The PALIMPSEST

Burning of fur trade factory at Fort Madison

Old Fort Madison — 1808-1813

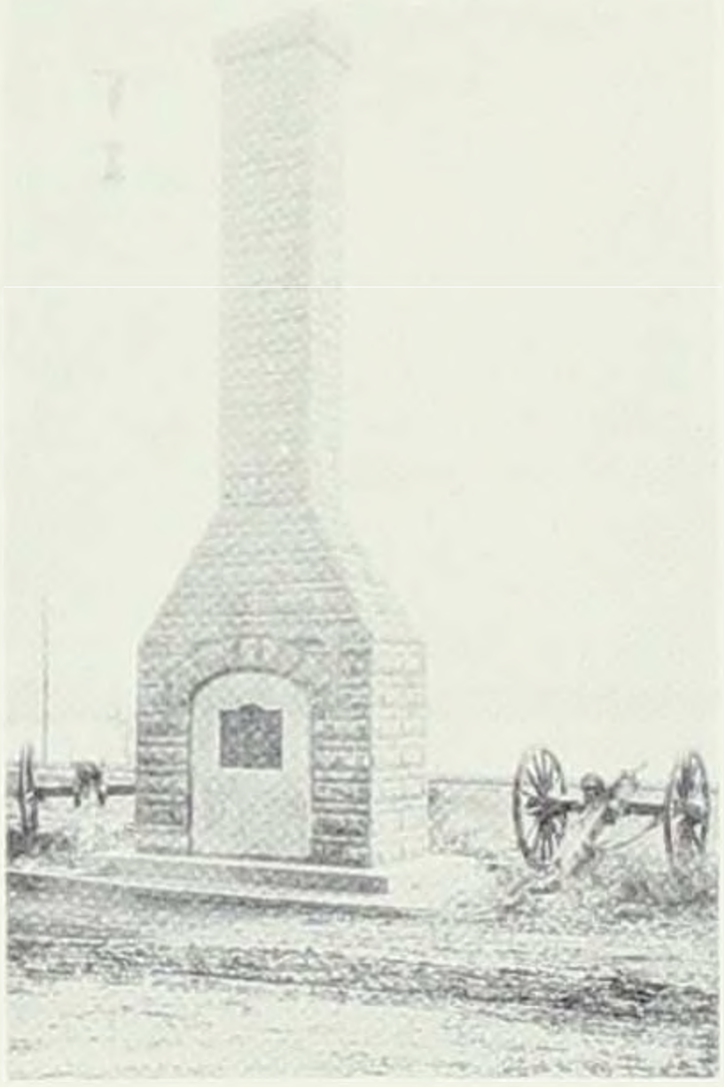
Published Monthly by

The State Historical Society of Iowa

Iowa City, Iowa

JANUARY, 1966

SPECIAL EDITION — FIFTY CENTS



MEMORIAL LONE CHIMNEY

Close-up of the "lone chimney" and two cannons before its removal "85 feet east and 35 feet south from the present location." It originally stood at the intersection of Broadway (4th) and Front (Avenue H). Note the unpaved street of yesteryear. Photo courtesy Jean Espy Chapter, D.A.R., with excerpts from Minute Book of the D.A.R. chapter by Mrs. Erma K. Campbell.

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Views of Fort Madison by Wm. E. L. Bunn. (*Front*) Burning of fur trading factory during siege of 1812. (*Inside back*) Artist's interpretation of the Johnson sketch. (*Back*) Indian ruse foiled, April 10, 1809.

Author

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THE PALIMPSEST is published monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa in Iowa City, William J. Petersen, Editor. It is printed in Iowa City and distributed free to Society members, depositories, and exchanges. This is the January, 1966, issue and is Number 1 of Volume 47. Second class postage paid at Iowa City, Iowa.

PRICE — Included in Membership. Regular issues, 25¢; Special—50¢

MEMBERSHIP — By application. Annual Dues $3.00

ADDRESS — The State Historical Society, Iowa City, Iowa 52240

THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XLVII ISSUED IN JANUARY 1966 NO. 1

Fulfilling the Treaty

To the traders who poled their keelboats up the Mississippi, it was a vast and lonely river. It was lonely in the channel because the glassy spread of olive-green water reached out hundreds of yards on either side. It was lonely close to shore (where the morning fogs combed through the willow tops and the crows sang out hoarse jibes at the boat crews) for it was useless to look for a white man. In all the weeks it took a crew to cordelle, warp, pole, row, and sail a boat from St. Louis to Prairie du Chien, there were but a few places where voyagers might expect a clearing, a light, and a halloo from the shore.

One of these places, after the fall of 1808, was Fort Madison. Every boatman knew when to look for it; coming upstream you passed the mouth of the Des Moines, and then you felt you were in Fort Madison country — but there still was a dangerous stretch of rapids ahead that would keep the crew busy for a day. Past the head of the rapids the water was placid and the river began

to make a great turn to the northeast. On the left-hand shore you saw the smoke of many chimneys and the gleam of peeled logs as the new stockade came into view. If it was a time when the Sauks, Foxes, and Winnebagoes were surly and unpredictable, you were delighted to hear the oaken gates come thudding shut behind you as you entered the safety and fellowship of the fort: the safety of log walls, the fellowship of sixty to eighty men of the First Infantry Regiment, U. S. Army.

For five years, from 1808 to 1813, Fort Madison stood at the Mississippi's edge guarding the frontier. Its blue-coated soldiers paraded, scouted, mounted guard, and lined up at the commissary window twice a day for their ration of whisky. Its government trader dealt across the counter with the Indians, exchanging fabrics, weapons, and baubles for the furs and lead brought in by the tribes. Then history took a giant step and left Fort Madison far behind. When the ashes of the burned stockade had cooled, men began to forget it. Facts died, legends grew. So little has been known of the fort in modern times that the names of most of the soldiers who lived and died there have gone unspoken for a century and a half.

The purpose of this story is to recall the facts and record the names.

One day in the late summer of 1804, near the mouth of the Quivre River fifty miles above St.

Louis, two white settlers were killed by a small party of Sauk warriors. While such raids were not uncommon on the frontier, this particular incident proved a turning point in Mississippi Valley history. It led to a treaty, to long years of unrest among the Indians of the Upper Mississippi Valley, and to the Black Hawk War a generation later.

When word of the killings reached the Sauk and Fox villages, which were then at the mouth of the Des Moines, two chiefs went down to St. Louis to make amends. Major James Bruff, military commandant of Upper Louisiana, immediately sent them back to bring down the men who had actually committed the murders. They were also instructed to bring along some of the chiefs and important men of the two tribes. William Henry Harrison, governor of Indiana Territory, was coming to St. Louis in October to organize the District of Louisiana. One of the vexing things that had been on Harrison's mind for several years was the problem of getting the Sauks and Foxes to sign a treaty with the United States, but he had never succeeded in getting those Indians around a council fire. Now, with a delegation due to come down with hostages, he would have his chance.

Until 1804 the Sauk and Fox Indians had dealt but little with the Americans. Although they lived in United States territory at the time of the Louisiana Purchase, the Indians considered themselves

political allies of the Spanish governor at St. Louis, and the commercial partners of the British fur traders from Canada. The persuasive British had told them what rascals the Americans were.

The Sauks and Foxes lived together in a loose confederation and claimed as their own a substantial part of what is now northern Illinois and southwestern Wisconsin. The land they occupied was vital to the United States because it lay along the Mississippi, a natural boundary separating the nation from European interests in the New World. President Thomas Jefferson was eager to extinguish the Indian title to all lands lying on the eastern shore of the river, and Governor Harrison was his special appointee for the accomplishment of this mission.

Although the Louisiana Purchase in 1803 had quieted American fears about French expansion, there remained the threat of the British in Canada, who tried hard to retain the good will of the Indians as they brought trade down the river and spoke to the chiefs of disaffection and revolt. A clear title to the eastern shore would help President Jefferson to control the activities of these British agents.

Of course the Indians knew nothing of the plan to buy their lands. As far as they knew, the two Fox and three Sauk chiefs who were taking a hostage to St. Louis had no other mission but to counsel with the Americans about the murders.

Had the Indian tribes expected to sell land, they would have sent a large delegation containing some of their shrewdest chiefs and most eloquent orators — Chief White Skin of the Sauks, for example, or Black Thunder of the Foxes. Instead they sent five mediocre chiefs, and they even failed to produce more than one of the murderers.

A government clerk made a cross after each chief's name on the treaty, while the chief touched the feathery end of the goose quill. When the ceremony of November 3, 1804, was over, the Indians had signed away fifteen million acres of land to the Americans. The land was to remain in the Indians' hands until the government had sold it, and they were to get a thousand dollars a year in annuities, plus the services of a trader, a blacksmith, and a man to teach them farming. Eventually they were to vacate the east side of the river.

Some of the Indians later claimed they were intoxicated at the treaty council and did not know what they were doing. Perhaps they were right. One of them, Quashquame, was strongly inclined to drink, and American treaty makers had long before learned what wonders of diplomacy could be wrought with a keg or two of Monongahela whisky.

The Sauk prisoner who had been jailed for the murders on the Quivre lay in a St. Louis guardhouse all winter and into the spring. Mail traveled

slowly, and no one in St. Louis knew that President Jefferson had pardoned the prisoner in February. Before the pardon could arrive, the forlorn warrior could endure his confinement no longer. He broke away and was shot by a sentinel as he fled. His body was later found outside the town.

It seemed that relations between the Indians and the United States were beginning badly, at least on the frontier. Back in Washington the Secretary of War was planning to carry out those provisions of the treaty that concerned the welfare of the Indians. By April a site was being discussed for the factory (trading house) called for by the treaty. But when it was finally built, at Fort Belle Fontaine on the south bank of the Missouri, four miles above the confluence of that river with the Mississippi, the location was too remote for the convenience of the tribes. They continued to deal with the British and with private American traders.

Next, the government turned to the matter of teaching agriculture to the Sauks and Foxes. To the head of the Des Moines Rapids in the summer of 1805 came the new agricultural agent, with a mare, a horse, and a wagonload of farming tools. He chose a location that was later to become the Nauvoo of the Mormons on the east bank of the river; across from him, on the west bank where Montrose, Iowa, now stands, was Quashquame's village of Sauks.

The agent was William Ewing, "a sober, hon-

est, faithful young man" whom Secretary of War Henry Dearborn had found in Pennsylvania. Agreeing to take the post for $400 a year, he had left the East in March with a letter from Dearborn to Harrison in his pocket. The letter described him as "well acquainted with the practical part of common farming in Pennsylvania." Harrison was instructed to supply him with agricultural tools and send him off to the Sauk and Fox country. The person chosen to be Ewing's interpreter was a Creole trader named Louis Tesson Honoré, who had lived at the head of the Rapids, west of the river, for several years.

William Ewing had little success at his new post. His Indians already were fair farmers — the women did the field work — and they were prejudiced against the Americans. Even worse, Ewing was a grafter and a spendthrift in the eyes of his superiors in St. Louis. He was constantly sending down for costly shipments of supplies; he spent government funds on trinkets for the Indian women; he traded whisky to the braves in exchange for muskets, then sold the muskets back at a high price.

During Ewing's stay at the Rapids, a new supervisor came into the picture who did not appreciate such foolishness. He was William Clark, back from his famous journey with Meriwether Lewis and now hard at work as Superintendent of Indian Affairs in St. Louis. (His traveling com-

panion, Lewis, was the new governor of the Territory.) Clark lost no time in having William Ewing discharged.

The first attempt to "civilize" the Sauk and Fox people was a failure. Later, under more competent supervision, the farming experiment would make more progress; but now the government was ready to try something else.

The factory at Fort Belle Fontaine was doing little business now because of its remoteness from northern tribes. At the same time the area around St. Louis was settling rapidly and Indian trading parties posed a threat to white residents.

In the fall of 1805, when General James Wilkinson, military commandant at St. Louis, had mentioned the possibility of establishing a post at the mouth of the Des Moines, the Secretary of War had advised against it "until the subject shall have been more fully considered." But by next April the Secretary was asking the factor or trader at Belle Fontaine "to make such inquiries, as circumstances will permit, concerning the propriety of establishing a Branch of the St. Louis Factory at the rapids of the Mississippi. . . ."

Here the matter lay until the fall of 1807, when Frederick Bates, acting governor of the Territory in the absence of Lewis, proposed to send a supply of trade goods up to the Rapids for the benefit of the Indians. The key to the plan was old Colonel Thomas Hunt, in command of the mili-

tary garrison at Fort Belle Fontaine. When he refused to provide soldiers to escort the factory goods, Bates abandoned the plan; but he did send Indian agent Nicholas Boilvin up to spend the winter at the Rapids with a small supply of goods.

The government also hired a blacksmith to repair the traps and muskets of the Sauks and Foxes. He was Alexander Willard, formerly a soldier on the Lewis and Clark expedition, who agreed to work for $30 a month plus one and a half rations a day. Governor Lewis promised him tools, a shop and coal house, a comfortable cabin, the free transportation of his baggage to the Rapids, and finally an assistant or striker. Willard had already assured himself a shaky place in history, on the Lewis and Clark expedition, by sleeping on watch (for which he had been flogged) and by losing both his rifle and tomahawk on the same day. It may be assumed that he was not Lewis' first choice for the job at the Rapids; but not many men wanted to go up into dangerous Indian country when they could find work in St. Louis.

At last the government decided to erect a factory at the mouth of the Des Moines. In the spring of 1808 the Belle Fontaine factory was abandoned and the factor was instructed to divide the goods on hand between two smaller factories, one to be located on the Missouri in the Osage country, the other near the mouth of the Des Moines.

The next step was to buy land for the factory

and for the fort that was to guard it. At a council in St. Louis in midsummer, Governor Lewis obtained three square miles from the Sauks, Foxes, and Ioways, on the west side of the river at the head of the Rapids.

It was agreed that Colonel Hunt would command the expedition going up the Mississippi. (Another group, scheduled to build Fort Osage on the Missouri, would be led by William Clark.) The Colonel's orderly book began to carry instructions for the company of men who were preparing to go with him; there were boats to caulk, arms to repair, and supplies to pack. The company was mustered under the name of Captain Ninian Pinkney, but Pinkney was away on detached duty in the East, so his company was to be taken by First Lieutenant Alpha Kingsley. Colonel Hunt would be in over-all charge of the expedition, but when the fort was well begun he would return to St. Louis, leaving Alpha Kingsley in charge of the new post.

Six days before the expedition could move, the old colonel suddenly grew ill and died. Lieutenant Kingsley draped the hilt of his sword and put on a black armband to mourn the death of his superior. He was now in full command of the expedition, and he had never seen the Rapids, never commanded a post. Also, he had never built a fort.

A Fort is Built

The line of boats that Kingsley led down the Missouri and into the mile-wide Mississippi was the largest convoy the Americans had yet sent into the upper country. There were at least four big keelboats, perhaps as many as six, and the task of getting them to the mouth of the Des Moines River took more than two weeks. So many of Kingsley's soldiers were ill, probably of malaria, that there were barely enough hands to navigate the boats.

About September 11, 1808, the convoy reached the Des Moines, at a time when passenger pigeons would have been surging down from the north and flights of white pelicans would be passing in the western sky — alternately flapping and gliding across the scarlet flare of sunset. On the east the bluffs came to the edge of the Mississippi, but on the west, where the Des Moines came in, there was bottomland with sycamore, cottonwood, and walnut trees. The main channel ran along the west side, and the two islands at the mouth of the Des Moines made that little river seem to have three openings.

Army men in Washington were never quite sure of the topography of the upper Mississippi; some-

times they spoke of the Des Moines Rapids as the factory site, and sometimes they placed it at "the mouth of the Des Moines." The final instructions from the Secretary of War had been specific: build a post at the mouth of the Des Moines. But Kingsley feared the land near the mouth was subject to flooding, and he could find no supply of clean spring water for his men, so he moved on upstream across the twelve-mile stretch of rapids to the land that Governor Lewis had bought from the Indians. No luck here, either, for the only spot fit for a garrison was half a mile from the river and there were not enough big white oaks to make a stockade.

On up the river they went, scanning the western shore. Kingsley probably knew nothing of the recommendations that Zebulon Pike had made after a reconnaissance in 1805. Pike had suggested the head of the Rapids as a likely location for a trading house — considered solely on the basis of convenience for the Indians — and had picked a high elevation farther upstream, at what is now Burlington, Iowa, for a military post. Pike had not supposed that factory and fort would be combined.

