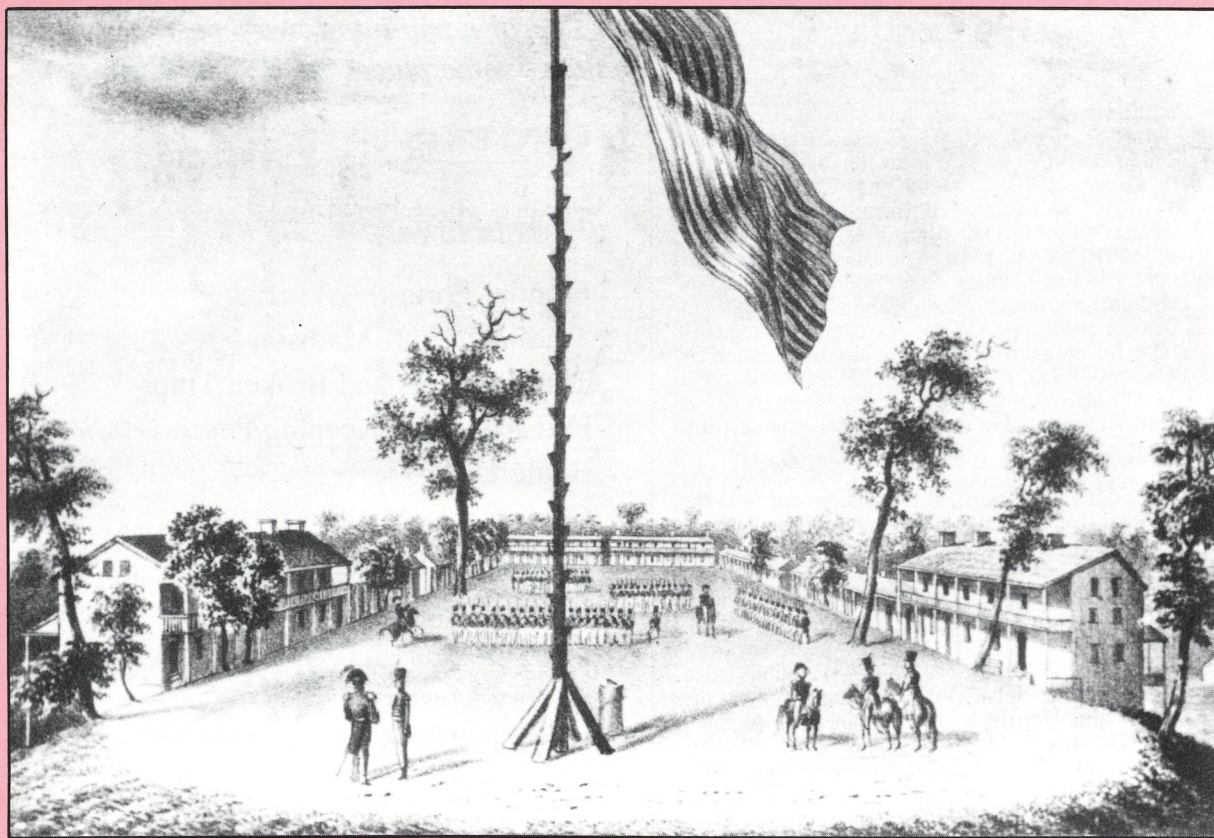


# The **Goldfinch**

*Iowa History  
for Young People*  
Volume 8, Number 1  
September 1986



## Forts in Iowa

# The Goldfinch

Iowa History  
for Young People

Volume 8, Number 1  
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Editor, GINALIE SWAIM  
Assistant Editor, DEBORAH GORE

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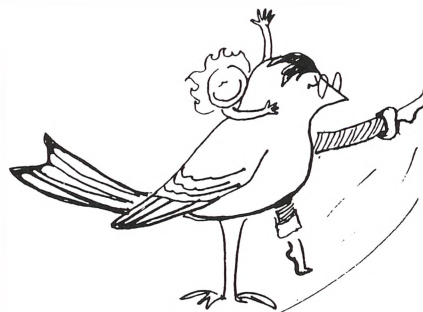
**Acknowledgements:** The stories about life at Fort Atkinson were adapted from "Fort Atkinson State Monument Preserve: Technical Report" by Bradley B. Williams (1980). "Good Times" and "History Mystery" were adapted from "Fort Atkinson Artifacts" by Marshall McKusick, the *Palimpsest*, vol. 56 (1975), pp. 15-21. The excerpt on page 19 is from "Old Fort Madison: Some Source Materials" in the *Iowa Journal of History and Politics*, vol. 11 (October 1913), pp. 517-45. The displays and guides at Fort Snelling (in St. Paul) provided information for "Choices." The characters of "Wild Rosie" and "Goldfinch" were drawn by Jenny Wren. A list of major sources used in researching this issue is available from the editor.

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Meet  
*Wild Rosie,*  
your official  
"Goldfinch Tour Guide"

for a trip into Iowa's past. This map  
shows some places we'll visit in this issue.

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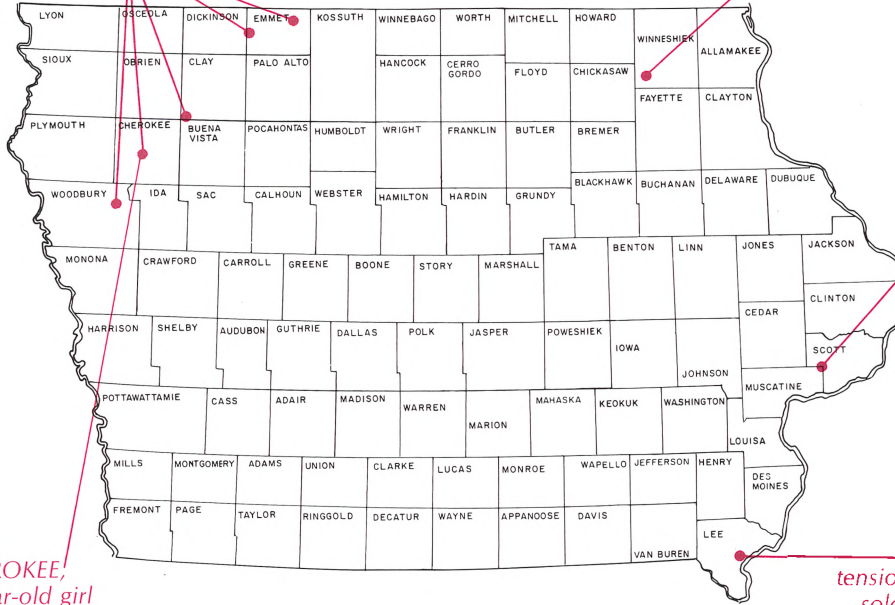
### *Forts in Iowa*

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**ON THE COVER:** This drawing depicts a military fort from the nineteenth century. The soldiers are marching on the parade grounds. Read more about the forts of Iowa in this Goldfinch. (Photo courtesy of the Office of the State Archaeologist.)

