Quarters One
Rock Island Arsenal

United States Army Sustainment Command
History Office
Introduction

Quarters One on Rock Island Arsenal is an established and recognizable landmark in the Quad Cities area. Perched on the banks of the Mississippi River, the house harkens back to an earlier time. The massive size, clean lines and pastoral setting gives the edifice a sense of grandeur. The third floor roof and the tower provide sweeping vistas of the Quad Cities area. One can imagine families on the tower roof in the summer watching riverboat traffic on the main channel or new agricultural implement factories in Moline.

BG Thomas J. Rodman received permission to build a home on Rock Island Arsenal in early 1869. Rodman finished the design by the end of the year. From the beginning, Rodman proposed a large house that would serve as a place for distinguished visitors. In his vision, Quarters One would always be both a home and a public building. In 1870, Rock Island remained at the edge of the far west and was a transit point for expeditions to the west. Some suggest that the entire third floor was designed to house the waiting families of soldiers on western travel. At the same time, Rodman expected that, as commanding officer and a senior leader in the local community, he would need space to entertain and hold public business. The building was designed and constructed with all those ideas in mind. Quarters One performed its first public duty when, in June 1871, it hosted the funeral of BG Thomas J. Rodman for the Arsenal staff and local community. Since then, Quarters One has been not only a home, but a public place to house visitors and host events.

Since 1871, before construction was complete, Quarters One has been the home of the senior officer assigned to Rock Island. Thirty-eight different senior officers, from General Rodman on, have called Quarters One home and one officer lived in the house twice. Each officer and his family have left their mark and have made the very public building an individual home. Today, the portraits of those thirty-eight officers line the stairway. Unfortunately, the era of housing the senior officer on the island in Quarters One has come to an end. Due to a variety of reasons, the US Army decided in 2006 that Quarters One would no longer be a family housing unit. In 2008 MG and Mrs. Robert M. Radin were the last family to make Quarters One their home.

Today Quarters One is now at risk due to a lack of funding for stabilization, preservation, and restoration. While the Army is committed to maintaining the building, increasing budget constraints will continue to put pressure on the Rock Island Arsenal garrison staff to prevent deterioration. Various options are being explored to bring investment and a sustainable business plan to play. If this book encourages any readers to develop their own ideas, it will have served a valuable purpose.

As Quarters One passed from a home to a new use, it was determined that a short history should be prepared that not only described the building, but also described its place in the history of Rock Island Arsenal and the Quad Cities. This volume, prepared by the US Army Sustainment Command History Office, is intended to leave a memorial to the building and the service it has provided to the community for over 140 years. Pictures and words cannot adequately describe the beauty and grandeur of the building. It has to be seen, walked through, and lived in to be completely appreciated.

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Construction on Quarters One began in the Spring of 1870 with General Rodman supervising the excavation. Earlier in April 1867 while planning the construction of the main stone shops, General Rodman sent circular letters to multiple stone companies requesting the companies send specimens of their stone and “inviting them to furnish proposals to furnish 100,000 cubic feet of range work stone” for the outer facing of walls, door jambs, and window and door caps.\(^{51}\) On June 20, 1867, General Rodman offered an order to L.P. Sanger & Son (later named Sanger & Steele) for all of the stone needed for Shops B, C, and the Commanding Officers quarters.\(^{52}\) Sanger accepted the offer and agreed to provide the required stone at a rate of six dollars per cubic yard.\(^{53}\) Sanger continued to provide the stone until September 1870 when Sanger refused to deliver further quantities of stone unless the Government pay forty-cents per cubic foot—a significant cost increase since the original 1867 agreement provided for payment by the yard.\(^{54}\)

Sanger’s demand for increased compensation did not fare well with General Rodman. Throughout the course of the contract, Sanger took other contracts and frequently diverted stone paid for by the Arsenal to more lucrative projects, thereby delaying the construction of Arsenal buildings and also breaching the terms of the contract with the Rock Island Arsenal.

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Letter from Sanger to RIA Commander Colonel D.W. Flagler (AMSAS-HI)
Walking out of the parlors and into the main hall, the visitor can truly take in the grandeur of the home. The main hall is thirty-one feet long and often served as the center of numerous holiday parties at Quarters One. From the main hall, the visitor can enter the den used by commanding officers. The den possesses dark wooden bookshelves constructed by Arsenal craftsmen and has a very warm feel with a brick fireplace, great views of the Mississippi River, plaster medallions, and a beautiful Secretary desk. The den has often served as a library, office, and family room for several commanding officers. From the den, the dining room is just steps away.
the rear patio. Sometime after its completion, a glass-enclosed conservatory was added to the southwest corner of the first floor. However, in 1972 it was razed.\textsuperscript{78} The cost of repairing it to its original conditions was considered too expensive. In the early 1900’s, the conservatory required significant heating in order to allow the plants to develop throughout the year. In order to heat the conservatory, old rifle stocks were burned, including the prized 1903 Springfield rifle stock that was manufactured at the Arsenal.
ing officers since the 1970’s report utilizing the third floor for any purpose other than ascending the tower for great panoramic views of the Quad Cities.

The house contains two main staircases, one in the main entryway and another directly to the side of the kitchen. The primary staircase is U shaped with semi-circle ends containing intermediate landings running from the first to the third floor. Portraits of all of the past commanders who lived in Quarters One line the stairway. The stair is open in the center and is walnut with molded railing.
The Haunted Hallows of Quarters One

Few topics are of more interest to visitors of Quarters One than the subject of ghosts. Situated directly across from the Confederate Prisoner of War Camp, the house immediately took on a haunted aura—particularly since over 1,900 Confederate POW’s perished during the camp’s twenty month existence. Many individuals report seeing a Confederate Prisoner of War leaning against the main posts at the entrance to the driveway of Quarters One smoking a pipe, accompanied by the sound of drums.

The Confederate POW is but one of the great ghost legends inside Quarters One. With Quarters One nearly complete, General Rodman died on June 7,1871, just before the residence would be completed. His death not only marked the first commander to perish while on the Island, but also marked the first public gathering in Quarters One: Rodman’s funeral. The funeral occupied the parlors of Quarters One with throngs of local residents arriving to pay their last respects to the man many considered the “Father of the Rock Island Arsenal.”

Rodman would not be the last commanding officer to die while at Rock Island. In 1918 COL LeRoy Hillman, who commanded RIA less than a year, died in Quarters One, an early victim of the influenza epidemic that later swept the nation. In 1932 COL David King, 12th RIA commander, died in Quarters One. The death of three commanding officers, and the existence of the POW camp directly