Kingsley stopped short of Pike's second site and chose a place on the north shore, some ten miles above the Rapids, and in choosing it he blundered. The location could never be defended; behind it ran a ridge where the Indians could take cover while firing down on the garrison, and along

the west was a ravine where war parties could infiltrate without being seen. Few military men who later saw the location failed to comment on its dismal shortcomings.

Kingsley liked it. "This situation is high," he wrote the Secretary of War, "commands an extensive view of the river and the adjacent country — also an excellent spring of water — and I believe there is no place on the river which will prove more healthy, and none more advantageous to the Indian trade."

Because he had passed up the land bought by Governor Lewis, he would need to ask the Indians for permission to shift the site. Before he unloaded his boats he sent for the chiefs and important men of the Sauks, Foxes, Ioways, and Sioux of the Des Moines, and held a council. The Indians agreed upon the new site, took the $300 in merchandise that Lewis had offered them for the earlier location, and went away satisfied. Then Kingsley began work on the establishment that, until the following spring, he would call Fort Bellevue.

No one pretended that Alpha Kingsley was the ideal man to supervise the building of a fort; he was merely a man doing a job that no one else was on hand to do. He was a Vermont man who had been appointed ensign in 1803, second lieutenant in 1805, and first lieutenant in 1808. He would never make much of a name for himself,

though he would become the friend of Sam Houston and Andrew Jackson, and Houston would later describe him as "a very amiable man, and a good member of the Church."

The only junior officer on the expedition was Second Lieutentant Nathaniel Pryor, who had some of the intrepidity that Kingsley lacked. Pryor had been the first man to volunteer for the Lewis and Clark expedition and one of the four sergeants who had served in that group. He had won an army commission for his excellent work with Lewis and Clark. But he was doomed to a short, unhappy life spent mostly among the Osage Indians, after a brief career in the Army.

Two civilians had come with Kingsley. One was John Johnson, the factor, and the other was Nicholas Boilvin, the Indian agent. Johnson was a Maryland man who was now starting a career that would keep him among the Indians for many years, then take him back to civilization and make him, for a time, the mayor of St. Louis. Boilvin, a French Canadian, would see long years of service among the Indians and would one day serve as a Justice of the Peace in Prairie du Chien. His present assignment was to help Johnson with the factory and to look after the temporarily defunct farm and blacksmith shop at the Rapids. He had with him the goods for the regular annuity payment to the Sauks and Foxes, provided for in the treaty of 1804.

The winter of 1808-1809 was the roughest the Valley had seen in many a year. An early freeze caught the settlers unprepared; boats were locked tight in the channel as far downstream as the mouth of the Ohio. During this bad weather the men of Fort Bellevue lived in temporary huts while they worked on the permanent buildings. Work parties were cutting fourteen-foot logs of oak, twelve to fourteen inches in diameter, stripping off the bark and hewing the great timbers flat on two sides. It was not easy to find enough logs that met specifications, and some were far from the building site. When snow fell, Kingsley hired sleds and oxen from trader Denis Julien to get the logs moved in. (Julien had settled just below Ewing's farm at the Rapids in 1805; he would supply laborers for the fort during the entire construction process, and would soon be freighting furs to St. Louis for John Johnson).

Frontier forts were quite standard in design. The pattern called for a palisade or stockade of upright logs about 120 feet square, with two-story blockhouses at each corner, twenty feet square. Kingsley decided to vary slightly from this pattern and build a five-sided stockade with three blockhouses. At first he thought he would put the factory inside the fort, but after looking over the tough, suspicious Sauks and Foxes he moved the location to a safer position west of the garrison.

By the spring of 1809 the Indians had decided they disliked the look of things around the fort. They had agreed to a peaceful factory but the place looked more like a military installation. British traders such as Jacques Porlier and Edward Lagoterie, who had been wintering with the tribes at their hunting grounds down along the Wyaconda River, had been stirring up unrest. Now the Indians were about ready to come up the river and pass the fort on the way to their summer homes near the mouth of the Rock River. They knew the condition of the post, that it was still a vulnerable collection of huts surrounded by a temporary stockade of low and spindly pickets. The blockhouses were not completed. If any mischief were to be done, now was the time.

One of the unhappier Indians was Black Hawk. He was by no means a principal chief of the Sauks, and in these days he had little influence. Later, as a fiercely pro-British warrior and probably a "war chief" of the Sauks, he would lead a group against the Americans in the War of 1812. Still later, his stubborn will to resist the westward movement would bring on the tragic Black Hawk War of 1832. As of now he was merely one of the ringleaders of a band that wanted to get inside the stockade and kill the soldiers.

The Indian activity around the fort so alarmed Kingsley that in late March he sent Pryor and six soldiers down to St. Louis to alert Governor

Lewis and Superintendent Clark. Lewis issued a call for volunteer riflemen, and some of these Rangers and a detachment of regulars from Belle Fontaine set out by land and water to reinforce Fort Bellevue.

Early in April the entire population of the Sauk and Fox tribes appeared at the fort, swarming ashore on the opposite bank and leaving their hollow-log canoes heaped with rolls of loosely tied furs. After they camped, trading parties began to cross the river to barter with Johnson for their summer supplies. The peaceable Indians were in a hurry to reach their summer homes and put their fields in shape for corn planting. Perhaps they also were anxious to get their trading done before the trouble started.

It was hard to keep a secret in an Indian camp. The old men sat gabbling in the spring sun, the bitter young men met in council and murmured their awful plans to one another, and the women chattered all day long at their work. It is not surprising, then, that three separate warnings of an attack had already reached Kingsley. William Clark had sent word of possible trouble. Nicholas Jarrot, a merchant and trader, had stopped by the fort on April 8 with another warning. Finally a young Ioway brave had reportedly revealed, while trading was in progress, that the hour was near.

On April 10 a party of Sauks and Foxes came to the fort, led by Black Hawk and a chief named

Pashepaho. "*Bon jour*, Father," the chief may have said, using the traditional form of address for a white official. "My braves have finished their trading. They are happy to have made a good hunt and to have dealt well with the trader. Now they wish to come inside the stockade and do a dance for the white soldiers."

A hurried parley with the interpreter, then Kingsley shook his head. No dance, he said. If they wanted to dance they could go over to the factory and dance for John Johnson. A rumble of surprise and disappointment ran through the party of warriors. Apparently it had not occurred to them that Kingsley might refuse their suggestion. Uneasily, not quite sure what to do next, they began to crowd the gate of the stockade.

Kingsley had kept all his men inside today, under arms, and they stood ready with flintlock muskets loaded and primed. Just inside the gate, its muzzle trained directly at the Indians, was a cannon charged with grape shot. Beside it stood a soldier with a stick of flaming port-fire in his hand, ready to touch the fuse.

The Indians backed down. Pashepaho waved them away, and as they turned in retreat they raised war clubs and sent forth a great shout of defiance and frustration. "In twenty minutes," said an eye witness, "not an Indian was to be seen on the north side of the river."

Next day a party of chiefs that included Quash-

quame came over to apologize. It was hard to keep the belligerent young men under control, they said, and they were thankful to know that "the smoke had disappeared." Kingsley had the cannon, a six-pounder, wheeled out to the river's edge and fired. After a terrific boom, the balls of grape came spattering down into the water. The chiefs, said one report, "put their hands to their mouths with an exclamation that the shot would have killed half of them."

The thwarted coup caused Kingsley to double his efforts. He burned fires about the fort to conceal the nighttime movements of the men, and worked long hours to complete the stockade. The big logs went up fast now, and on the evening of April 14 the men tamped the earth around the final section, hung the gate and barred it, and were secure.

In the letter he wrote to Washington a few days later, Kingsley called his post Fort Madison for the first time. It was an obvious choice for a name, considering the fact that James Madison was now the President — so obvious that it had already been given to another post on the Arkansas River fifty miles above the Mississippi. There was still another Fort Madison in Annapolis harbor on the East Coast. Because of this duplication in names, there would always be some confusion in the records.

A detachment of regulars reached the fort after

the excitement was over, stayed a few days, then started home. Downstream they met the militiamen under Captain Bernard Pratte, a St. Louis merchant, bound for the fort in keelboats. Pratte's boats were laden with supplies for Kingsley and it was necessary for them to finish the trip, but the volunteers were also soon hurrying back home.

The alarm was over. The Mississippi Valley settlers heaved a sigh, and Meriwether Lewis dismissed his Rangers.

Cast of Characters

Of the four men who led the expedition that established Fort Madison, Nicholas Boilvin was the first to leave the new post. In October he was ordered on up the river to become the Indian Agent at Prairie du Chien. Alpha Kingsley left on furlough in September, 1809, and was never sent back. Nathaniel Pryor resigned his commission in the spring of 1810 to begin trading with the Indians. John Johnson stayed on until September, 1812, when Indian opposition forced him to transfer his trading operations to a post on the Missouri.

And all the while the list of alumni grew. Many are nameless and others have left but little record of their service at the fort. Some of the principal figures are described in the following paragraphs.

HANNAH AND HORATIO STARK

The first woman to live at the fort was Hannah Stark. She arrived in August, 1809, with her husband, Captain Horatio Stark, who was the new commander — and she brought a tiny baby named Mary. The Starks' trip up the river was a series of horrors. Leaving Fort Adams, in Mississippi Territory, in late May, they traveled by keelboat for weeks. The crew of eight soldiers navigated

the boat through sickness and storms. Swarming mosquitoes tormented them. "So very abundant did they become," wrote Captain Stark later, "that Mrs. Stark never ventured from under her Barr for ten days, and with every possible Precaution our dear little Baby was almost devoured with them."

At last, when they had nearly reached their new home, they fought the Des Moines Rapids. Unfamiliar with the upper river, the crewmen lost control of the boat in a storm and let it lodge crosswise against a jagged bank of rock. The terrified Hannah, holding tight to her baby, spent the night in the cramped cabin of the boat while the hull slammed against the rocks. But at noon the next day, Lieutenant Kingsley and a detail of men from the fort came to help the Starks travel the last few miles to their new home.

Captain Stark was a career officer from Virginia who had been commissioned in 1799. Since then he had served from Mackinac in the far north to Columbian Springs near New Orleans, but he had never before commanded a post of his own. He was a tough soldier, probably in his thirties, and knew the Army well. But he knew little about how to handle Indians. His assignment to Fort Madison carried with it the position of Indian agent, and in his dealings with the Sauks, Foxes, Ioways, and Sioux, he was often arbitrary and unsympathetic.

Hannah Stark was from Franklin, Connecticut, where her father was a physician. She had been in the West since 1804 and was accustomed to the rigors of frontier life, although not used to the Indians. A few days after her arrival at the fort two different parties of warriors came to counsel with her husband. "Mrs. Stark is very fearfull of them," the Captain wrote, "tho' in time I hope she will be more reconciled."

On September 28, 1810, Hannah gave birth to a daughter and named her Rozanna. The letters that survive are not clear about where this child was born. Hannah could have gone to St. Louis for her confinement, but it is more likely that she stayed at the fort. The post surgeon was qualified to care for her, and a trip to St. Louis would have required some miserable days of keelboating. Iowans have a reason to wonder about this matter, for if little Rozanna were born at the fort she probably was the first white child born in what is now Iowa.

The Starks left Fort Madison in 1812, and Hannah died in September of that year, in St. Louis, after the birth of another child. Captain Stark was sent East and his position as commander at the fort was taken by Lieutenant Thomas Hamilton.

CATHERINE AND THOMAS HAMILTON

When the Hamiltons arrived in 1810 they were in disgrace with the regiment. Catherine was the

daughter of Captain John Whistler, the commander at Fort Dearborn on Lake Michigan, and there she had married young Thomas Hamilton, one of her father's subalterns. Then the two of them had become embroiled in a dispute over who was to be the sutler at Fort Dearborn. Finally, when both sides were sending off heated letters to Washington, when Hamilton had been officially charged with conduct unbecoming an officer, and when he had allegedly challenged pioneer settler John Kinzie to a duel, the government had stepped in. Captain Whistler had been ordered to Detroit and the Hamiltons were sent out to Fort Madison.

Word of the Hamiltons' indiscretions had preceded them, and the Starks gave them a cool reception. But in a country where social contacts were so rare, this enmity could not survive long. In later months, when the Starks had gone and Hamilton was in command, his soldierly conduct during Indian attacks did much to restore his damaged reputation.

There is some evidence that at least two Hamilton children lived at the fort. Lieutenant Hamilton was commander of the post until its abandonment in 1813. He died in 1833, but Catherine was still alive in 1874, receiving a widow's pension of $8.00 a month and no doubt pleased with the growing reputation of her artist nephew, James Abbott McNeil Whistler.

ROBERT SIMPSON

During the first winter the soldiers of Fort Madison got along without medical care. But when the ice left the river in the spring, a young surgeon's mate, Robert Simpson, arrived on one of the first boats. Simpson was a native of Maryland, newly educated in Philadelphia and Georgetown, and eager for a taste of army life. This was his first post.

Dr. Simpson brought a great chest of medicines, including plenty of Peruvian bark to combat malaria, and he dosed his patients with fierce purges compounded of calomel, jalap, senna, or scammony. He blistered them with Spanish fly and soothed their aches with tincture of opium. Usually, when they were quite ill, he bled them. Neither he nor any other doctor of the time had heard of antiseptics or anesthetics.

A young surgeon's mate who was full of ambition could not have picked a more discouraging post than Fort Madison. Dr. Simpson was appalled by the heavy hand with which Captain Stark ruled the men, and finally he tried without success to have the Captain court-martialed. The charges and specifications he drew are unknown today, but they seem to have concerned Stark's cruelty. Flogging was an accepted punishment in those days, and the Captain used it freely.

The doctor married Brecia Smith, of St. Louis, and brought her to the fort where she nearly died

of malaria along with their child. Discouraged, Simpson resigned his commission in 1812 and opened a medical practice in St. Louis. Here he became an early champion of women's rights and was one of the first antislavery men in the area, running unsuccessfully for election to the first constitutional convention on the antislavery ticket in 1819. For a time he was sheriff of St. Louis County, then city comptroller and cashier of the Boatmen's Savings Institution. When he celebrated his eighty-eighth birthday in 1872, he was hailed as the oldest living American resident of St. Louis. He died in 1873.

EMILIE AND BARONET VASQUEZ

Baronet Antoine F. Vasquez, whose American friends called him Barney, was a Spanish resident of St. Louis when, in 1803, he became an American citizen by virtue of the Louisiana Purchase. Because Baronet had been an Indian trader, Zebulon Pike took him west as an interpreter in 1806, and when he returned he was commissioned an ensign in the First Infantry. He fought at Tippecanoe in 1811 and by 1812 was serving at Fort Madison.

His wife, Emilie, and their tiny daughter, Ophelia, joined him at the fort in September, 1812, arriving just in time to experience a three-day Indian attack. "Emilie at first did not know what to make of it," Baronet wrote to his brother. "But after several hours of gun firing, she regained

strength and determination for at the end she went as far as the door."

After the War of 1812, Baronet returned to trading and interpreting. He worked for William Clark in the early 1820's and in 1824 he accompanied a party of Sauk and Fox chiefs to Washington. Later he was an agent for the Kaw agency on the present site of Kansas City, Missouri, and died of cholera while returning to his agency from St. Louis in a buggy. Emilie survived him for several years.

ROBERT C. PAGE

"The man who cannot enjoy a placid temper under privation of a part of the comforts of a more advanced state of society, is sure to be pitied for having business in the back woods of America." Timothy Flint, the traveler who made that observation, might have made another in the same vein: the man who is not fitted by taste and temper to the crude, vigorous ways of a frontier military post had better not apply for a commission in the Army.

Lieutenant Robert C. Page, of Fredericksburgh, Virginia, accepted an appointment in 1808. Two years later his assignments had brought him to the Mississippi Valley, and in the spring of 1810 he was sent to Fort Madison. He did not prosper there. The other officers disliked him and certainly the iron rule of Captain Stark must have rubbed him the wrong way. In November, 1811,

he wrote the Secretary of War that there were irregularities at the fort, and that he wished to be transferred. But he was still there in April, 1812, when he was placed under arrest.

The charges and specifications drawn against him dealt mostly with his use of whisky: drunk while on duty as officer of the day several times, and in some cases when attacks on the garrison seemed certain.

"He is a poor Cowardly pittiful *Wretch*," wrote Thomas Hamilton, who urged his superiors to let Page resign without a trial. Hamilton, of course, knew how it felt to be in disfavor with one's fellow officers and in danger of a disastrous court-martial.

Lieutenant Page was allowed to leave the service after writing one of the most restrained and perfunctory letters of resignation in history: "Feeling it not compatible with my wishes to remain longer in the Service of the United States Army, I hereby profer my Resignation."