At ESTHERVILLE, IOWA LAKE, PETERSON, CHEROKEE, and CORRECTIONVILLE the short-lived Northern Border Brigade protected area residents (page 19).

At FORT ATKINSON, troops protected Winnebagoes from other tribes and from settlers (pages 9-12).



In DONAHUE, Aaron Corbin is this issue's History-Maker. He organized "Living Heritage Days" at Pioneer Village. (pages 21-22).

In CHEROKEE, a 14-year-old girl wrote in her diary about the Indian panics of the 1860s (page 19).

At FORT MADISON, tensions between American soldiers and Sauk Indians rose in 1813 (pages 5-7).

## ASK WILD ROSIE

**"Rosie, how could people see boundaries that separated Indian tribes?"**

"Boundaries were often along natural features such as rivers or streams. Some boundaries, like the Neutral Line, were not identified by landmarks. That kind of border line is invisible unless you're looking at it on a map. You don't see it when you cross it."

**"Rosie, why were Iowa forts used for only a few years?"**

"Forts were no longer needed when fur trade with the Indians declined, when Indian tribes were moved, and when settlement grew rapidly."





Work Projects Administration

## Frontier Forts

**H**AVE YOU ever built a treehouse fort? Can you think of some of the advantages of having a treehouse fort? For example, it gives you a place to **meet with people** (your friends). It is a place to **trade supplies** (bubble gum cards, apples, books, and other useful stuff). A fort provides **protection** (if you keep the ladder pulled up, no one can enter without your permission). It gives you an **observation point**. From the treehouse you can see all around the neighborhood. You can watch what's going on.

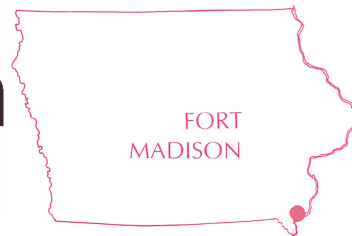
The American government built forts for the same reasons. At a fort, the army could meet and exchange information and supplies with Indians, explorers, fur trappers, and settlers. A fort provided protection because it had strong walls and guards, and army officers had the authority to arrest people who broke the law. Forts were built in places where people could watch the nearby land and rivers. Soldiers who lived in the fort frequently went on patrol through the countryside, to keep a watch on the people, too. With these advantages, a fort was a way of controlling the land and the people that lived there.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the American government built forts in what we now call Iowa. Each fort was used for only a few years. The middle section of the United States was changing quickly. White settlers were moving in, to start farms and towns. The Indians who lived in the Midwest were being forced out. Forts were built to help control these movements of people.

When a fort was no longer needed, it was usually abandoned. Towns often grew up in the same locations. Do you live near any of these Iowa towns: Ft. Madison, Cherokee, Des Moines, Ft. Atkinson, Montrose, Ft. Dodge, Estherville? In this *Goldfinch*, you will read about some of the early forts that were built where these towns are today.

The story of Iowa's forts is really a story of people—the Indians who were forced to move farther west, the settlers who eagerly moved into this area, and the soldiers who had the responsibility to make it happen in an orderly way. □

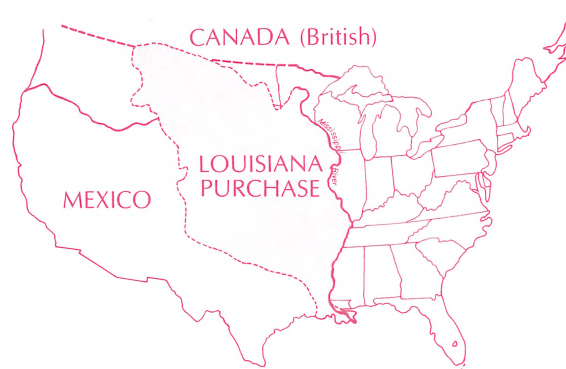
# Trading at Fort Madison



AS THE SOLDIERS' boats headed up the Mississippi in the fall of 1808, John Johnson and Lieutenant Alpha Kingsley thought through their instructions. Johnson was a trader hired by the American government. His job was to make friends with the Indians and give them a good impression of the American government. Kingsley and his soldiers were to build a trading post where Johnson could trade with the Indians, and to build a fort nearby to protect the trading post.

British, French, and Spanish people had long traded with tribes in the vast region between the Mississippi River and the Rocky Mountains. The traders exchanged goods made in Europe for furs trapped by the Indians.

In the exchange, both sides got what they



*In 1803 the U.S. bought a huge piece of land called the Louisiana Purchase from the French. The land we now call Iowa was included in this territory.*

needed. The traders shipped the furs to Europe, where wealthy people paid high prices for stylish hats and coats trimmed in beaver, fox, and otter. The tribes valued the iron axes, knives, kettles, guns, and blankets offered by the trader.

As a tribe continued to deal with a particular trader, the tribe depended on the trader for things they needed. The tribe promised loyalty and support if the trader's country went to war.

When the United States bought the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the government wanted to begin trading with the tribes in this area. The government wanted the profits of the fur trade and the loyalty of the tribes. That was why Johnson,

Maps by Linda Knowing

courtesy Office of the State Archaeologist (OSA)



*From a nearby ridge overlooking Fort Madison, Sauk Indians laid siege to the fort.*



*Soldiers dig a trench at night to escape from Fort Madison.*

Kingsley, and a group of soldiers were sent up the Mississippi to build a trading post and fort.

The spot on the west side of the Mississippi that Kingsley finally chose was near the mouth of the Des Moines River. Kingsley thought it was a good observation point. Soldiers could see far up and down the river. A nearby spring provided fresh water. There was enough white oak timber nearby for building the **stockade** (the fence around the fort). Kingsley did not realize that a fort built under a high ridge would be difficult to

defend.

