississippi River. The dam connected Rock Island with the Illinois mainland; and it was reported the dam had attracted another saw mill to the island. In 1846, Sears built a second dam. The dam furnished water power to Sear's Flour Mill on Benham's Island, an island in the main channel, and to several businesses on the main island, Rock Island, linking the two. In 1855, Sears purchased title to Benham's Island, situated near the upper, or eastern, portion of the larger island of Rock Island. In addition to the mill, Sears built a house with barn, outbuildings, three warehouses, and a steamboat landing on Rock and Benham's Island.

The Sears' mill and dams built at Rock Island attracted other businesses to Rock Island. In 1847, Sears persuaded John Deere and his partners, Robert N. Tate and John Gould, to re-settle in Moline along the shore of the Sylvan Slough. He did this by offering Deere and Associates rent free water-power for a period of time. He also promised he would build them a frame factory if they would relocate their grand plow shop from Grand Detour, Illinois to Moline. Next, Sears succeeded, through the special act of Con-

gress, to purchase 35.45 acres of island property for \$1.25 an acre. Sears laid out a portion of his island property in lots. He planned to develop it as a subdivision to the city of Moline. Although Sears sold a few lots to his Rock Island Village, the village never developed, and he sold the property back to the Federal Government for \$145,175. The price reflected improvements he had made on his property.

Although this may seem like a failure, Sears was one of only two men to receive legal title to property on Rock Island, with George Davenport being the second. The two men were also the only ones paid in 1862 to leave the government land upon which they had originally been squatting. All the other squatters of the area were forced to relocate without compensation. Sears' mill and dam we later used to produce the first power for the Arsenal.



Sears' Mill

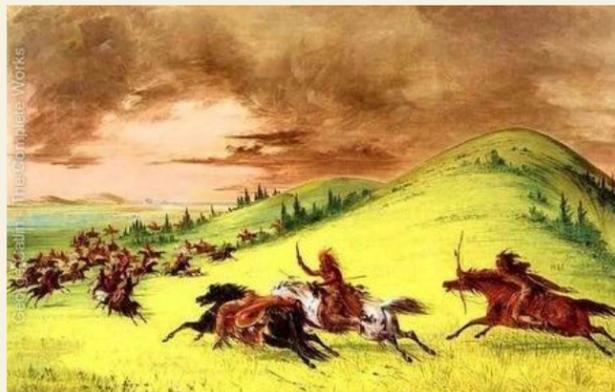
INTERTRIBAL WARFARE

Intertribal squabbles and sporadic fighting took place among various tribes of the Mississippi River Valley which frightened and disturbed settlers near Fort Armstrong. Settlers were shocked by the ruthlessness of Indian intertribal warfare. Under the Indian code of conduct, no one of the enemy tribe was spared. Indian agents and commanders at Fort Armstrong and other military posts along the Mississippi River intervened constantly in the intertribal feuds to prevent disputes from erupting into full scale frontier wars.

In 1825, the U.S. government attempted to arrange peace between warring Sioux and the Sauk and Fox tribes. According to Indian tradition, relatives of a murdered victim could demand payment in blood or "gifts" from the attackers to "cover" the loss of their dead relative. Government agents tried to develop a plan which eliminated the need for such avenging attacks. The government attempted to provide a peaceable solution to the problem. It agreed to cover the dead on both sides of the Indian con-

flict. Government officials considered such a procedure to be less expensive than mobilizing the army.

The intervention, unfortunately, would only worsen relations between the US and the Sauk and Fox. In an attempt to follow US requests, sixteen Fox chiefs traveled



to Dubuque to meet with US representatives as well as Sioux, Menominee, and Winnebago Indians to hopefully end the intertribal feuding. On the way to the parley, however, 15 of the 16 Fox chiefs and one woman were massacred. Because this horrific event occurred while they were trying to comply with US requests, the Sauk and the Fox became even more bitter to-

ward the United States.

The plan proved ineffective. Territorial encroachments by hunting parties continued to occur and many of the hunting parties returned to their villages with the scalps of their enemies. Settlers feared an attack on the Sauk and Fox villages near Dubuque and Rock Island by the Sioux, Menominee, and Winnebago Indians might threaten their settlements.

Government agents negotiated a treaty in July 1830 with the feuding Indians that supposedly covered the losses on all sides involved in the intertribal feuding. Unfortunately the treaty did not resolve the fighting either.

After realizing that their plans were not working, the United States called for military intervention. Only threats were used, however, in the fear that a show of military force might drive even more braves to fight. This intertribal feuding would continue to affect Fort Armstrong and its nearby citizens until the Indians were forced farther west after the Black Hawk War of 1832.