JOHN P. GATES

A Canadian by birth, and a resident of St. Louis since 1796, Gates was employed by the United States government at various times as a civilian interpreter. How long he served as John Johnson's interpreter at Fort Madison is not clear; he returned from the fort to visit his family in St. Louis in January, 1812, an indication that he had been away for some time, and he receipted for a boatload of goods at Fort aMdison in July, 1812.

Gates was the father of a large family and he apparently had no desire to serve in the Army. But on a particularly festive evening at Daniel Shape's tavern in St. Louis, in February, 1814, Lieutenant Vasquez talked him into enlisting as a sergeant. A few days later Gates (who was then forty-seven) wrote a pleading letter to William Clark, asking to be released. He said he had enlisted in a drunken frolic and that his wife and many children would suffer in his absence.

Clark did not release him, however, and he served until May, 1815, perhaps consoled by the $100 wartime bounty and 160 acres of land he received for his service.

GEORGE HUNT

On the day that Colonel Thomas Hunt died at Fort Belle Fontaine, Zebulon Pike wrote the Secretary of War on behalf of the Colonel's two sons. He recommended military appointments for George and Thomas, Jr. A short time later George appeared at Fort Madison — not in the uniform of an officer but with an appointment as sutler.

The profession of suttling was intended to make the idle hours of a soldier more bearable. Hunt sold the men coffee and tea, refined loaf sugar, chocolate, imported molasses, pepper, butter, bacon, rice, cheese, raisins, tobacco and snuff, and a variety of alcoholic beverages. He probably received about three-quarters of every soldier's pay

through the sale of these items, and he had the right to collect back debts directly from the paymaster's table on pay day.

Hunt stayed at the fort until September, 1811, when Johnson arranged for him to establish a small branch factory at the lead mines below Prairie du Chien. By this time Nathaniel Pryor had settled at the same place with a smelting furnace and was buying lead from the Indians. On New Year's Day, 1812, the two men were attacked by a band of Winnebagoes who were seeking revenge for casualties their tribe had sustained at the battle of Tippecanoe a few weeks earlier. Both men escaped, and Hunt walked overland to Fort Madison in bitter weather, poorly clothed and with little food. In a letter written a few days after his arrival, Thomas Hamilton said, "George Hunt is here a poor distressed creature, without a Cent or a good suit of Clothes." In the spring Hunt returned to the mines to salvage what he could from the burned wreckage of his home and warehouse.

THE ENLISTED MEN

A roster of the men who came up the river with Lieutenant Kingsley, and those who joined him during the first winter, appears below. There are no future presidents here. No one is rising through the ranks to generalship, statesmanship, or reknown. These men were coopers, tinners, hatters, cobblers, farmers, or oldtime professional soldiers.

Nearly all were from the eastern states; most of those whose home states are known were from Pennsylvania. Some, like Corporal Lynch and Private Linn, were from Ireland; Private Mason was from England and Sergeant Ilginfritz probably from Germany.

Sergeants	*Corporals*	*Musicians*
James Galloway	Frederick Guntrum	Charles Allen
Patrick Griffin	George Ilginfritz	John Dawson
Samuel Keeley	Edward Lynch	James Henry
Thomas Stevenson	Joseph Ozier	

Privates

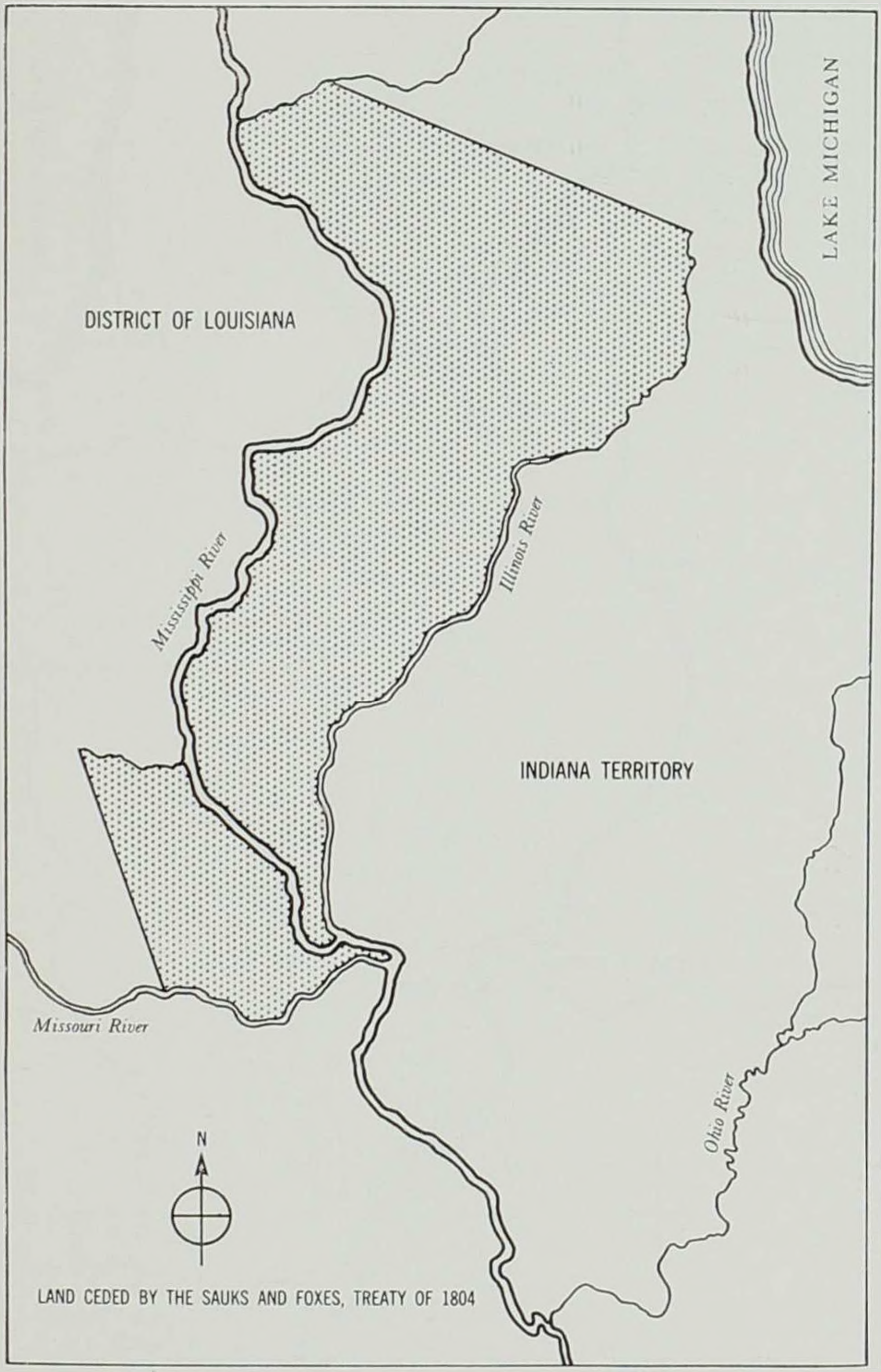
Abraham Arnold	Josiah Keene	Randolph Nolan
William Baxter	Michael Keougho	Daniel O'Flanagan
William Bradley	James Kernon	Joseph Ogin
James Brotherton	John King	Joseph Pruitt
John Brunt	James Leonard	William Quigg
John F. Buck	George Leonard	Matthew Ray
John Cantwell	George Linn	George M. Reese
Jacob Clinger	William Long	John Ritts
John Corrigan	John McConsky	Gregory Rogan
Michael Coulker	James McDowell	John Shaw
John Cox	John McMahan	Adam Showers
Michael Dougherty	Hugh McNeal	Henry Shultz
William Elliott	William McShane	John Smith
Thomas Faulkner	Richard Martin	Samuel Thompson
William Fegin	John Mason	Nicholas Tracy
Robert Finney	John Miller	Jacob Waggoner
John Fitzgibbon	James Moore	Jesse Watson
John Garret	Joseph Neal	George Weise
Christopher Hayes	Adam Nethrow	James White, Jr.
John Keene		James White, Sr.

Nicholas Tracy died of illness in August, 1809, and Daniel O'Flanagan died the following February. Both were former deserters. Perhaps the

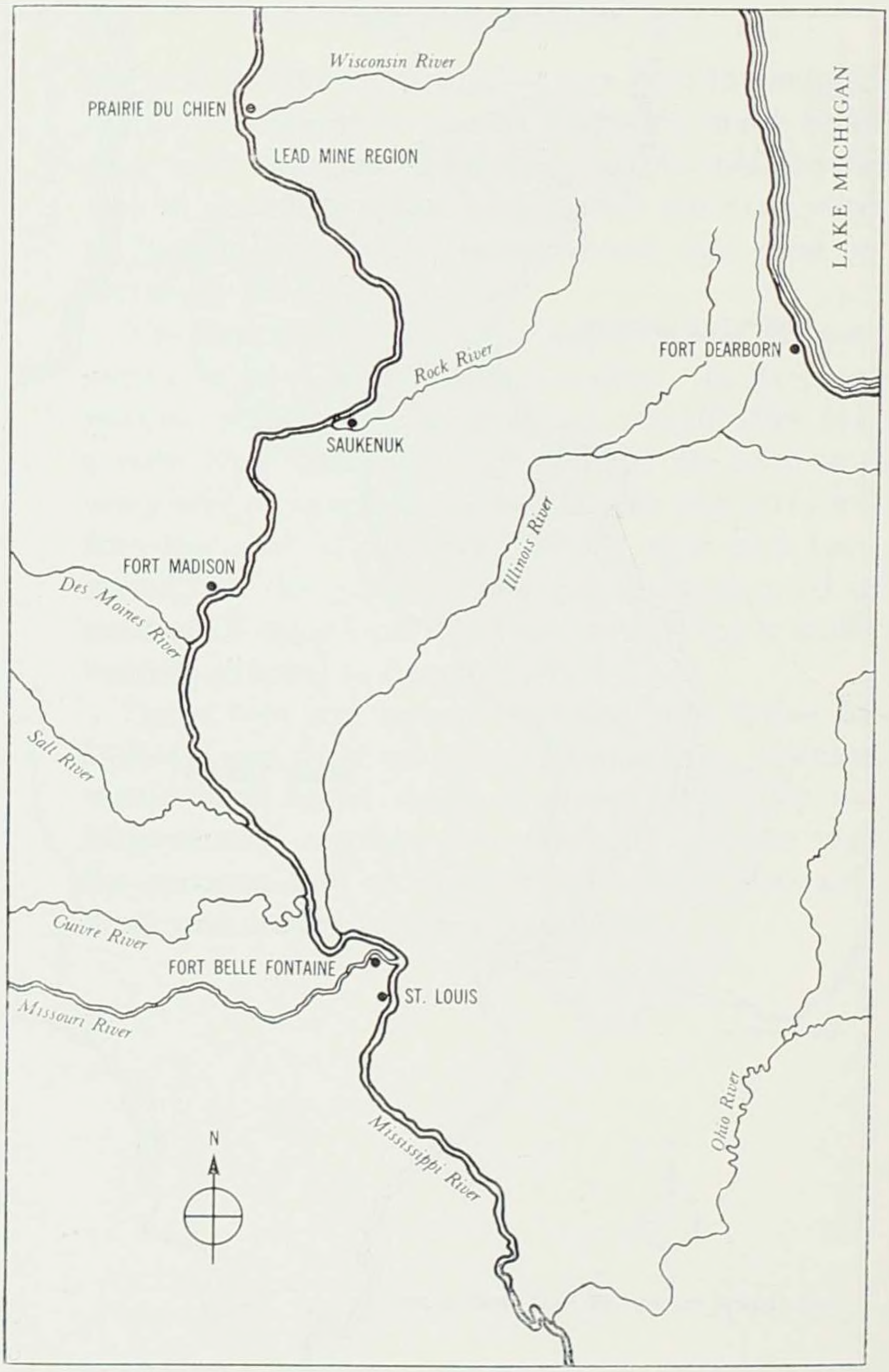
physical frailties that made them hate the rugged army life enough to desert had also made them prey to its diseases. John King, an old soldier who was ill and unfit when he came up the river, died in September, 1809. James Moore had died by October, 1811.

The first man to die at the hands of the Indians seems to have been James Leonard. A party of braves, probably Winnebagoes, caught him half a mile from the fort; they severed his head and arms and removed his heart. It was two days before the men at the fort learned what had happened, for the garrison was too undermanned to send out a search party. They waited for friendly Indians to bring in Leonard's body.

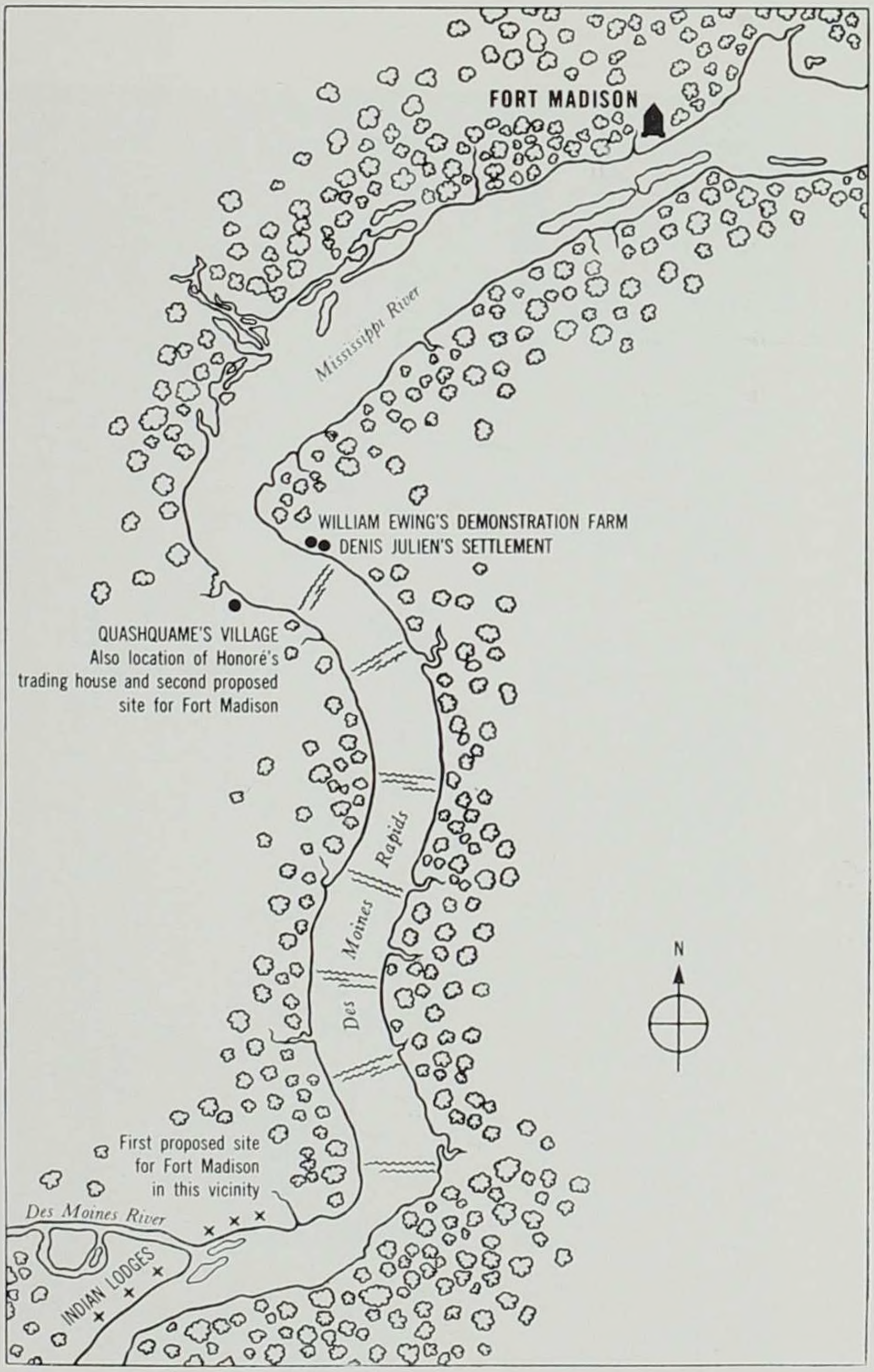
Eight men are known to have been killed by Indians, and there may have been others. Disease would have taken many more not shown by the fragmentary records, for death by disease was the common fate of many Mississippi Valley soldiers who escaped the scalping knife.