The Sauk and Mesquakie tribes who lived in the area had traded furs and lead (from lead mines upriver) with British and Spanish traders. But they were not happy to see American soldiers building a fort because that meant the soldiers would be there permanently. And when the trading post and fort (named Fort Madison) were finished, the Indians were not pleased with the trading goods offered by Johnson. The trade goods were cheaply made and broke easily. The

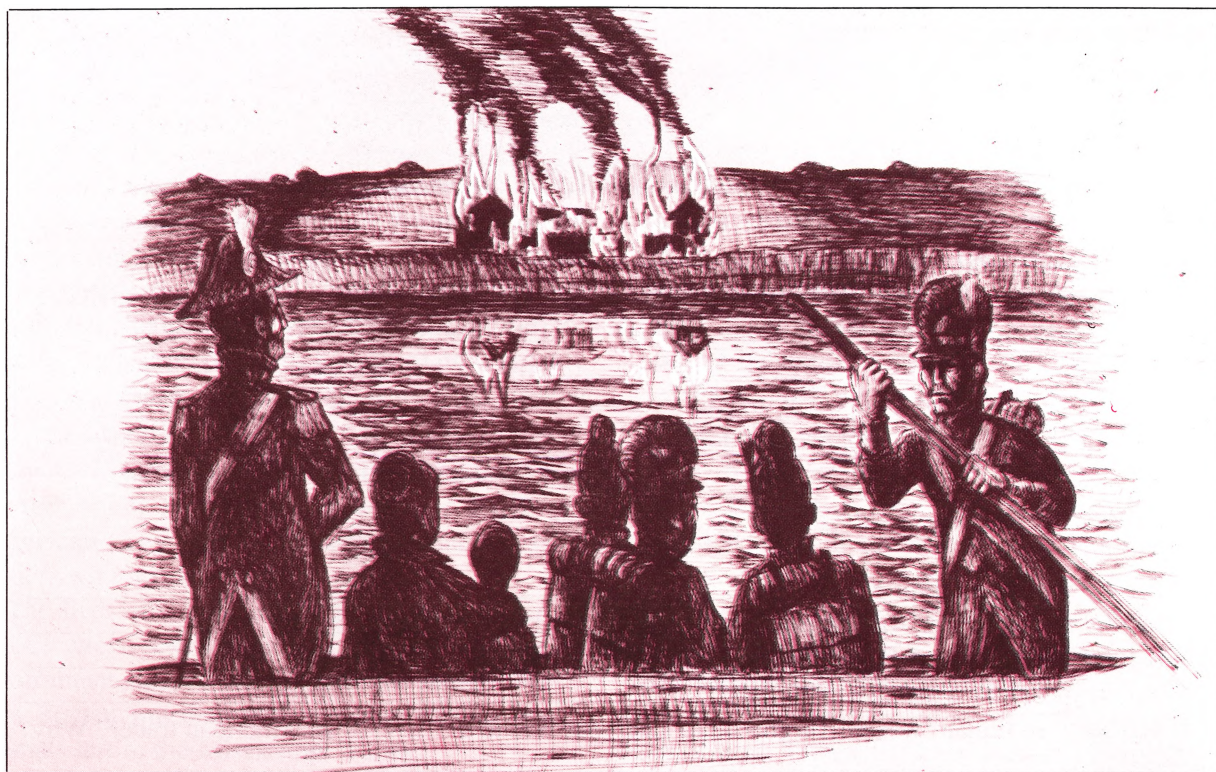
British traders offered much better items. Encouraged by the British, the tribes did not trust the Americans at Fort Madison.

In the following years, distrust turned to tension. Several small fights occurred between the soldiers and the Indians. Meanwhile, Great Britain and the United States were edging towards war over control of the western lands and rights at sea. In 1812 war erupted. In 1813, Sauk tribes loyal to the British attacked Fort Madison. From the nearby ridge, the Sauk laid seige to the fort for several weeks. Because the fort had been built

below the ridge, soldiers could not even walk from one blockhouse to another without being seen and attacked. Supplies were running low.

The fort commander sent for help from troops in St. Louis. But no help arrived. Finally, the soldiers dug a secret trench from the fort to the Mississippi. One night they crept out of the fort to their boats. As the soldiers left, they set fire to the fort so that nothing would be left that could be used by the British or the Sauk. The soldiers escaped to St. Louis, while Fort Madison burned to the ground. □

*After escaping from Fort Madison, soldiers in boats watch the fort go up in flames.*



# Thin Blankets and Broken Traps



courtesy OSA

*Indians carry bundles of fur toward a trading post at Fort Madison.*

**Forts played an important role in the fur trade. As a trading post, the fort protected Americans who were trading with Indians. Fort Madison provided such protection for Americans who were trading their goods for the furs trapped by the Indians.**

**About 1810, an unknown man who worked at Fort Madison wrote the following notes. Read the selection and then answer the questions below.**

At that time the Mississippi country was filled with British traders. . . . Their goods were of the very best quality, manufactured expressly for the Indian trade. Their rifles were just what the Indian required & the powder of the very best quality; whereas the goods sent to the American factors [traders] were of a very inferior quality. . . . At first the goods were laughed at, ridiculed by the Indians. The leading articles of trade, such as blankets, cloths, powder, rifles, &c., were

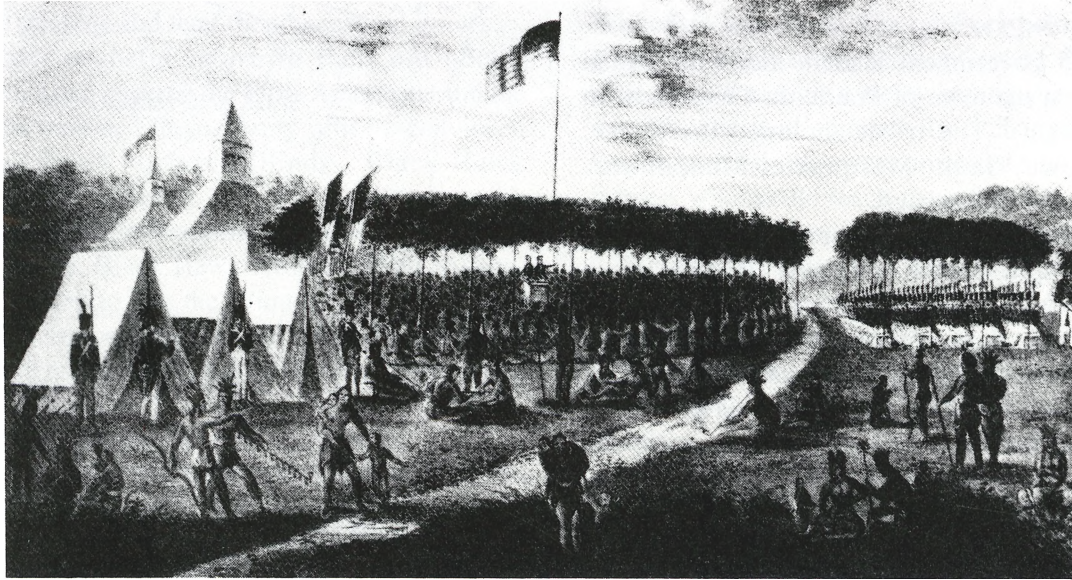
miserable. The blankets were small and thin, weighing but half the weight of an English trader's blanket; the cloths also were this and worse, so narrow that two yards would not make a *match-i-co-ta* for a squaw and the calico would not, from age, hold together. The traps were good for nothing; the springs would break but the government furnished a blacksmith . . . who mended their traps, axes, kettles, guns. . . .

