

# The ASC History Newsletter

Issue 1

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## THIS MONTH IN MILITARY HISTORY...

- 1776: Battle of Harlem Heights—Washington ambushes the Brits, reviving American morale
- 1777: American flag flown for 1st time at Revolutionary War skirmish in Cooch's Bridge, Maryland.
- 1814: Battle of Plattsburgh at Lake Champlain—American victory of British made this the decisive battle of the War of 1812
- 1847: American troops capture Mexico City
- 1862: Battle of Antietam—bloodiest day of Civil war, 23,000 casualties in 12 hours
- 1862: Battle at Harper's Ferry, VA. Both Union and Confederates fought to control this important railroad junction.
- 1863: Battle for Cumberland Gap, TN ends in Union victory
- 1918: Col. George S. Patton leads the 1st US tank attack at St. Mihiel, France
- 1918: US troops land in Archangel, Russia to stay for 10 months as intervention in their civil war
- 1939: Britain and France declare war on Germany
- 1943: U.S. carrier aircraft & B-24s raid Tarawa to eliminate Japanese position
- 1944: Navy pilot George H.W. Bush was shot down by Japanese forces after completing a bombing run over the Bonin island. He was rescued but both other crew members died.
- 1945: Japanese troops in Philippines surrender to U.S.



Japanese General Yoshijiro Umezu signs surrender document in front of General MacArthur on 2 September, 1945

## Early History of Rock Island Arsenal

The first building project to construct the Rock Island Arsenal began during this month in 1863. The history of the area, however, began long before this groundbreaking day, making this site the oldest institution in the entire Quad Cities.

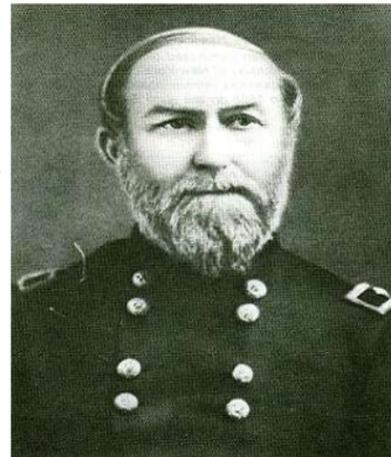
In the early 1700s, Europeans and white Americans started coming to the area due to fur trading opportunities with the Indians. It did not take long, however, for the government to get involved as well. The presence of the United States government has been on the island since as early as 1804. In this year, a Treaty was signed with four Sauk and two Fox chiefs, from the local Indian tribe, granting a huge amount of land to the U.S. government in trade for their protection and friendship of the Sauk and Fox Indians. Truly telling of the actual level of friendship, the Indians later claimed they were tricked into getting heavily inebriated and signing the Treaty against their better judgment.

Government presence on the island increased with the establishment of Fort Armstrong in 1816. Here, early pioneers sought refuge during the hostile years of Indian uprisings. Black Hawk, a fierce Sauk warrior, led one of these hostile bands and sided with the British when war broke out in 1812. Military forts, such as Fort Armstrong, were built to block the British, or anyone else, from

trading in or controlling the river valley after the cessation of hostilities. Fort Armstrong proved its importance and served as a post to keep an eye on the troublesome Sauk and Fox Indians, protect American fur traders, and communicate up the river with other posts.

Aggression from the Indians, mainly the Sauk and Fox tribes but also the Sioux, Menominee, and Winnebago, increased as years passed. Much of the enmity was between tribes rather than just towards white settlers. When the Black Hawk War began in 1832, there were many misconceptions about everyone's end goal. After 15 weeks of fighting in northern Illinois and Wisconsin, Black Hawk was captured and a treaty was signed. In this treaty, the Sauk and Fox gave the U.S. government 6 million acres west of the Mississippi and agreed to leave the land in return of a yearly annuity of \$20,000 paid over 30 years. With the threat of Indian hostilities now gone, Fort Armstrong was abandoned.

When Congress expressed desire for a new armory in the West, Rock Island was immediately suggested. Its location on the Mississippi River with its 20 foot bluffs made it easily defensible, and by



Major Charles P. Kingsbury, the 1st Rock Island Arsenal Commander

now there was plenty of workforce living in the area. After nearly two decades of debate, Congress passed the Act of 11 June 1862 establishing a national arsenal at Rock Island.

Major Charles P. Kingsbury, a former Ordnance Officer, oversaw the construction of the national arsenal after becoming the first Rock Island Arsenal Commander on 3 August, 1863 and held that position until 4 June, 1865.



## Quarters One

The second man to become Commanding Officer at Rock Island Arsenal was Brevet Brigadier General Thomas Jefferson Rodman who dreamed up the idea of Quarters One.

Building of the Commanding Officer's Quarters began in May 1870, but the next Arsenal Commanding General, Lieutenant Colonel Daniel W. Flagler, saw the project finished after Rodman's death in June of 1871.

Construction was finished in October 1871 with the landscaping following in the spring of 1872.

Constructed of two foot thick limestone brought from Joliet, Illinois, this Italianate villa style home is the largest family residence owned by the U.S. Army, measuring in at just shy of 20,000 square feet.

There are more than fifty rooms in this home, three floors, a main core, west wing, and observation tower. No one can leave out one of the house's most popular attractions: the screened

-in wrap-around porch that covers the entire east and north sides of the home, facing directly towards the Mississippi River.

This house, built in 1871, was even equipped with central heating!

Rodman was somewhat secretive in his construction of this house, and because of him it is unknown today how much this house cost to build. By reusing materials, like melting down the Civil War cannons to make all of the house's wrought-iron objects, and constructing items in Arsenal shops, Rodman concealed the actual costs.

Not surprisingly, the Commanding Officer no longer resides in the infamous Quarters One because restoration and preservation costs became too high. Major General R.M. Radin was the last Commandant to live there, and the house has been vacant since he moved out in 2008. The house is still often being used to host special events.

Quarter's One has an extensive history that would take a book to entirely explain. With almost 140 years of occupants, this house has loads of interesting tales, and even a couple ghost stories, that make this home unique.

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