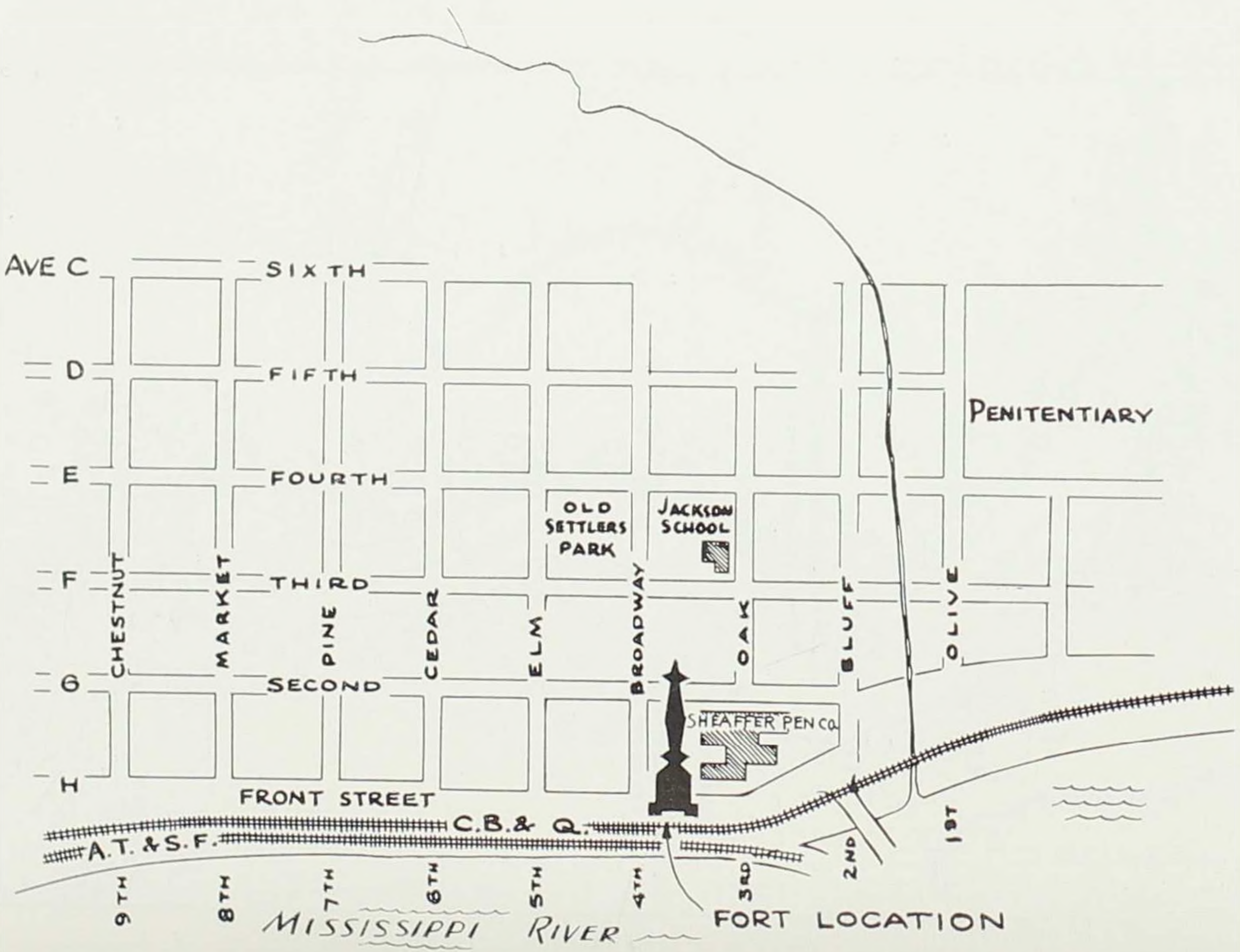
Leading to the establishment of Fort Madison was the Treaty of 1804, negotiated by Governor William Henry Harrison of Indiana Territory in St. Louis. The Indians gave up the shaded area and Black Hawk, deeply embittered by its provisions, refused "to touch the goose quill" confirming it.



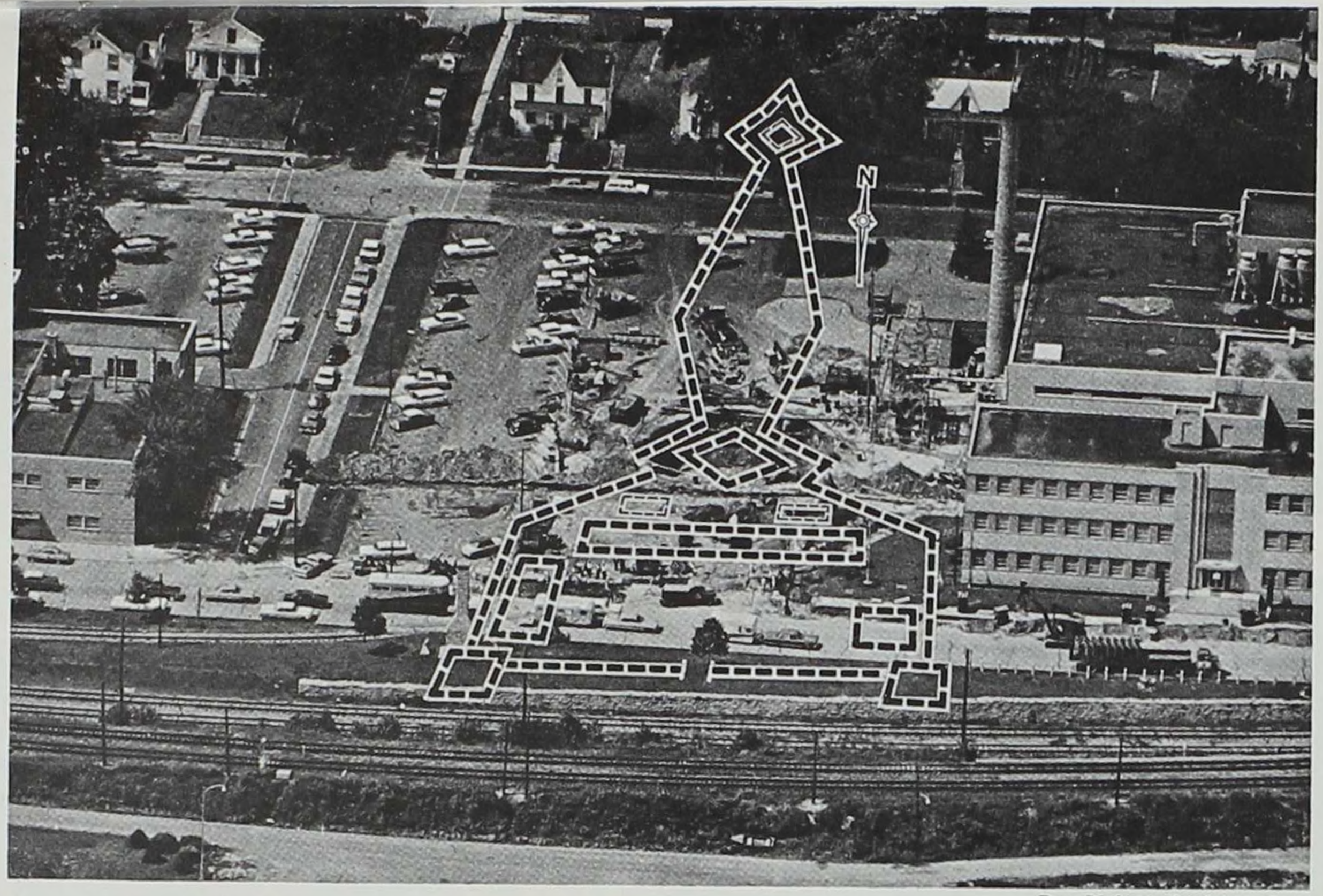
Inhabited places were few in the Upper Mississippi Valley of 1804-1813. There were seven Sauk and Fox teepee villages overlooking the Mississippi River in addition to forts and trading posts operated by American, French and British nationals.



There is no modern map available showing exactly the appearance of the Des Moines Rapids. Lt. Zebulon M. Pike, in 1805, wrote in his journal: "The river all the way through is from ¾ to a mile wide. The rapids are 11 miles long, with successive ridges and shoals extending from shore to shore . . . The shoals continue the whole distance."



Street map of the City of Fort Madison showing location of the old fort.



Des Moines Register photo

Airview of parking lot showing approximate location of Old Fort Madison by placing John Johnson's sketch of the fort over it. Map was made in 1810 and discovered by Dr. Donald Jackson in the National Archives, Washington. Note relationship of chimney marker to Blockhouse No. 1. White square stone, lower left, locates the "ravine" fed by a spring but now a covered drainage sewer. It is at the foot of Broadway just north of the Burlington tracks and between the second and third telephone poles.

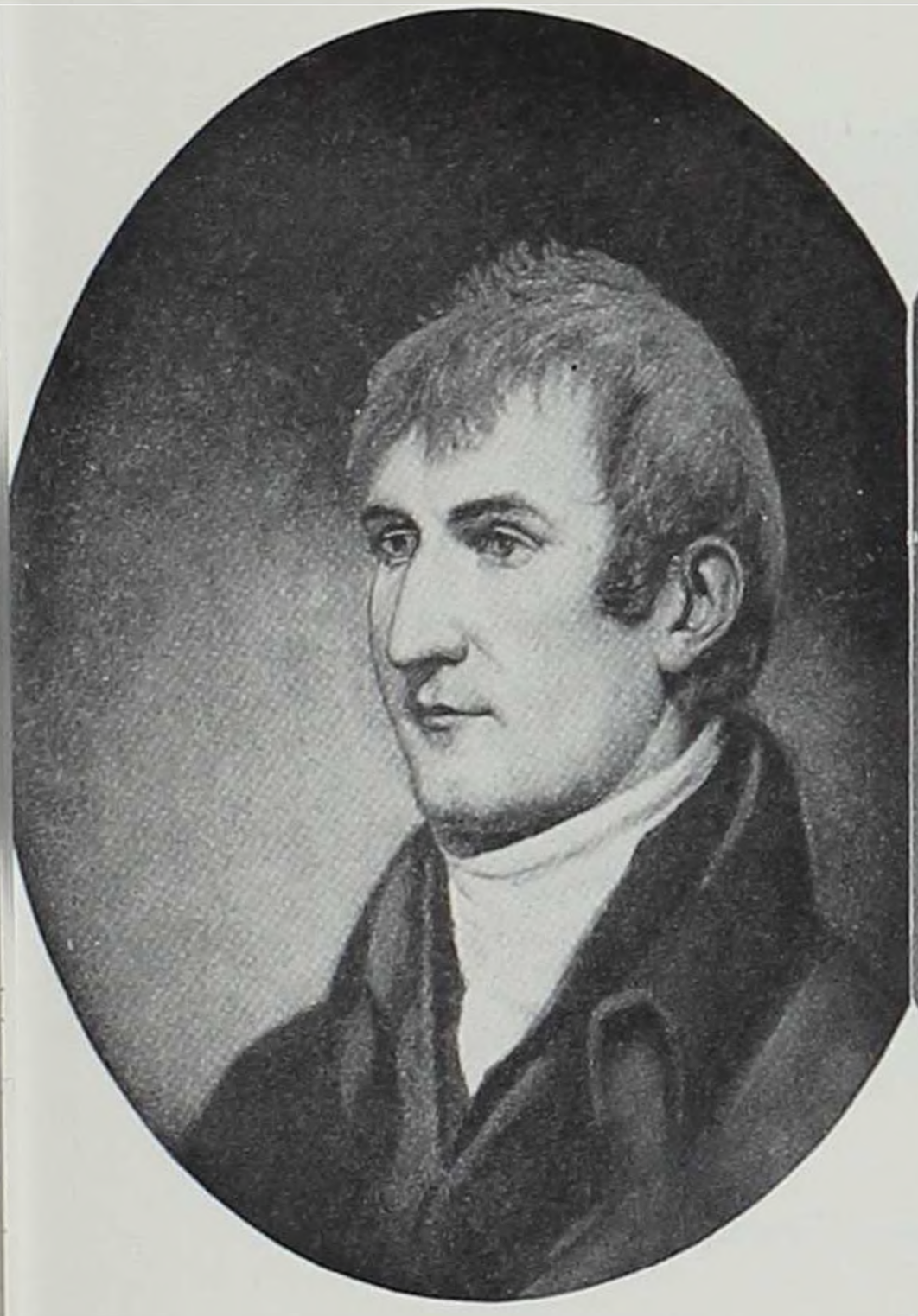
THOMAS JEFFERSON

JAMES MADISON

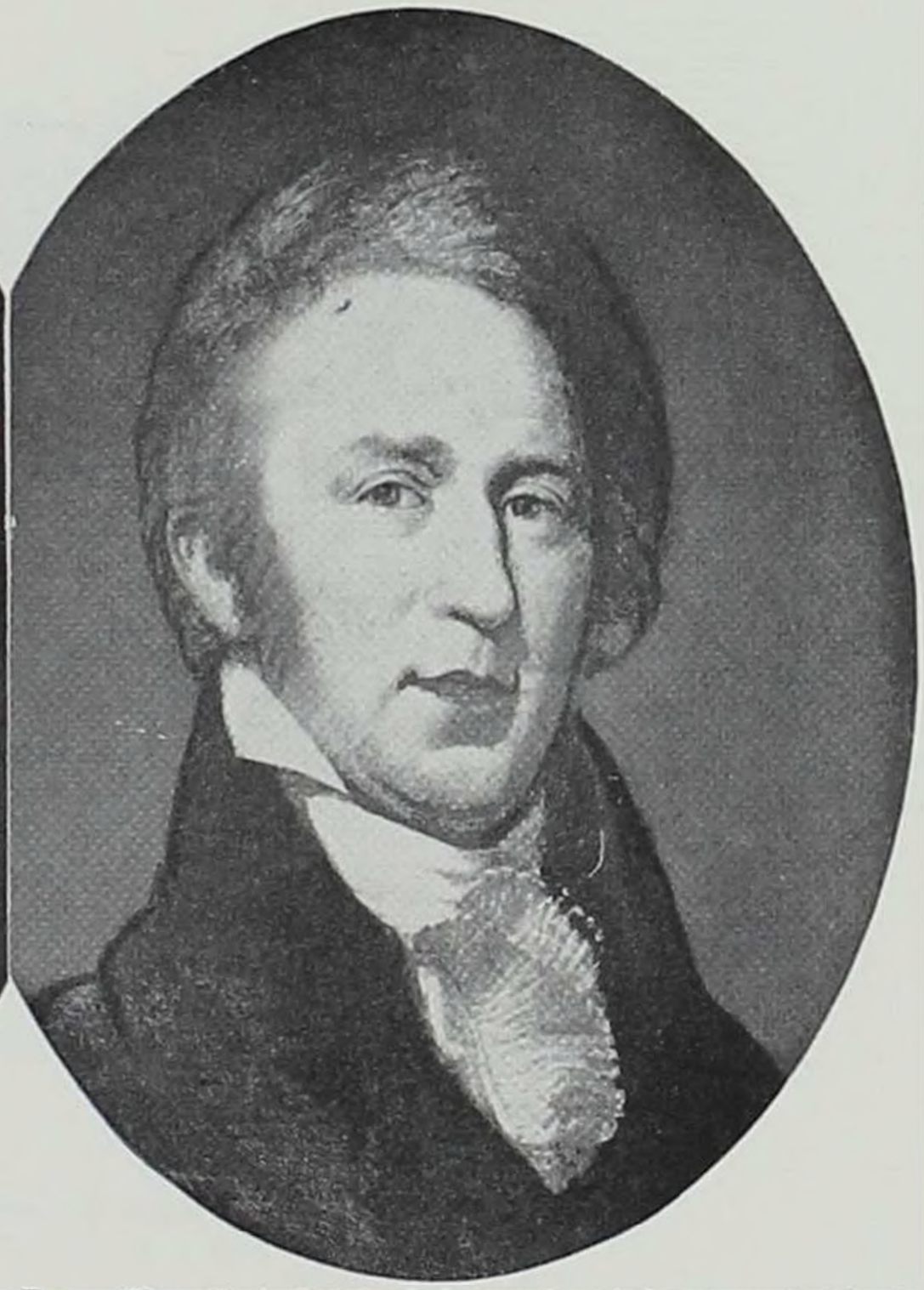
WM. HENRY HARRISON

ZACHARY TAYLOR

Four presidents were involved in the early history of Iowa. Jefferson arranged the Louisiana Purchase; Harrison, as Governor of Indiana Territory and of the District of Louisiana and Superintendent of Indian Affairs, wrote the Treaty of 1804; Madison was president while Fort Madison flourished; and Taylor, as a young army officer, fought Black Hawk along the Mississippi and was defeated at Credit Island -- now present day Davenport.