**Questions** (*Answers on page 23.*)

1. What is "the Mississippi country"? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What did the British or Americans trade? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What did the Indians need traps for? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you think a *match-i-co-ta* was? \_\_\_\_\_
5. If you were an Indian, would you choose to take your furs to a British or an American trader? Why?  
\_\_\_\_\_



# Fort Atkinson: Keeping Peace



*This painting shows the 1825 meeting of Indian and government leaders at Prairie du Chien (now in Wisconsin).*

**O**N A BLUFF overlooking the Turkey River, the United States Army began to build a fort in the summer of 1840. The government had promised protection for Winnebago Indians who had just been moved to the area. This protection was Fort Atkinson. From the fort, troops could keep the Winnebagoes within their lands and protect them from other tribes and **Euro-American** (Americans with European ancestors) settlers who wanted to move in.

The lives of the Winnebago and other Indian tribes were changing. In the 1820s the government stopped trading with the Indians for furs. By that time there were not many fur-bearing animals left in the Mississippi Valley.

As the fur trade left the Mississippi Valley, pioneers were settling farms and towns. This land had been the home of many Indian tribes. Now it was being taken over by settlers, with ways of life very different from the Indians' ways.

Government leaders decided that Indians and settlers should be separated. The Mississippi River became a boundary. The settlers could live on the land east of the Mississippi. The many tribes would be moved west of the river, to new places chosen by the government. This was called the Indian removal policy.

The Indians had little choice but to accept this decision. They were forced to move to different kinds of land. Tribes that knew how to survive in

woodlands were sometimes moved to the prairies, where they had to learn new skills.

## Indians give up their lands

In 1825 government leaders met with Indian leaders at the town of Prairie du Chien (now in Wisconsin). The tribes included the Sioux, Chippewa, Sauk, Mesquakie, Menominee, Ioway, and Winnebago.

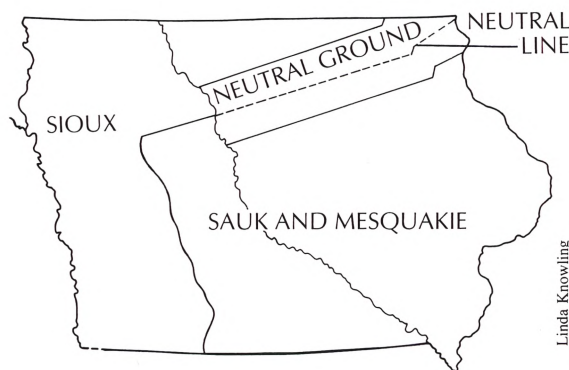
The Americans wanted the tribal leaders to sign treaties (agreements). In the treaty the tribe would **cede** (give up) their land, and the government would pay them **annuities** (uh-NEW-it-tees; money and supplies for many years).

The Indians did not think about land in the same way that Euro-Americans did. Indians did not believe that land could be owned by people. They believed it was something that was shared.

A Winnebago leader named Walking Turtle tried to explain this to the Americans. “I have a small tract of Country of which I wish to tell you. It is where I was born and now live,” he said. “The Lands I claim are mine and the nations [other Indian tribes] know it. [It] is not only claimed by us but by our brothers and Sacs & Foxes, Menominees, Iowas, Mahas & Sioux. . . . It would be difficult to divide it—It belongs as much to one as to the other.”

But government leaders drew boundary lines on the map. They showed each tribe where their new home would be across the Mississippi.

Two tribes called the Sauk and Mesquakie (who had long been friends) were to move across the river to the land we now call Iowa. That was where their enemy, the Sioux, lived. The Americans believed that they could draw a line on



*On the Iowa map above, draw the Neutral Line. It ran from the mouth of the Upper Iowa River (where it flows into the Mississippi) to the second fork of the Des Moines River. Then shade in the area labeled the Neutral Ground.*

the map called the **Neutral Line**. The Sioux would live north and west of the line. The Sauk and Mesquakie would live south of it.

On the land the boundary was invisible. It was not marked by natural features, like ridges or streams. The Neutral Line did not solve the problem of having the Sioux live so close to the Sauk and Mesquakie.

In 1830 the government made a new treaty. Each tribe gave up about 25 miles of land on each side of the Neutral Line. This made a long strip about 50 miles wide, called the **Neutral Ground**. No tribe was to enter this strip.

## The Black Hawk War

In other ways, too, the new boundaries and new homes were not working well. For example, the Sauk tribe wanted to return to their home village in Illinois. Life had been good there, with fertile

cornfields and rivers thick with fish.

In the spring of 1831 a Sauk chief named Black Hawk led some of his people back to the village to plant gardens and tend their ancestors' graves.

Their peaceful return to their old homes alarmed and angered the Euro-Americans and the troops stationed there. Army officers convinced Black Hawk to leave Illinois. Black Hawk reluctantly agreed.

But by the next spring, pressured by some of his people, Black Hawk returned to his village. He planned to join the Winnebagoes and British soldiers in forcing the settlers back east. Then he could reclaim land in the Wisconsin Territory and in Illinois.

The Winnebagoes and British did not join Black Hawk. American troops were ordered to chase Black Hawk's group back across the river. After a long chase and several small skirmishes, Black Hawk tried to escape across the Mississippi. He was captured and sent to jail.

This episode, called the Black Hawk War (though it was hardly a war), caused problems for the Winnebagoes. Now it was their turn to be forced to new homes. Euro-Americans had seen Wisconsin's fine land and were eager to own it.

### **Leaving their home lands**

The government decided that eventually the Winnebagoes would be moved far west, past the Missouri River. But in the meantime they had to be moved out of Wisconsin. The solution was to put them in the area called the Neutral Ground.

The Winnebagoes were to be moved right between enemy nations, the Sioux and the Sauk and Mesquakie. The Winnebagoes feared that the Sauks would attack them for not supporting Black

Hawk. They were not friends with the Sioux either.

The Winnebagoes did not want to leave their Wisconsin homeland. They did not believe they could live safely in the Neutral Ground. But they were forced to sign a treaty saying they would move by the next summer. In exchange for the land they ceded, they were promised a school, six farmers who would teach them farming skills, a blacksmith shop, and annuities for several years.

