

ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL

Rock Island Arsenal is an active US Army facility located on a 946-acre island in the Mississippi River. Today, Rock Island Arsenal is our nation's largest government owned and operated arsenal.

In 1969, the arsenal was placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In 1989, the original arsenal buildings were designated a National Historic Landmark.

The United States acquired title to the island in 1804 through a treaty with the Sauk and Mesquakie tribes. The importance of the island was identified as early as 1809, when it was set aside as a federal military reservation by an Act of Congress. An Act of Congress established Rock Island Arsenal in 1862.



9. Living Memorial Walkway



The Living Memorial Walkway was dedicated on July 17, 2008. The idea for the memorial was initiated by Major General Robert M. Rodin, Commander of the Army Sustainment Command and Senior Commander of Rock Island Arsenal. The memorial honors the memory of service members, defense civilians, and contractor employees from Illinois and Iowa who have lost their lives while serving during the combat operations of Noble Eagle, Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom, and the Global War on Terrorism.

10. Memorial Park & Civilian Monument



In 1950, Rock Island Arsenal employees dedicated Memorial Park to the memory of the employees of Rock Island Arsenal who died while serving with the US Armed Forces during the Second World War. Thirty-one ordnance systems are exhibited, with emphasis on systems used by the US Armed Forces. Many of the artillery pieces are products of Rock Island Arsenal.



On July 11, 2002, Colonel Randall D. Corbin, Commanding Officer of Rock Island Arsenal, dedicated the site for the monument to civilian service that he envisioned. On July 24, 2003, the monument was unveiled at Rock Island Arsenal Heritage Day.

11. Confederate Cemetery



The only tangible remains of the Rock Island Barracks is the Confederate Cemetery. The Rock Island Barracks was one of 21 prison camps operated by the Union. From December 1863 to July 1865, 12,192 Confederate prisoners were held at the prison camp. A total of 1,960 prisoners died. Each gravestone identifies the individual soldier, his company, and his unit. The National Cemetery Administration maintains the Confederate Cemetery.

12. Rock Island National Cemetery



The Rock Island National Cemetery is one of 128 national cemeteries operated by the National Cemetery Administration throughout the United States. Originally established in 1863 as the post cemetery for Union prison guards at the Rock Island Barracks, this cemetery is among the 20 oldest national cemeteries. The cemetery covers 70 acres and has approximately 23,000 to 24,000 gravestones representing 29,000 burials. It is among the 30 largest national cemeteries in terms of number of burials.

13. Gravesite of Colonel David M. King November 5, 1869 - January 27, 1932



Colonel King was the twelfth Commanding Officer of Rock Island Arsenal from June 3, 1921 to January 27, 1932. He was an 1893 graduate of the United States Military Academy. During the First World War, he was in charge of the American Ordnance Base Depot in France.

14. Gravesite of Brevet Brigadier General Thomas J. Rodman July 30, 1815 - June 9, 1871



General Rodman is known as "The Father of Rock Island Arsenal." As the second Commanding Officer, he assumed command of Rock Island Arsenal in 1865. He designed the ten stone shops, Quarters One, the officers' quarters, and support buildings. He did not see the completion of his project. He is famous for designing the Rodman gun that was widely used in the Civil War. He also conducted the first tests in cannon gunpowder that led to the manufacture of mammoth and prismatic gunpowder.

1. The Gathering Point



This steel mural is a community-built art project that interprets the natural resources of the Mississippi River and the rich history and legends of Native Americans connected to Arsenal Island. The steel mural depicts the variety of animal life that thrives on the island and reinforces the appreciation of nature all around us and within us - for children and adults alike.

2. Fort Armstrong



What we see today is the 1916 replica of one of Fort Armstrong's blackhouses erected for the fort's centennial celebration. Built in 1816, Fort Armstrong was one of a system of forts developed in the Upper Mississippi Valley. The fort's most important role in keeping the peace was when it served as military headquarters during the Black Hawk War of 1832. The fort was abandoned in 1836, but remained an ordnance depot until 1845.

3. The Government Bridge



The Government Bridge that we cross today from Rock Island Arsenal to Davenport, Iowa, was built in 1896. It is a double-decker bridge with double railroad tracks above and a roadway below. It was built on the same piers as the first Government Bridge of 1872. Its swing span that can rotate 360 degrees for river traffic is a rare engineering accomplishment.

4. Mississippi River Visitor Center



Located at Locks and Dam 15, the Visitor Center is operated by the US Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District. The Visitor Center provides an excellent vantage point to observe and learn about the function of the locks and dams system for the 9-foot channel project on the Upper Mississippi, the operation of the Government Bridge, and the importance of barge traffic on the Mississippi River.

5. First Bridge Pier Monument



This monument marks the location of the first railroad bridge across the Mississippi River. On April 22, 1856, the Railroad Bridge Company opened this structure. Fifteen days later, the steamboat Effie Afton struck the bridge. The Effie Afton was destroyed, and part of the bridge was burned. This incident led to a famous court case that pitted steamboat interests against railroad interests. Abraham Lincoln, then a Springfield lawyer, defended the railroad. The trial ended in a hung jury. The Supreme Court eventually decided a subsequent suit in December 1862, and the bridge remained operational. The first Government Bridge of 1872 replaced it.

6. Colonel Davenport House



To visit the Col. Davenport Home is to step back into the frontier history of this nation in the early 1800s. Tour guides will take you through Davenport's careers as a US soldier, fur trader with native Americans, and developer of local communities. Your tour will take you through the home he had constructed in 1833-34, decorated with furnishings of that period.

7. Rock Island Arsenal Museum



Originally open to the public on July 4, 1905, the Rock Island Arsenal Museum is the second oldest US Army museum. The primary mission of the museum is to portray the history of Rock Island Arsenal and Arsenal Island. The museum is well known for its premier firearms collection.

8. POW-MIA Memorial



On September 19, 1987, a large spruce tree was initially dedicated on this spot as a living reminder of service members who remain Prisoners of War (POW) or Missing In Action (MIA). Today's more substantial POW-MIA monument is in keeping with the resolute policy to liberate all POWs, to seek the fullest possible accounting for those still missing, and to repatriate the remains of those who died while serving our nation.