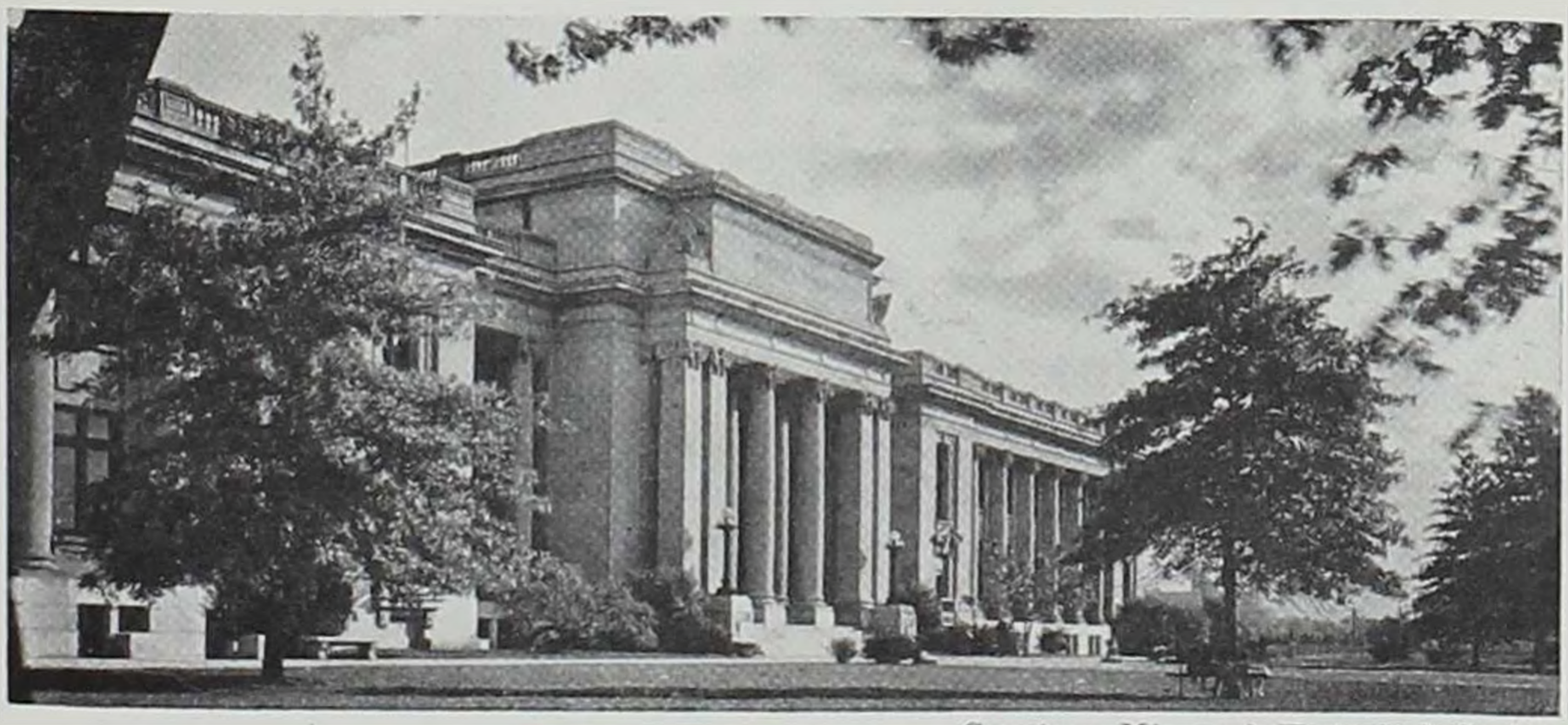
MERIWETHER LEWIS



WILLIAM CLARK

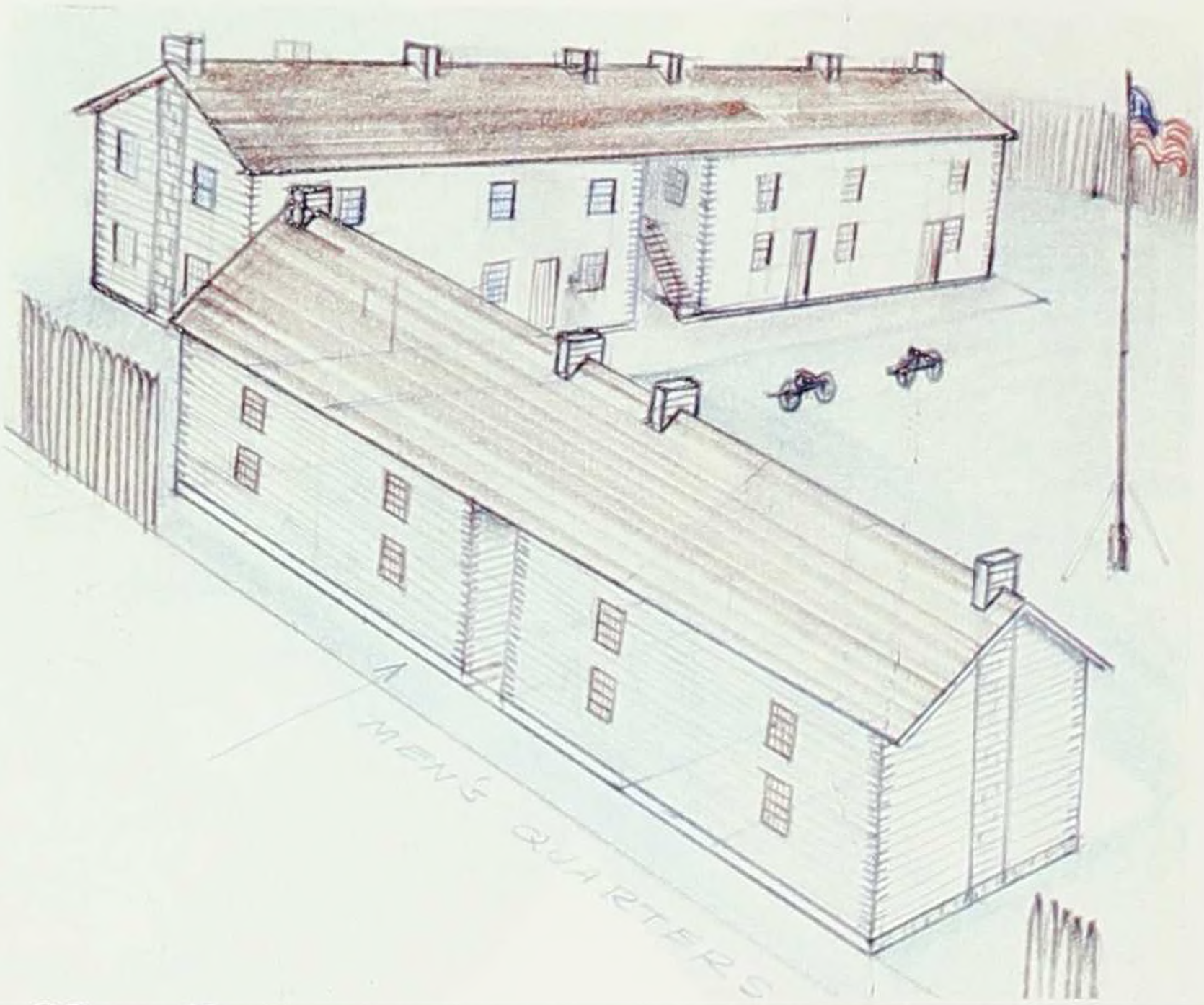
From Thwaites' Original Journals of Lewis and Clark

Lewis and Clark first saw Iowa as explorers, then served her as government officials while Fort Madison existed. Lewis was governor of the Territory of Louisiana from 1807 to 1809 and Clark served in the same capacity from 1813-1821.



Courtesy Missouri Historical Society

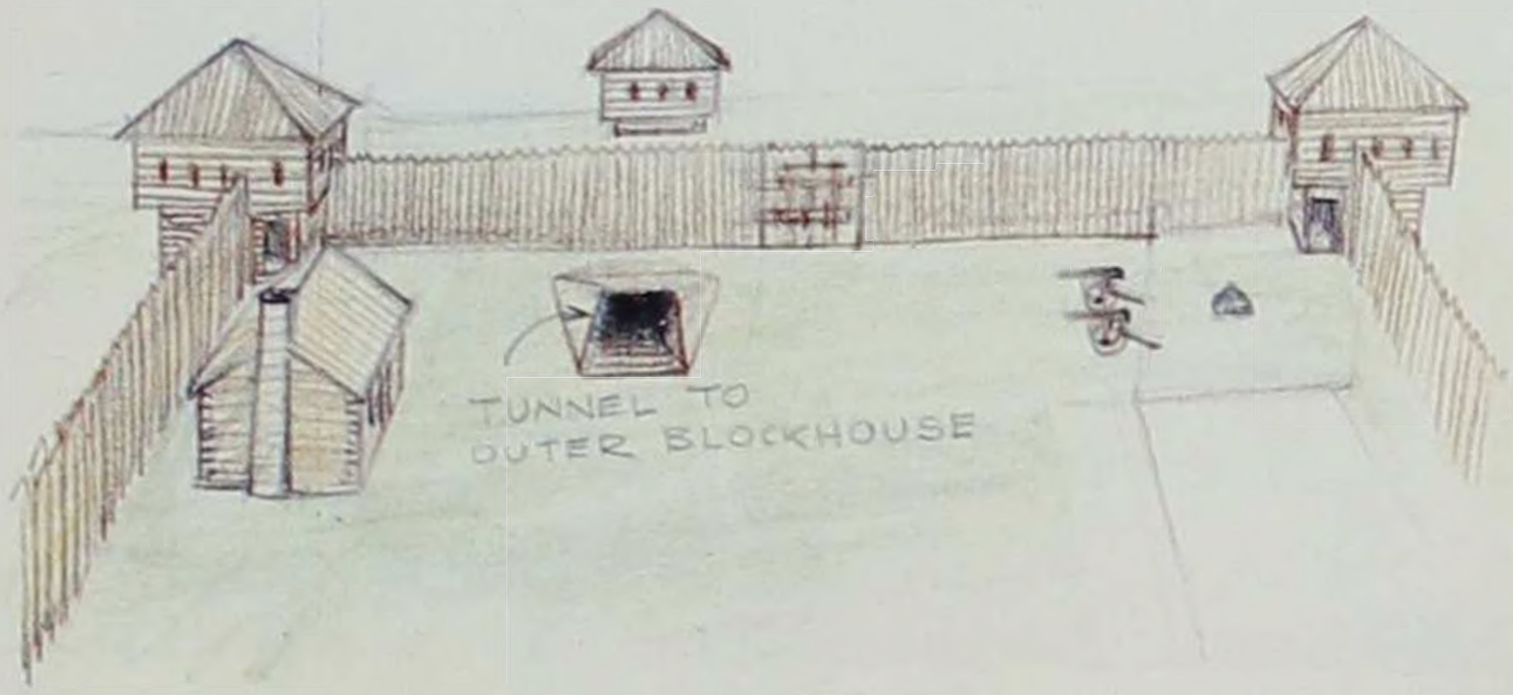
The Jefferson Memorial in St. Louis houses many valuable records covering the history of the Louisiana Purchase and the Mississippi Valley.



Officers (No. 5) and men's quarters (No. 6) inside Fort Madison.

Approaching Fort Madison from the Mississippi.

Factory (No. 10) has been burned; outer blockhouse stands at mouth of ravine; the usual collection of boats are docked at main gate.

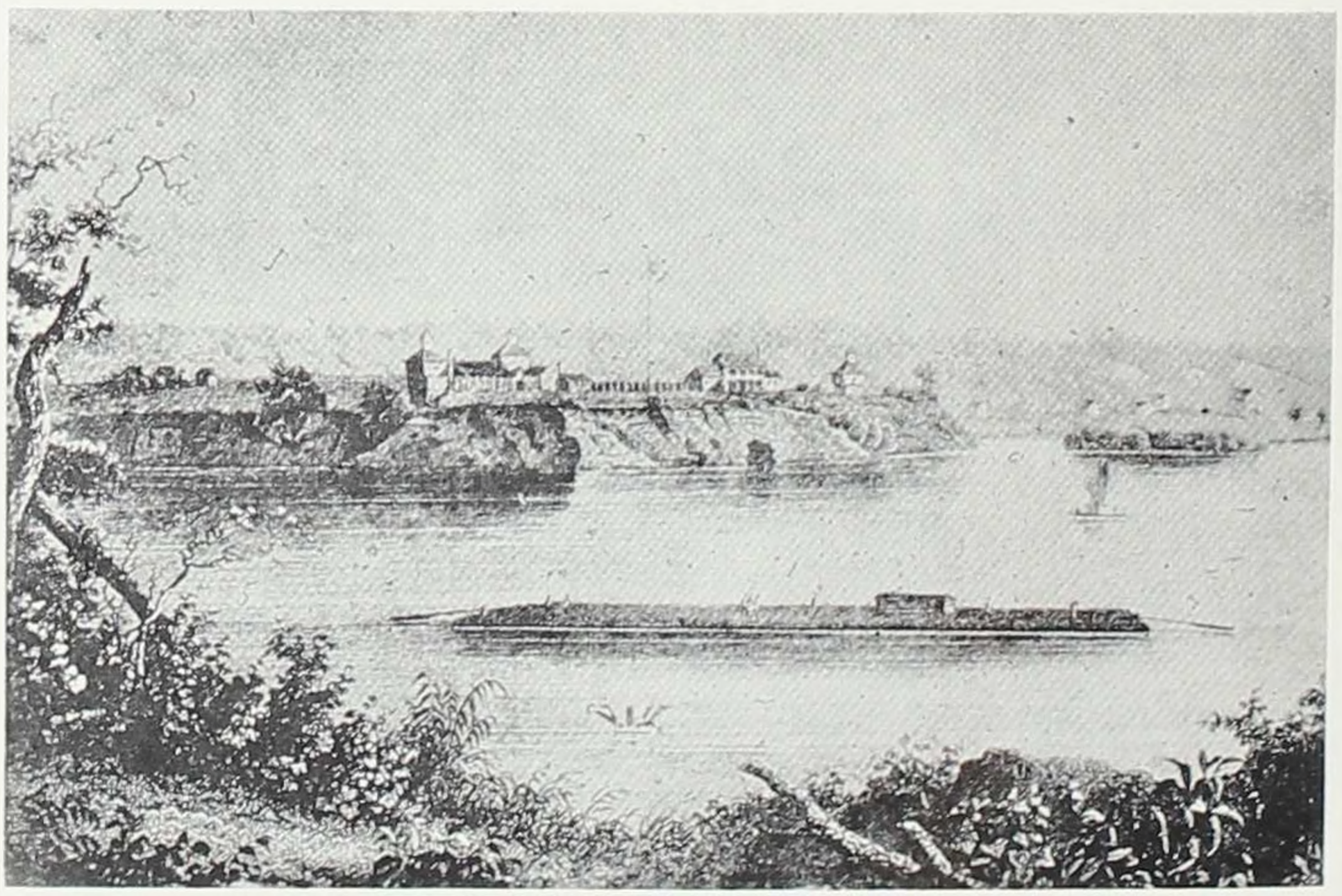


Entrance to tunnel to outer blockhouse and the Mississippi—escape route used following the burning of the fort.