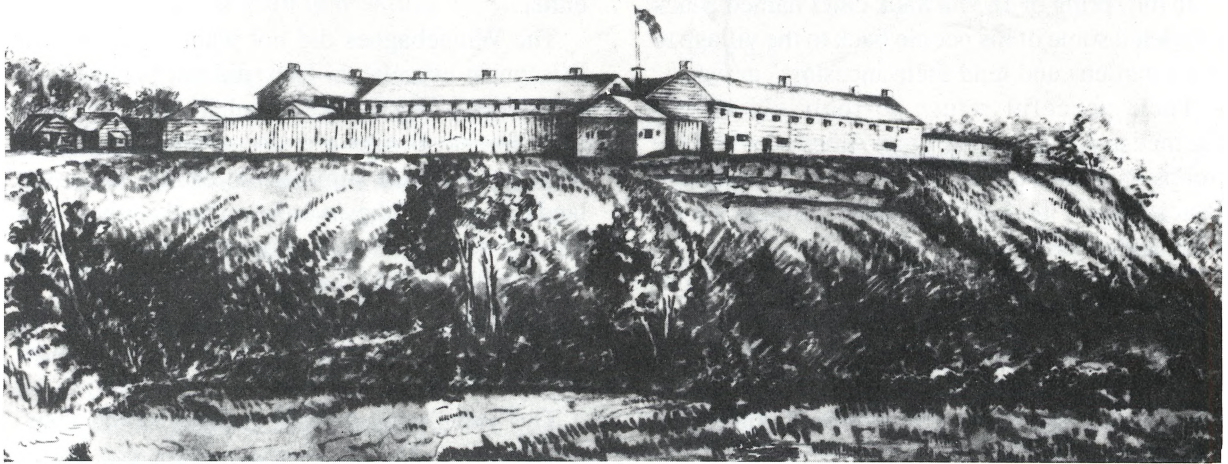
In 1840 the army was ordered to forcefully move the Winnebagos to their new homes in the Neutral Ground.

The move caused great sadness to the tribe. One group loaded up their belongings in a wagon and then walked off in a different direction. The army translator asked where they were going. "They said they were going to bid good bye to their fathers, mothers, and children," he later wrote. "The captain directed me to go with them, and watch them; and we found them on their knees, kissing the ground, and crying very loud, where their relatives were buried."

*A Winnebago woman works with an animal hide as it is stretched and dried.*



*This is what an artist imagined  
Fort Atkinson would look like.*



courtesy OSA

By boat and wagon the Winnebagoes arrived in the Neutral Ground. Now the army would build the protection they had promised—Fort Atkinson. Besides protection, Fort Atkinson would prevent settlers from trespassing on the Neutral Ground, as well as keep the Winnebagoes from returning to Wisconsin.

### **Building the fort**

The army's plan was to have the officers' quarters and the soldiers' barracks (where they slept and spent free time), the stables, and a temporary hospital completed by winter. But the building went slowly. When winter came, the work had to stop.

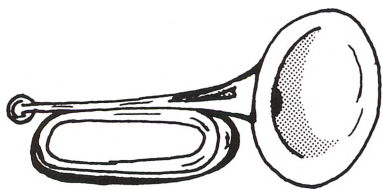
By the spring of 1841, word came that more soldiers were to arrive at Fort Atkinson. More barracks and stables would be needed. Yet the log barracks were still unfinished. "Every driving storm comes in between the Logs," Captain Isaac

Lynde complained, "my quarters are wet with a rain storm of last night."

In early summer of 1842, two years after the fort had been started, small improvements and frequent repairs still needed to be done. The officers believed the fort was too crowded and that more buildings were needed. But the government said no more money could be spent for building Fort Atkinson. The fort was meant to be only temporary. The Winnebagoes were to be moved farther west when a permanent location was found.

By fall of 1846, the Winnebagoes ceded all claims in the Neutral Ground. Within the next few years, they would be moved to Minnesota, South Dakota, and finally to a reservation in Nebraska. With the removal of the Winnebago, there was no reason for the fort to be used any longer. On February 24, 1849, troops marched out of the gates of Fort Atkinson for the last time. □

# Bugle Call



From sunrise to sunset, the life of a soldier on a military fort was filled with duties and chores. Imagine you are a soldier at Fort Atkinson. The commanding officers assign you jobs such as patrol or guard duty. Chores might include gardening, cutting firewood, caring for livestock, hauling water, or cooking. The sound of the bugle is your signal for a new activity.

Play this matching game to see what a soldier's typical day was like. The column on the left shows the time and name of each bugle call. The column on the right shows what activity each bugle call announces. But they are scrambled. Draw a line from the left column to its matching activity in the right column. (Answers on page 23.)

## TIME/BUGLE CALL

## ACTIVITY

5:45 a.m./Reveille (REV-i-lee)	Breakfast.
6:00 a.m./Stable call	It is late now. You must stay in your barracks until reveille announces the next morning.
6:30 a.m./Roll call	Daybreak. Time to get out of bed. You get your bunk and barracks in order.
6:40 a.m./Peas-upon-a-trencher	In the evening, you assemble on the parade ground to hear the next day's orders.
7:15 a.m./Surgeon's call	If you're sick, your sergeant will help you to the fort hospital.
7:30 a.m./Troop	Time to head to the stables to water and feed the horses, oxen, and mules. This happens three times each day.
Noon/Roast beef	Noon or evening meal. It probably won't be as good as roast beef. It could be bread and soup.
6:30 p.m./Retreat	You join the troops assembling on the parade ground. You'll find out your work assignments for the day.
9:45 p.m./Tattoo	Every soldier's name is called. This is a way to check that no soldier has deserted. This call happens five times a day.

Artwork by Linda Knowing

# Choices

Pretend that you are a young person in the early nineteenth century. Would you choose to be a soldier? The soldier's life on a military fort was different from today. Historians have studied the lives of American soldiers in the 1800s and what kinds of choices they had. (Discussion Questions on page 23.)

## 1. Would you decide to enlist in (join) the army?

Based on what historians have discovered, here are the reasons you might have wanted to join:



Do you dream of the excitement and adventure of a frontier soldier?



Do you need a job? Many other jobs have long hours and low pay. Perhaps the army would be better.



Are you poor? In the army you'll get clothes, food, a place to sleep, and a **pension** (money for when you grow old).



Are you in trouble with the law in your community? Enlisting is a way to leave your community quickly.

## 2. Would you be accepted?



Are you too young?



Are you too old?



Are you too short?



Are you smart enough?



Are you married? (Only officers are allowed to have wives.)



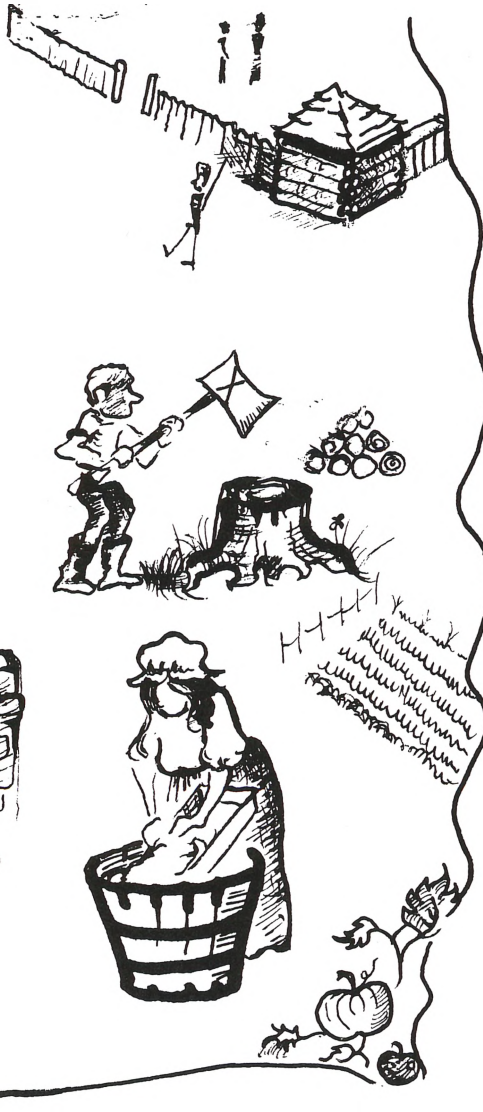
Are you a woman? (Only men can join the army.)

Out of every five men who wanted to enlist, four were not allowed to join the army because of those reasons. Wives of low-ranking officers could be laundresses.

### 3. What would you do in the army?

It depends on the skills you already have. At Fort Atkinson, you might have done these jobs:

- Baking
- Blacksmithing
- Building
- Chopping wood
- Cleaning the kitchen
- Gardening
- Laundering
- Patrolling
- Plastering
- Playing the bugle
- Repairing shoes
- Standing guard
- Taking care of horses



### 4. Would you stay in the army all five years of your enlistment?

Of every four men accepted by the army:

One deserted.



One was sent home for serious illness or injury.



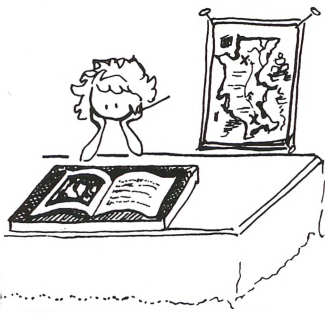
One died.



One completed his five years.






Artwork by Jenny Wren



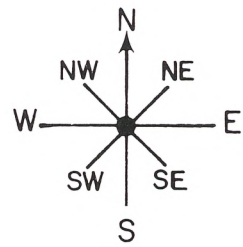
# Help Wild Rosie Finish This Map

You are an army lieutenant in 1834. You have just been sent to Fort Strong to finish an official map started by Lieutenant Marcus Brownlee. (Last winter Lieutenant Brownlee died of pneumonia.) All you can find in his quarters are scattered notes and this half-finished map. Use the key, scale, compass rose, and the questions below to complete the map. (Answers on page 23.)

1. Fort Strong was built at the fork of two rivers: Mink River (flowing from the west) and Bright River (flowing from the north). Label the rivers on the map. On Bright River, draw a boat bringing supplies to the fort.
2. Find the straight-line distance (in yards and in meters) that the soldiers had to haul wood logs and firewood from the forest to the fort gate. (Measure from the dot in the forest.) \_\_\_\_\_
3. Is the stable on the north or south side of the stockade?
4. Find and label the two stone structures: the well and the **powder magazine**. (Guns and ammunition are stored in the powder magazine. It is built of stone to keep the contents cool and dry and to keep it from catching on fire and exploding.)
5. Soldiers and officers live in the long buildings inside the fort. Label the building on the west end "officers' quarters." Label the buildings divided into rooms "barracks" (for enlisted men). If each barracks room can hold 12 men, how many enlisted men can live at Fort Strong before more barracks must be built? \_\_\_\_\_
6. A **blockhouse** is a two-story tower from which guards keep watch. Are the blockhouses at Fort Strong on the northwest, northeast, southwest, or southeast corners of the stockade? \_\_\_\_\_
7. The **sutler** is the fort's storekeeper. At his store soldiers can buy things that are not provided by the army, such as pens, ink, paper, dishes, games, tobacco, and pipes. Find and label the sutler's store.
8. Outside the stockade, soldiers work in the stables, granary, blacksmith shop, bakehouse, garden, and carpenter shop. If a soldier led his horse from the stable to the blacksmith for new horseshoes, how many meters would he walk (from door to door)? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Garden vegetables are stored in the **root house**. Meat is kept cool in the **icehouse**. Why do you think the icehouse was built close to the river? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Draw and label other buildings that you think the fort needs. For example, a mess hall (dining room), hospital, a guardhouse (jail), more barracks.