Painting by C. B. King

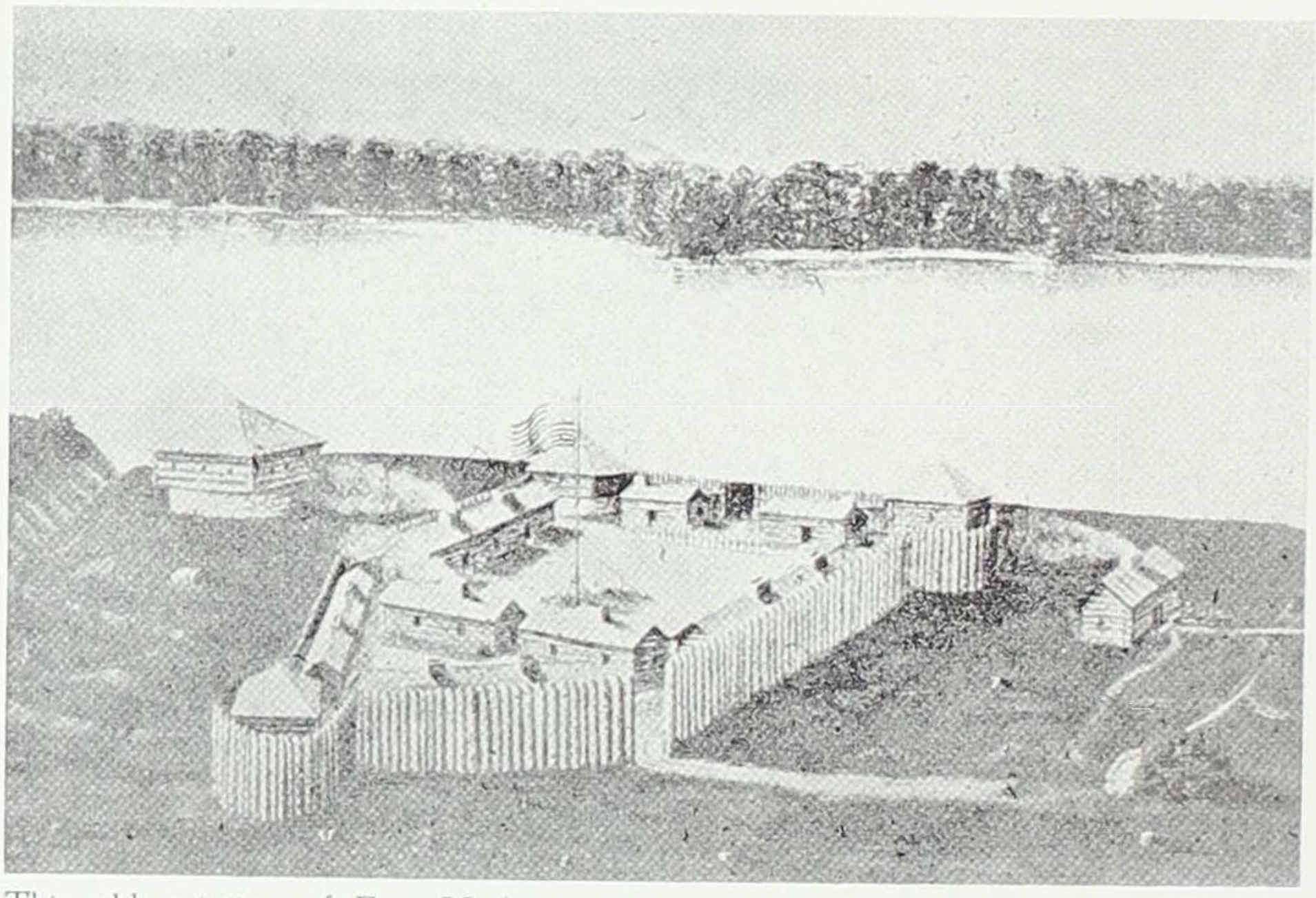
BLACK HAWK

Black Hawk was born in Saukenuk, present-day site of Rock Island, in 1767. He was 41 years old when Fort Madison was erected in 1808. Black Hawk bitterly opposed the Treaty of 1804 and the subsequent erection of Fort Madison. He was equally embittered at the erection of Fort Armstrong (below) on Rock Island in 1816.



This drawing of Fort Armstrong illustrates the type of military posts erected immediately after the War of 1812.

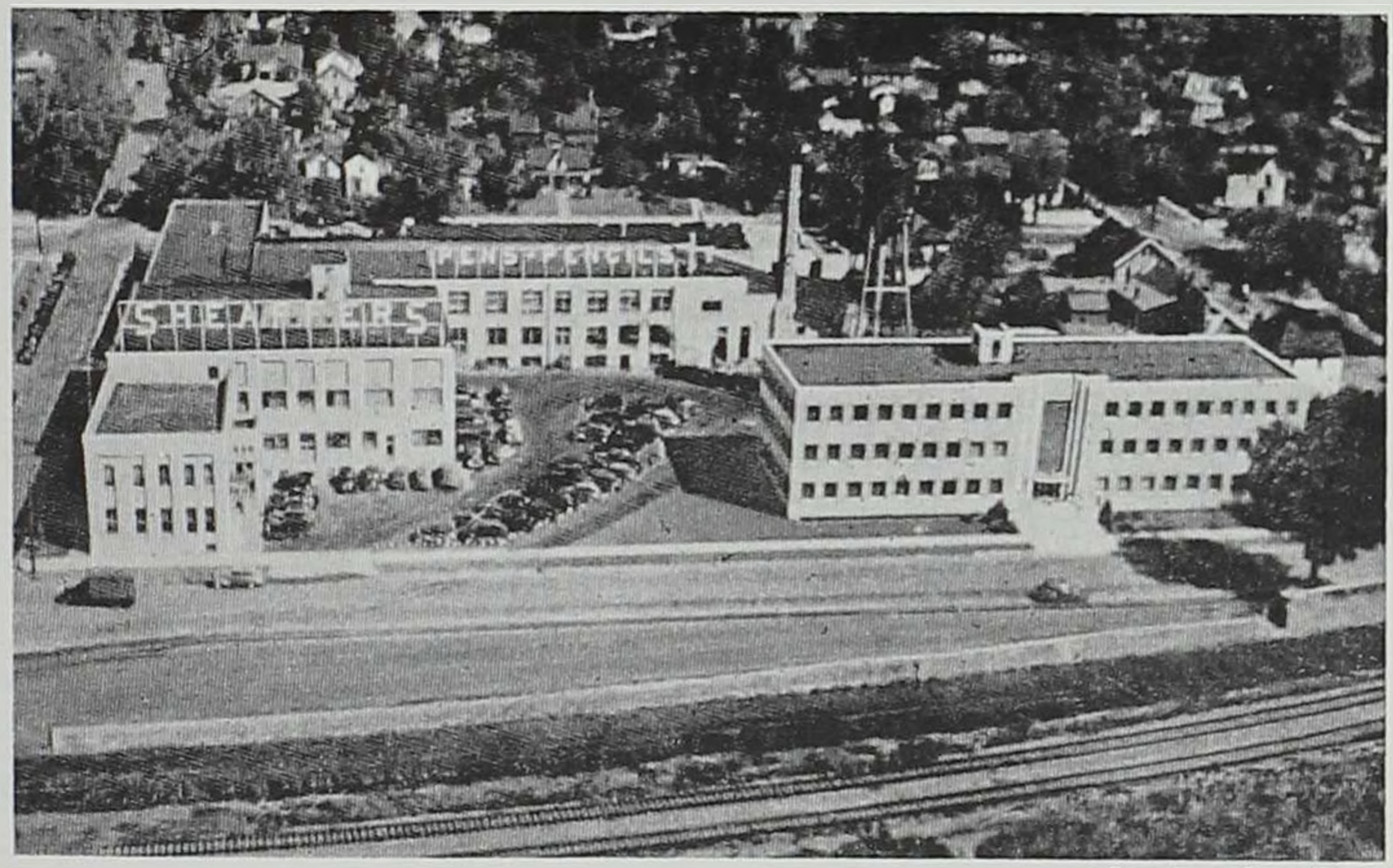
United States Army uniforms of the period 1802-1810. Such uniforms were probably in vogue for most of the period that Fort Madison stood on the Iowa frontier. Faithful reproductions of Army uniforms can be found in *Uniforms of the Army of the United States — Illustrated — from 1774 to 1889.* Authorized by the Secretary of War and prepared under the supervision of the Quartermaster General by Lt. Col. I. M. Ludington.



This old painting of Fort Madison, inaccurate in many details, was made about 1899. The original now hangs in a Fort Madison schoolroom.

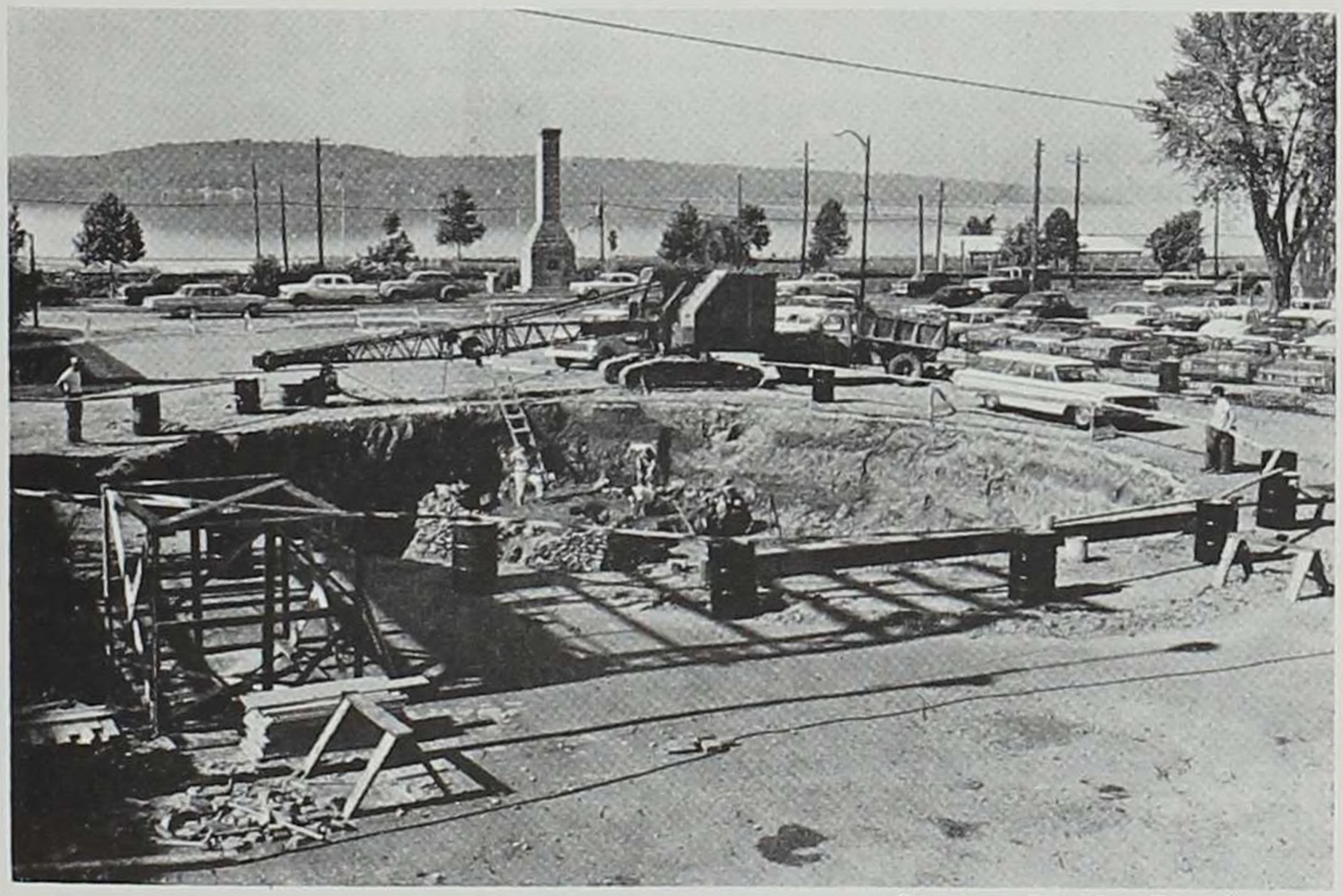
St. Louis Globe-Democrat, March 23, 1902

Burning and evacuation of Fort Madison in 1813.



Courtesy Bill Bunn

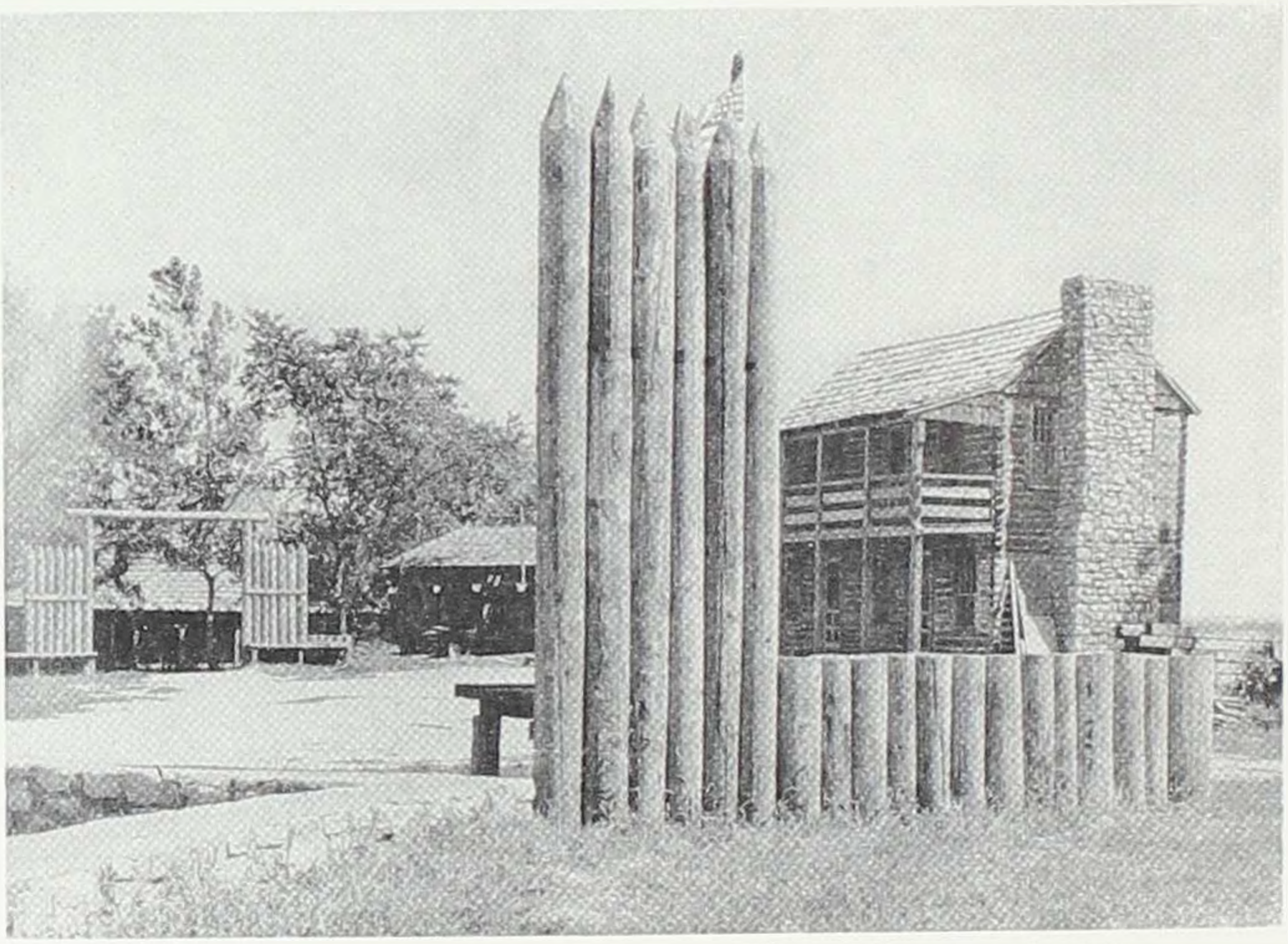
The old buildings of the Sheaffer Pen Company, originally the Morrison plow works, stood on the parking lot on the site of Old Fort Madison. The danger of confusing portions of the remains of the plow works with the fort is readily apparent.



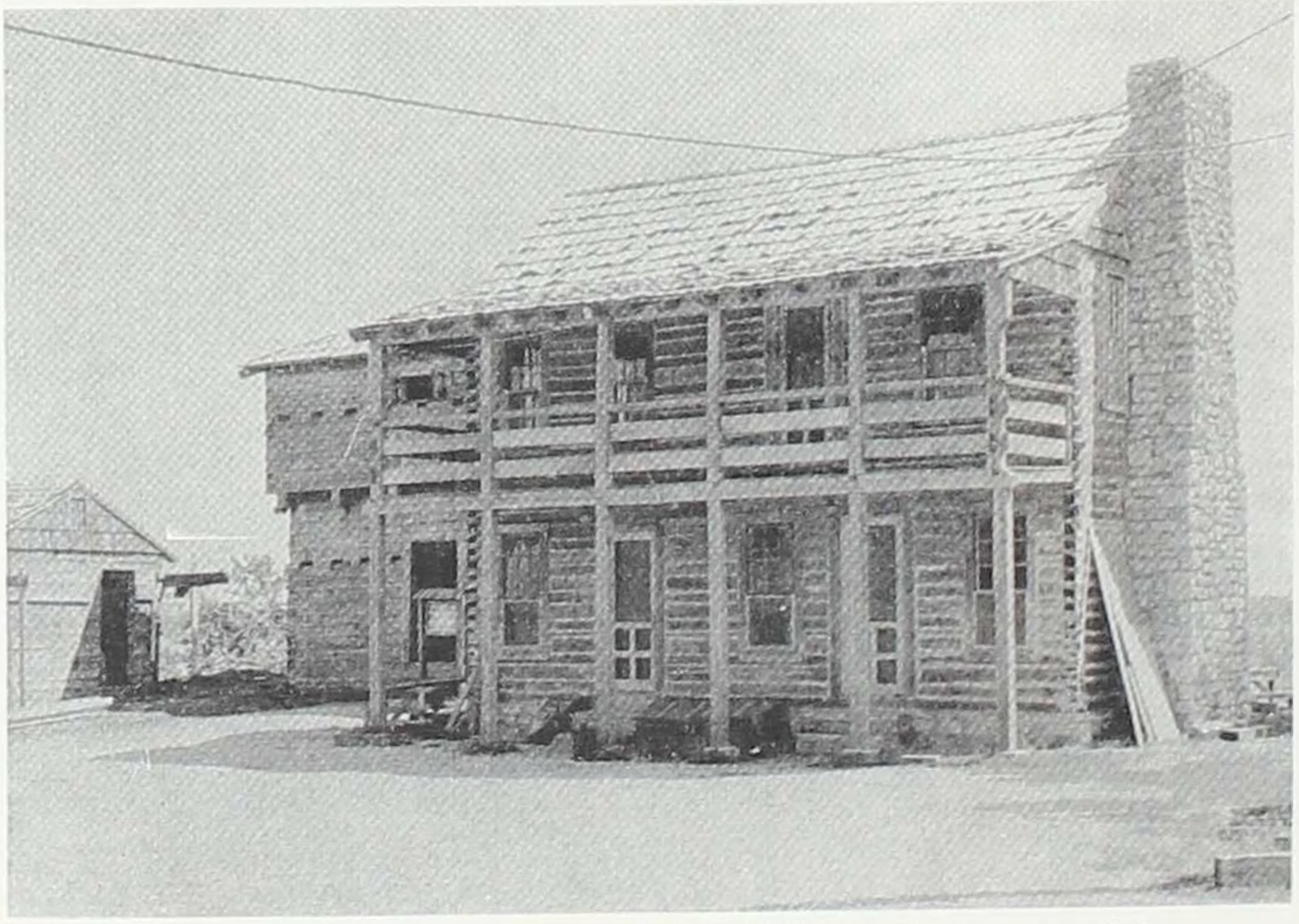
Courtesy Sheaffer Pen Company

Showing the early excavation work at the Sheaffer Pen Company parking lot. This view looks southeastward across the Mississippi with the D.A.R. chimney marker on the approximate site of Blockhouse No. 1 and the excavation in the foreground representing Blockhouse No. 3..

RESTORATION OF FORT OSAGE AT SIBLEY, MO.



U. S. Factory Building (left) Officers' Quarters (right)
Interpreter's House (center)

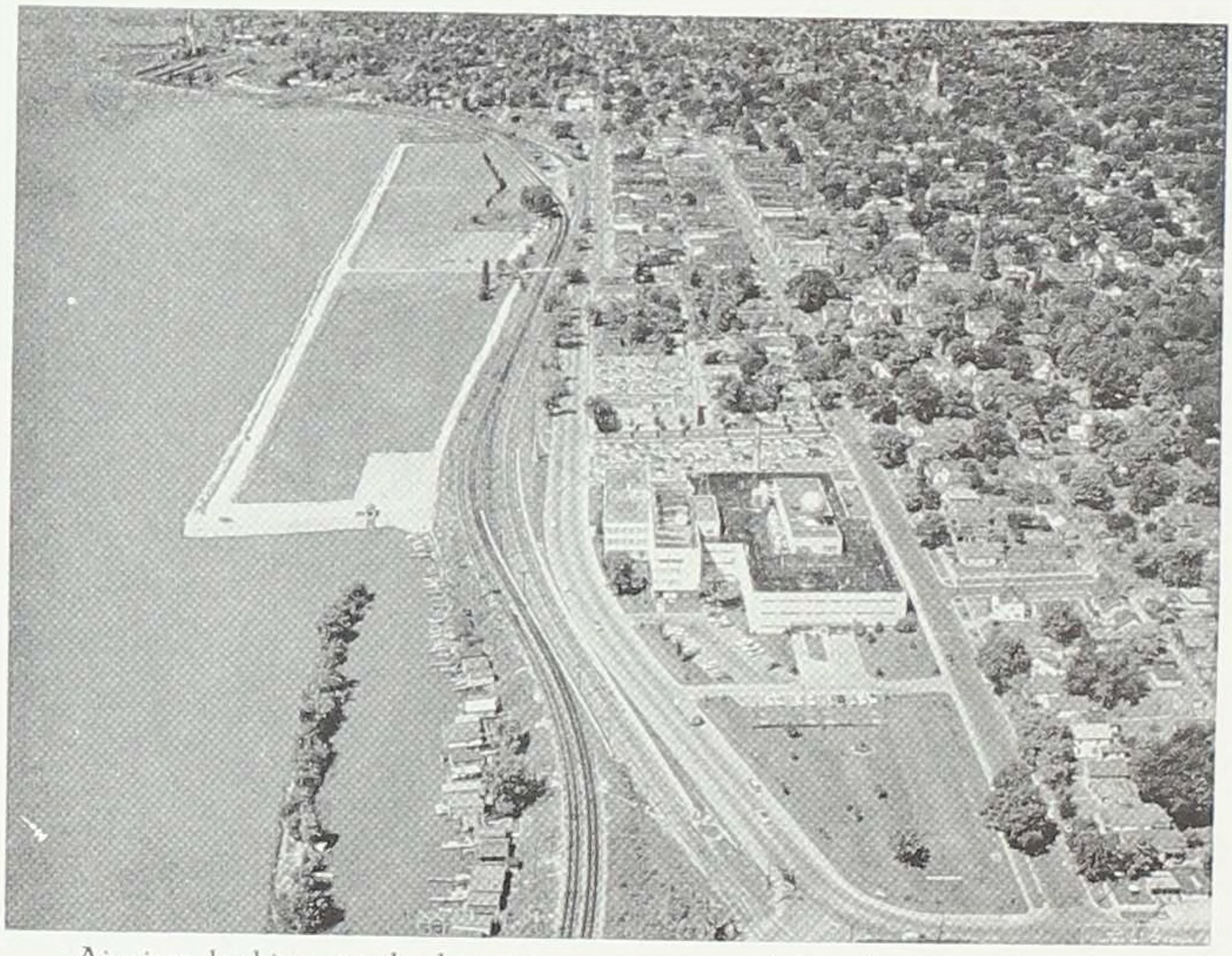


Interpreter's House (partial, left) Officers' Quarters (right)
Main Block House (partial, center)

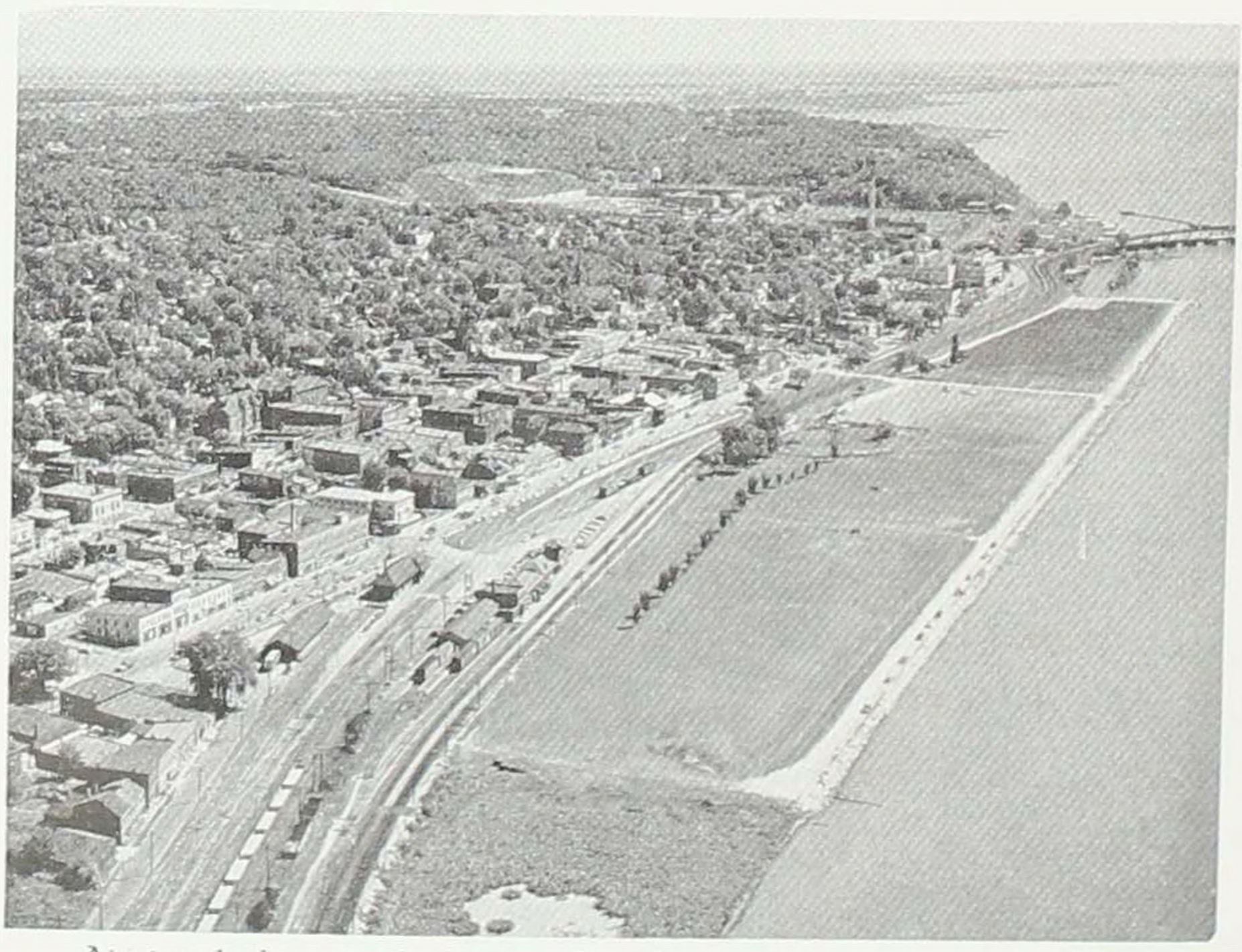
Photographs of a partial restoration of Fort Osage (built on the Missouri near present-day Kansas City in 1808) show what one local group has done to commemorate its historic landmark.

This airview shows both old and new Sheaffer Pen buildings in relation to Broadway and Front streets, the Chimney marker, the railroads and the Mississippi.

THE CITY OF FORT MADISON TODAY



Airview looking south showing monument and Sheaffer Pen Company in the foreground.



Airview looking north showing Sheaffer Pen Company and the State Penitentiary in the distance.

The Way it All Looked

In 1813 a writer in the Lexington, Kentucky, *Reporter* described Fort Madison as "a wretched pen, improperly called a fort." He was quite mistaken. It was no bastioned fortress, but by the standards of the day it was a comfortable and adequate frontier fortification.

Modern writers have sometimes called the fort "tiny" and have referred to a "lone chimney" left standing after the fort was burned. A fort with a lone chimney would indeed have been tiny in those days when every room was heated by a fireplace. But when Fort Madison fell into ashes, at least a dozen blackened chimneys remained.

The fort could be reconstructed today from the fragments of information that have survived. These fragments fall far short of a blueprint; but by adding what we know of construction methods of the day, and by studying other forts for which more complete plans exist, we could come close to an accurate replica.

When Lieutenant Kingsley began work on the fort he sent a crude drawing of his plan to the Secretary of War. It was only a prediction of how the place would look, not an accurate detailing of the final structure. Until recently it was

thought to be the only drawing of the fort in existence.

Two other drawings mentioned in letters cannot now be located in the files of the National Archives. One was drawn by Colonel Daniel Bissell after an inspection trip to Fort Madison, and the other was made by Captain Stark. If either of these plans is ever found, more light will be shed upon the subject. Stark was a methodical man and would have produced a detailed drawing — although he apologized for its inadequacy in sending it to headquarters:

> The whole is very roughly executed being the first thing of the kind I ever undertook and having no instrument whatever but a pair of bad dividers and Scale — The Measurement was made partly with a 10 feet Pole and partly in 3 feet paces; However, those who have seen this plan say it is tolerably exact.

The one real plan now available to us was drawn by factor John Johnson. It was found by this writer in 1956 while he was rummaging through a bundle of Johnson's vouchers and inventories at the National Archives. A modern version, redrawn for clarity, is reproduced on the last page herein. By studying it item for item, following Johnson's numbering key, we can acquire a fair picture of Fort Madison.

No. 1, 2, 3, 4 — blockhouses. The first three were on level ground near the river but the fourth was on the ridge running behind the garrison and

parallel to the river. Johnson called it "an elevated situation, about 45 degrees." Captain James House, after a trip to the fort, wrote that the ridge was within 250 feet of the rear of the main work. A blockhouse was constructed there when it became apparent that the ridge was an ideal spot from which the Indians could fire upon the fort. No description of the blockhouses is available, but the Secretary of War in 1803 prescribed, for the frontier, blockhouses twenty feet square, two stories high, with portholes in the upper story for small ordnance and loopholes in each story for muskets. The timbers were to be hewed on two sides for close fit, and pointed with clay or lime. Johnson used the lower story of No. 3 for storage of furs and trade goods. No. 4 may have been smaller than the others, since it was an outpost. The stockade around the main work, joining the blockhouses, was made of great sturdy logs, sharpened at the top, but that portion running up the incline to blockhouse No. 4 may have been made of smaller pickets since it was intended only as protection for guard details passing to and from the main work. The gate near the river was the "main gate" and the one near blockhouse No. 3 was the "wicket gate."

No. 5 — officers' quarters. Johnson indicated six chimneys here and said the quarters were two stories high. The two detached units probably were kitchens. The unit containing the number 5

seems to have been a covered or enclosed passage between two buildings, each with two rooms downstairs and two upstairs. Stark wrote that officers' quarters and enlisted men's barracks would contain eight rooms each. (He added that Fort Madison was to be the best constructed of any garrison he had ever seen.) The rooms were plastered, probably with lime made at the post, for "burning lime" was a common fatigue duty of soldiers. The woodwork was of black walnut and pine. The common fireplaces were made of stone blasted from a quarry, but the one in the main room of the officers' quarters was made of "ground stones" — round stones picked up by the soldiers.

No. 6 — barracks. Similar in design to the officers' quarters, with eight rooms and four chimneys. At one time more than 100 men were housed here, but the usual number was much less. No detailed description is available, but the structure seems to have been about 20 by 80 feet with living and dining quarters downstairs and sleeping quarters upstairs. A similar barracks unit built in Detroit in 1805 was described by the Secretary of War as having two windows in each room (20 panes per window) and a 7-foot piazza running along the front of the building. This piazza, said the Secretary, should be furnished with benches along the wall and should have a gravelled floor. The outside walls probably were not painted but the roof, made of rough-hewn shingles, may have

been coated with oil and Spanish brown, the Army's favorite color for outside work.

No. 8 — covered way. In military terminology the passage to blockhouse No. 4 was a covered or covert way, but the men of Fort Madison simply called it "the tail." One of Captain Stark's superiors suggested that he "curtail the tail" to make defense of the fort simpler; Stark replied that it was a covered way to the blockhouse on the hill, and thus vital.

No. 9 — parade. In this open area the men paraded under arms at reveille and retreat and for such ceremonies as weekly and monthly inspections. The flagstaff was here, and perhaps the well. Johnson's drawing fails to show two structures which were important to any military post, the hospital and the powder magazine. These may not yet have been completed when he made his drawing in January, 1810. The magazine would have been located at one side of the parade, away from the other buildings, as a precaution against fire. The hospital could have been anywhere, perhaps along the east wall of the stockade where no structures are shown in the drawing. According to standard War Department plans the usual magazine was a conical stone or brick structure about eight feet in diameter, with no wooden parts except the door. It was water-proofed with two or three coats of Spanish brown and provided with a small vent for circulation.

No. 10 — factory. In the fall of 1810 a board of survey headed by Lieutenant Hamilton inspected the factory buildings then under construction to estimate their value. The description sent to Washington by the board is paraphrased here.