KEY		SCALE	
FOREST 	BLOCKHOUSE 	0	60 yards
GATE 	SUTLER'S STORE 	30	30
STONE STRUCTURE 	RIVER 	60 meters	





GRANARY

STABLE

BLACK-SMITH

BAKE HOUSE

CARPENTER SHOP



PARADE GROUND

**FORT STRONG**

ROOT HOUSE

ICEHOUSE

# Good Times

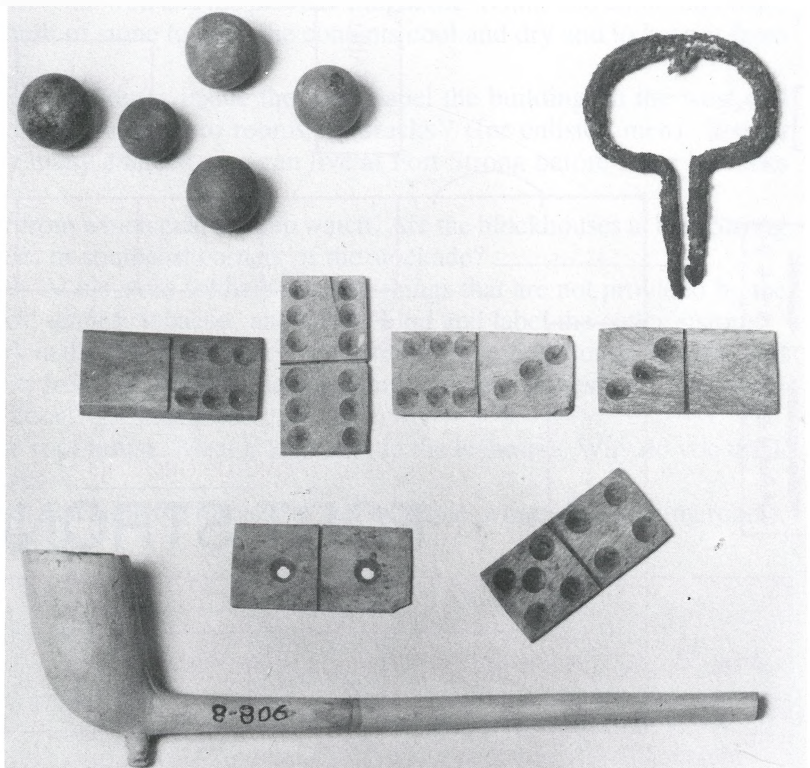


Life at a frontier fort left little time for entertainment. Yet, these **artifacts** (things made or used by humans) found at Fort Atkinson give us a glimpse of off-duty life at the fort more than 100 years ago.

Found at the site were children's clay marbles (top left), a jaw harp (to play songs on; top right), handmade bone dominoes (middle), and a pipe (bottom).

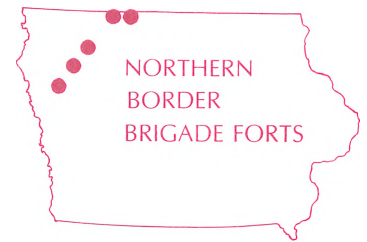
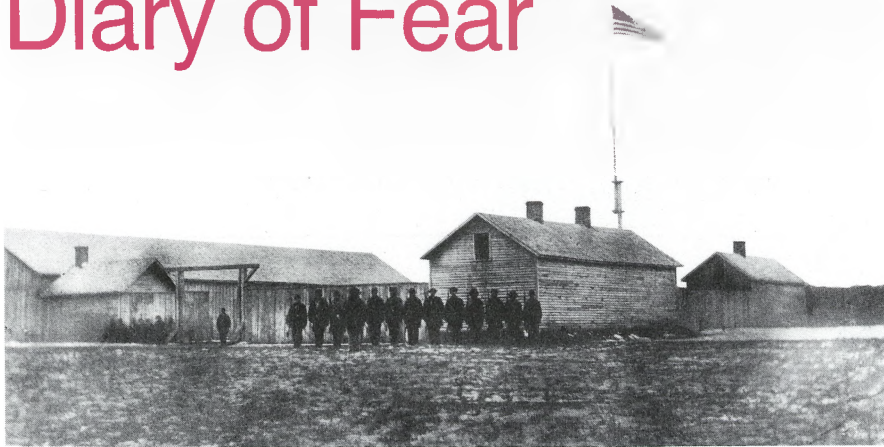
Officers' children probably played with the toy marbles. Soldiers could have sung songs around fires to a jaw harp, while others played games like dominoes or smoked pipes.

What might you have done to pass a long, lonely winter's night at a fort?



courtesy OSA

# Diary of Fear



Linda Knowling

*Built at Estherville, Fort Defiance served as part of the Northern Border Brigade.*

“ I AM fourteen years old today, 8 of these years have been passed in Cherokee, during that time we have run away from the Indians twice. The first time was the winter after we got here in 1858. It was reported that 400 Indians were coming down upon us. We fled to Ashton and while there learning that the report was false we run back again. The second time was little over a year ago now the last day of August 1862.”

Clara E. Brown of Cherokee, Iowa, wrote this passage in her diary on February 3, 1864. Like many people living in northwest Iowa in the 1860s, she heard rumors about Indian attacks. Rumors and panic spread quickly through the few frontier communities. Fearful for their safety, many families began to move back east to more populated towns in Iowa.

Stories about the 1862 Sioux Indian raid at New Ulm, Minnesota, were still told. Iowans talked about the large numbers of settlers who were killed. They were afraid it would happen here.

In the 1860s, many men were away in the South fighting in the Civil War. Who would protect the frontier from Indian attack? In 1862 Iowa's governor, Samuel J. Kirkwood, ordered a unit of men called the Northern Border Brigade to protect settlements in northwest Iowa. He believed it was important for settlers to remain in the area.

Five companies of about 50 men each were organized at Iowa Lake, Estherville, Peterson, Cherokee, and Correctionville.

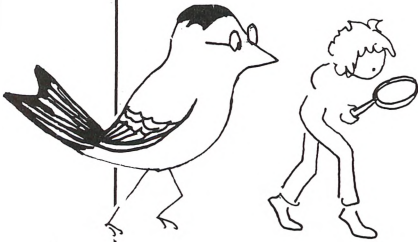
Their duties included building forts, scouting trips, and military drills. The men also hunted and fished in their free time.

By the end of 1863, it was clear that Indian attack in northwest Iowa was no more than a scare. The Northern Border Brigade was disbanded.

# History Mystery



courtesy OSA



## CLUES:

1. These pieces of china were found at Fort Atkinson.
2. Experts glued the broken pieces together.
3. The top row shows plain china.
4. Examples of fancier china are on the bottom row.
5. The fancy china was imported from England.

**What does this tell us about life at Fort Atkinson?** (Answer on page 23.)

# History-Makers



DEAR READERS: Be a history-maker! The *Goldfinch* is a magazine about the history of Iowa. Wild Rosie wants to know what you've discovered about Iowa's past. Has your class worked on any special history projects? Are you helping to save something that's old? Have

you found an old letter, diary, photograph, or object that tells something about the past? Send your stories, letters, or artwork to the *Goldfinch*, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240. If we can we'll print them in the History-Makers section.

by Aaron Corbin

**D**O YOU believe in time travel? Whether you do or you don't, there's more than one way to see the past.

My name is Aaron Corbin and I'm 13 years old. Last spring I organized an event called Living Heritage Days. It was the weekend of May 17 and 18, 1986, at Pioneer Village, near my home in Scott County, Iowa. I got the idea by visiting Living History Farms in Des Moines and other historical museums in the United States, where I saw how people had lived in the past. At those museums people wore clothes from different time periods and demonstrated crafts, customs, and other activities.

Pioneer Village is a wonderful place. It has two log cabins, a one-room schoolhouse, a church, a train depot and caboose, a barn filled with antique farm machinery, a blacksmith's shop, a carpenter's shop, and a general store. Most of the buildings have a local history and were moved to this site near Scott County Park. Pioneer Village is under the direction of the Scott County Conservation Board.

Pioneer Village is open to the public, but no one was ever there to

explain the history and show people what life was like when the buildings were being used. So when Governor Terry E. Branstad announced Iowa Homecoming '86, I thought it might be a good idea to plan something for Pioneer Village. I called the County Conservation Board. At the next board meeting, they set a date for the event.

Then I called several people to see if they wanted to be involved. For example, I called the spinners and weavers guild, a quilting club, and a Civil War reenactment unit. (The people in the unit act out Civil War battles.) They all agreed to demonstrate their skills. Almost everybody I called thought it was a good idea and was willing to spend a weekend at Pioneer Village.

The next step was setting up the schedule. After the schedule was arranged I sent letters to everyone. The week before Living Heritage Days, I called everybody just to make sure no one had forgotten.

One interesting part of the project was researching information about the past. I got games and recipes and other information from the *Foxfire* books, historical magazines, like the *Goldfinch*, and the Explorations

in Iowa History Project. I copied some of the information and gave it to the volunteers who would help that weekend.

There were other things I needed that I couldn't afford, so I asked the County Conservation Board to take care of a concession stand so visitors could buy something to eat. We also needed portable restrooms, a tent for

*Aaron Corbin shows how to play a game with the hoop and wheel at the Living Heritage Days.*



courtesy North Scott Press

*Jennifer Corbin, Aaron's sister, demonstrates baking in this beehive brick oven.*



*At the Living Heritage Days, a crowd watches as Aaron shows off his frogs' jumping abilities.*

some of the demonstrations, a loud speaker system, and help with publicity.

I did run into a few problems. One was parking. There was not enough parking at Pioneer Village so I went to my school superintendent, Dr. Otto, and asked if the school would supply a bus and driver to shuttle people back and forth from Scott County Park to Pioneer Village. He thought about it and called me one week later to tell me it had been arranged.

The morning of May 17, I woke up early and went over to Pioneer Village to get things ready. I had asked my Boy Scout Troop #203 to help with a lot of things during the weekend. We helped the reenactors set up their equipment. I also announced when demonstrations were being held for the public.

There were demonstrations that

lasted all day, like a teacher from the 1880s instructing in the schoolhouse and a person making lye soap, braiding rugs, and baking in a beehive oven in a pioneer house. The clerk who ran the general store already knew a lot about general stores because his grandfather started one in Scott County back in the 1880s. I had arranged for someone to be an agent at the train depot. A retired farmer talked with people who came into the barn filled with antique farm machinery. The men in the blacksmith shop were really blacksmiths. In fact, one of them had a grandfather who started a blacksmith shop around the turn of the century in what is now the town of Bettendorf.

Some performances were given only once. The circuit rider preacher gave a church service on Sunday morning. A group called The

Putnam Players told about different women who had settled in Scott County and expressed these settlers' different ethnic views. A woman who collects old clothes planned a fashion show that included clothes and history from the 1890s to the 1940s. Girls from our community and 4-H club were models in the fashion show. A riverboat captain gave a presentation about life on the Mississippi before the twentieth century.

There were also demonstrations of a cider press and rope making. Children who attended could join in the pioneer children's games.

I wanted to make Living Heritage Days an annual event, but I am moving away. I feel pretty good though because the County Conservation Board has appointed a permanent director and they plan to have the event every year! □



## Pass It On

Pass this page on to someone who might share your interest in Iowa history. A teacher or parent, a grandparent or friend? These projects would be fun to do together.

### What Happened to Iowa's Forts?

Some forts like Fort Atkinson have been rebuilt or restored as museums. Others were gradually torn down for their lumber. Some developed into towns such as Ft. Dodge and Ft. Madison. Around the nation, these cities began as forts or trading posts: Detroit, Michigan; Ft. Worth, Texas; and St. Louis, Missouri. Find out what other cities began as forts and trading posts. Look up city histories in an almanac.

### Talking About Fort Life

“Choices” explores the typical options faced by the nineteenth-century soldier on the frontier. Discuss these questions:

1. Why did men want to join the army? How might these reasons compare with reasons for enlisting in military service today?
2. Why were most men not allowed to enlist in the army?
3. Could women enlist in the army? How were they allowed into forts?
4. What types of jobs would you have liked to do on a fort?
5. Do you think life on the fort was adventurous or boring? How is fort life shown in movies and television?

### Visit a Fort!

You can visit the annual Fort Atkinson Rendezvous in September. The fort is brought back to life with 1840-period craft demonstrations and military drillings. Also tour Fort Snelling in St. Paul, Minnesota, to see a vivid portrayal of fort life.

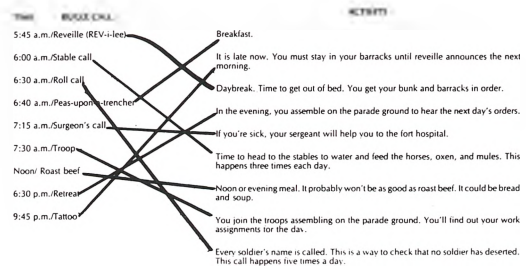
### Goldfinch Oldfinches

Read more about this time in Iowa history in earlier *Goldfinch* issues: “The Fur Trade” and “Indians in Iowa” (\$1.50 each, plus \$1 for postage. Address on page 2).

## Answers

**Trading, page 8:** 1. Land surrounding the Mississippi River. 2. Blankets, cloth, powder, rifles, traps. 3. To trap fur-bearing animals. 4. Probably some type of dress, blouse, or skirt. 5. British trader because he would have better quality goods.

### Bugle call, page 13:



**Finish the map, page 16:** 2. 75 yards or 80 meters. 3. The stable is north of the stockade. 5. 84 soldiers (12 soldiers  $\times$  7 rooms). 6. Southwest and northeast. 8. 60 meters. 9. Blocks of ice are cut from the frozen river in the winter. If the icehouse is nearby, the heavy blocks won't have to be carried so far.

**History Mystery, page 23:** One thing that these pieces of china tell us is that there were different types of lifestyles at Fort Atkinson. Officers and their families used expensive, imported china, while privates used simple, plain dishes. Also, the fact that people imported china tells us that not everything was produced at the fort.

“It was fun to sell hats and I had very good luck at it. . . . I tried them on myself to show them off, and usually made a sale.”

(Elizabeth Wright Heller,  
in the *Palimpsest*,  
volume 54, pages 19-20)

After the Civil War, times began to change in America. Women entered new job markets. Rural homemakers and farmers used new inventions and ideas to run their homes and farms. In the next issue of the *Goldfinch* read about women who worked in Iowa before 1900.

***Welcome to the Goldfinch! We're really looking forward to the 1986-87 year! We'll be covering Iowa's forts, working women, the U.S. Constitution and Iowa, and regionalism: arts and literature.***

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