The main factory house was 52 by 20 feet, consisting of a stone-floored cellar and two stories of hewn logs, with an 8-foot piazza in front, "the whole under a strong roof of oak shingles." The lower story would eventually contain a room 12½ by 11½ in the south end, with a fireplace, to be used as an office; a trading room 19 by 18¼; a room for skins 11½ by 5½; a room 20 by 12 for a kitchen or for use by the interpreter; and a stairway 20 by 8½. Upstairs there would be a room 20 by 18 in the south end, with fireplace, for dining; a bedroom 13 by 11½; a room 7 by 7 for domestic articles; a room 20 by 12 in the north end, with fireplace, for the assistant factor, and a 7-foot passage connecting the rooms.

When complete the building would be worth $3,166. While it was under construction the factor was also using these near-by structures: a house 15 by 20 occupied by Johnson as home and office; a trading house 15 by 20; an interpreter's house 12 by 15; and a house 15 by 18 built originally for Indian use and now serving as a warehouse. All these minor structures were "cabin-roofed" with clapboards instead of shingles.

Some of the cabins were torn down or burned

by Hamilton in 1812, against Johnson's wishes, apparently because there was danger that hostile Indians might occupy them and fire upon the fort.

Johnson hired soldiers for ten cents a day to build his factory, and also relied on some civilian laborers provided by trader Denis Julien. Construction went slowly, and in the spring of 1812 Johnson was still hiring builders. In May of that year he paid John Mason $6.50 for "making a ground floor to the piazza."

No. 11 — the ravine. Johnson did not include the ravine in his drawing, but it is shown here — closer than the scale would ordinarily permit — because of its importance. Lieutenant Hamilton said it was 100 paces from the stockade. Here the Indians invariably gathered to attack, and finally Hamilton built a small blockhouse on the point of land where the ravine joined the river.

Other buildings outside the stockade. The blockhouse by the ravine, not built until 1813, emphasizes one difficulty in reconstructing the garrison on paper: buildings were erected and torn down throughout the five-year history of the fort. There is even one more blockhouse to contend with. Because the Indians concealed themselves behind the river bank in front of the fort, Hamilton built a small blockhouse at the edge of the river, near the stockade, in late 1812 or early 1813. It was connected to the main work by a "small subterraneous passage." Other buildings men-

tioned in correspondence include a stable, and a house occupied by Archibald McNabb, operator of a private trading establishment. Trader Denis Julien seems to have maintained buildings in the area for his hired men, and there probably was a sutler's store, ice house, bake house, and a few rough shelters for livestock.

Location of the fort. Until June, 1965, the exact location of the fort was uncertain. Such identifying elements as the ravine, and the ridge behind the fort from which the Indians fired on the men, had long since been altered by the hand of man. There was a commemorative marker in Fort Madison, in the shape of a stone chimney, but it had been located arbitrarily—and just as arbitrarily moved to another location in the course of highway construction.

When the W. A. Sheaffer Pen Company began to excavate in its parking lot for the installation of new equipment, a group of Fort Madison citizens watched the digging carefully. And, when workmen began to uncover stones which suggested the foundation of a structure, professional advice was sought.

Construction was delayed while state archeologist Marshall McKusick brought a crew of students to the site including this writer and several others. Using John Johnson's remarkably accurate plan of the fort (see last page herein), the foundation of blockhouse No. 3 was uncovered

first, along with charred logs and a collection of military buttons, broken dishware, and other artifacts. Several other portions of the post were tentatively identified, including a section of the foundation of the officer's quarters, a basement, two outdoor cobblestone areas, the foundation of blockhouse No. 1, a portion of the barracks foundation, and remnants of the stockade fence. Because of the construction in progress, much of the site area could not be examined.

One coincidence is noteworthy. When the commemorative marker was moved to its present position some years ago, through sheer luck the new location chosen was almost directly over the site of blockhouse No. 1.

Trading with the Indians

"If I understand the Indian character at all," wrote Captain Meriwether Lewis, "I do know that there are but two effectual cords by which the savage arm can be bound, the one is the love of merchandise, and the other the fear of punishment. . . ."

Fort Madison was meant to appeal to the Indian on both these counts, but the commercial appeal was stronger. No longer was the Indian a self-sufficient woodsman living entirely off the land. The warrior who brought chunks of lead downriver from the mines, or shuffled up to Johnson's counter with a roll of skins across his back, was already spoiled by the fripperies of civilization. For him the flint age was long gone, the iron age was here and assimilated — and now he was entering the pewter age, the japanned tin age, the calico age. Never again would he feel comfortable without a lodgeful of the gadgets that Johnson or the private traders had for sale.

By 1775 the second Continental Congress had recognized the vital nature of Indian trade and had begun work on a plan for licensing traders. When the project lagged, George Washington revived it in 1793. Soon afterwards, in 1795 the

first factories had been set up at Tellico in what is now eastern Tennessee, and on the St. Mary's River in Georgia.

When the Fort Madison factory was built in 1808, those two original posts had been abandoned; but there were eleven others ranging from the Red River in Orleans Territory to the island of Michilimackinac in the far north. Others would follow, but steady opposition from the big fur companies and other interested factions forced the system out of existence by 1822.

Supervising all these frontier department stores was the job of the Army, with the actual administration handled by the Office of Indian Trade in Georgetown, D. C. Through this headquarters the goods were purchased from suppliers on the East Coast and in Europe, then shipped west. Usually the shipments were sent up the Potomac to Cumberland, Maryland, then overland to Brownsville on the Monongahela or to Wheeling on the Ohio. From there the great Ohio-Mississippi network provided access to the western factories.

There was no secret about the reason for these trading houses. John Johnson's original instructions from Georgetown began like this:

The principal object of the Government in these establishments being to secure the Friendship of the Indians in our country in a way the most beneficial to them and the most effectual & economical to the United States, you will

avail yourself of every proper means & opportunity of impressing these people favourably toward the Government.
. . .

In song and legend the Indian has always been a great customer for baubles and beads; but the Indian of real life was more interested in blankets and hardware. Johnson sold thick, shaggy blankets in great quantities and charged from 67 to 82 cents a pound. He sold flintlock muskets and steel traps, and both these items were frequently of shoddy construction — providing plenty of work for the blacksmith.

Drygoods were important, and the commonest item was stroud, a coarse fabric usually dyed red or blue. Johnson also sold white and green baize for summer blanketing, calico, lace, Hessian (a sacking of hemp or jute), flannel, twill coating, colored and striped gartering, assorted ribbons, buttons, and thread.

Hardware included swords, spurs, fishhooks, brass and steel pipe tomahawks, butcher knives, axes, hoes, froes, rasps, files, and awls.

Household goods consisted of cooking pots and frying pans, scissors, knives, and table utensils. Some drugs and condiments were sold, such as allspice, cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg, Prussian blue and vermillion (for cosmetic use), and Turlington's balsam (a patent medicine).

After his basic needs were cared for, the Indian could turn to the joys of costuming himself. He

wanted beads, rings, earbells, cowbells, sleigh-bells, headbands, armbands, wristbands, brooches, earwheels, gorgets, and strings of wampum.

Considering risks and transportation costs, the prices Johnson asked for these goods were fair. He set his retail price at 120 per cent of cost. He extended credit and found that Indians, like white men, had wide-ranging views on the necessity of paying their bills. One private trader in the region said he always charged the Ioways more than the other tribes because they seldom paid back more than fifty cents on the dollar.

The common medium of exchange was fur or lead. According to his records in 1809, Johnson sent the following kinds and amounts of furs to St. Louis, to be forwarded to the seaboard markets.

274 packs deerskins — 38,131 pounds
7 packs beaver furs — 100 pounds
17 packs bearskins — 347 skins
30 packs raccoon — 3,610 skins
2 packs muskrat — 1,330 skins
2 packs otter — 176 skins
60 deerskins covering raccoon packs
44 bearskins covering various packs
9 kegs tallow
1 keg beeswax
43 dressed deerskins
3 bags feathers

A piece of fur was a troublesome thing, tasty to moths, likely to rot in transit, and occupying far

too much storage space. Easier to handle were the pigs or plaques of lead that Johnson bought from the Indians. They were so stable — mere flat blobs of partly refined metal weighing about seventy pounds — that they were almost a kind of currency in the region.

The lead mines of the Sauks and Foxes were located on both sides of the Mississippi and along the Wisconsin, beginning a hundred miles or so below Prairie du Chien. The women worked the mines and the men floated the lead down to Fort Madison in canoes. At five cents a pound this lead was among the most profitable of all the goods Johnson handled. He collected nearly 48,000 pounds between the time of his arrival and the end of 1809. In 1810 he collected 80,000 pounds.

So important were the mines that Nicholas Boilvin would report in 1812 that the Sauks and Foxes had nearly given up the hunt as a means of livelihood. White men were producing ore, too, in mines below St. Louis, and the value of the lead now being exported from the Territory by whites and Indians was reported to be greater than the annual export of furs.

Sparks in the Willow

The Indians who plagued Fort Madison were a minority. Most of the Sauks, Foxes, and Ioways did not participate in the War of 1812. They threatened, they wavered, but in the end they were restlessly neutral.

Two small groups, however, were far from neutral. They were Black Hawk's band of British-inclined Sauks and Foxes and a band of tough and wild Winnebagoes who lived along the Rock River. Most of the bullet scars in the stockade at Fort Madison were put there by warriors from these two elements.

On August 24, 1812, an Indian came to the fort with a shocking story. He said that Fort Dearborn, on Lake Michigan, had fallen to the Potawatomi Indians on August 15. He had actually talked to some braves who had fought there, he said, and to prove their story they had shown him a piece of the garrison flag from Fort Dearborn.

The story was all too true. One by one the western forts were falling: Mackinac and Dearborn gone, Fort Wayne under pressure, and — though they did not know it yet at Fort Madison — Detroit was in British hands.

News of the Dearborn disaster was confirmed

on August 26 by a party of thirty Sauks who stopped to warn John Johnson and Thomas Hamilton. Hamilton, who was now in command, issued meat, flour, and eight gallons of whisky to the bearers of the news. Then he settled back to await the attack he felt sure was coming. An old brave had told Johnson in confidence that Fort Madison would be attacked within ten days or two weeks. Reinforcements had been sent for, but they would be some time in arriving; in the meanwhile there were eight men on sick report, and the season of fever and ague was due.

The biggest item of social news at the fort in early September was the fact that Emilie Vasquez was coming up from St. Louis on the next keelboat, bringing her little daughter Ophelia. At this time, Catherine Hamilton was probably the only white woman at the fort. Emilie's trip was untimely, considering the mood of the Indians, but she arrived safely on the evening of September 4 — safely but not secretly, for in the time it took the wallowing boat to make its way through the Rapids and reach the landing at the fort, its presence became known to the Indians. They were less interested in Emilie and Ophelia than in the seventeen men of the crew, for these men who jumped ashore and disappeared inside the fort meant greater firepower. Lieutenant Hamilton would be grateful for that added firepower.

Apparently no warning of an imminent attack had reached the fort. The sentinels saw nothing unusual, sensed no danger as Black Hawk and his hostile followers surrounded the post. They closed the main gate and the wicket gate, and cried "All's well" to one another, across the parade and from blockhouse to blockhouse, as the night wore on.

Early on the morning of September 5, the first man outside the stockade was Private John Cox. He was only twenty-five feet from the safety of the great log wall when he fell with a gunshot wound, and while a sentinel at a loophole fired vainly to protect him, a Winnebago cut away his scalp.

Black Hawk, who was concealed in the weeds by the path that led from the main gate to the river, had hoped that the entire company would march forth to drill in front of the fort — as he had heard they frequently did. The plan of the Indians was to rush the gate while the company was outside; but when no one appeared but Private Cox, there was nothing to do but shoot him down and begin a siege.

Firing from both sides continued all through the day. The maimed body of Private Cox lay where it had fallen, for Lieutenant Hamilton did not know the strength of the attackers and would permit no men from the fort to recover the body.

Stationed on the ridge behind the garrison, the

Indians commanded the height so thoroughly that no soldier could pass from one blockhouse to another without risking his life. Hamilton may have found himself wishing that Alpha Kingsley could be there to see the folly of locating a military post in the shadow of a ridge.

On the morning of September 6, Private Cox's body still lay outside the stockade. The Indians appeared in small groups on all sides. Those who had concealed themselves in the shelter of the river bank were content to fire leisurely at the loopholes. Others slaughtered the cattle, hogs, and poultry. At about four o'clock in the afternoon the attackers all gathered below the river bank and began to fire at the blockhouses and at the flagstaff. After firing about 400 shots (by Hamilton's estimate) they succeeded in severing the halliard so that the garrison flag came fluttering down. A general shout arose and Black Hawk later would boast that his own deadly aim had cut the halliard. "I took my rifle, and shot in two the cord by which they hoisted their flag."

After dark the Indians dragged away the body of Private Cox. When daylight came next morning, the soldiers peering through the loopholes saw the dead man's head and heart impaled upon sticks thrust into the mud along the shore.

Gunfire continued all day September 7. The boats at the landing were burned and a house belonging to Denis Julien was on fire. Black Hawk's

warriors were now trying to burn the fort with flaming arrows, but the soldiers had devised "squirts" or syringes from some old musket barrels, and with these they kept the shingles too wet to ignite. One man had been wounded in the face but there were no more fatalities. No count of dead Indians was made.

At sundown the house of trader Archibald McNabb was burning, and Hamilton had begun to worry about the factory building. If that substantial structure should burn when the wind was right, the whole fort would go with it.

Hamilton's decision to fire the factory himself while the wind was calm could not have been made casually. He had watched his soldiers erect the building log by log, and he knew how important a trading house was to the friendly Indians. Still, he must consider the safety of his command, including his own wife and children.

He sent a man with a stick of port-fire, from the ordnance stores, to set the building afire during a lull in the siege. It burned with a great flame, sending sparks into the willows along the river and filling the air with the unbearable stench of scorched fur as the bales of pelts were consumed. Much of Johnson's merchandise was stored in the lower floor of blockhouse No. 3 and was not lost, but the building itself fell to coals and rubble, and with it fell one more attempt of the American government to subdue the red men of the Upper

Mississippi Valley and draw them away from British influence.

While the factory burned, some of the Indians fortified a stable near the fort. When they began to fire from this redoubt in mid-morning, September 8, Lieutenant Vasquez had his first opportunity to show Emilie what a crack artillerist he was. Except for occasional drill and the daily firing of the morning gun at reveille, with a blank charge, the men had had little chance to test their skill as matrosses [artillerists] since the establishment of the fort. Even in the spring of 1809, when they had fired a round of grape to impress Black Hawk, their target had merely been the broad river.

There probably was a six-pounder in each of the three main blockhouses, for Kingsley had brought one along when he began the fort and two more had been sent up during the scare in 1809. Vasquez took command of one of these pieces as soon as the Indians were discovered in the stable, and fired two rounds. His accuracy, said the *Missouri Gazette* in St. Louis, "soon made their yellow jackets fly." But attempts to burn the fort continued all through the day.

By September 9 the Indians had expended their ammunition and left, but not before they had won a victory and put Hamilton in a mood to evacuate the fort. The factory was gone, and it was the main reason for the existence of the post. Already John Johnson was packing his goods, intent

on getting down to St. Louis as fast as possible. The cattle were dead, so there was no way to haul wood; the hay was burned and hence there was "no forage even if we had cattle," Hamilton reported. He told his superiors that he would evacuate by November 15 if no steps were taken to render his position more secure.

A relief party of nineteen men was already on the way, commanded by Horatio Stark, who had been on duty at Belle Fontaine all summer. Stark was still nominally in command of the Fort Madison company, with Hamilton substituting while Stark recovered from an illness. His relief party (sent before the attack) was too late to help defend the post but it did arrive in time to allay Hamilton's fears that he must evacuate.

Although the urgent attention of the War Department was turned to danger spots in the East, and although there was talk of retrenching in the West, Fort Madison still had a year to live.

The more Lieutenant Hamilton thought about it, the more he believed the western frontier could be saved. In October he wrote the Secretary of War:

Do not consider it impertinent in a young officer by suggesting the following particulars to be taken into view —

It is said the Michilimackinac, Chikago and Detroit has been arrested from our Countrymen. The ill consequences resulting from these misfortunes will readily occurr to

every wellwisher of his government. — I therefore offer the following plan of opperation. . . . Forward an effecient force to regain Detroit, and capture Maulden. Proceed to Michilimackinac regain that post and take the little post of St. Joseph, which is in its neighborhood. The advantages which will accrue to the frontier of Louisiana, Illinois and Indiana are inconceivable. The Indians who are now attached to the British would not only loose their confidence in them, but would deter others. . . . send two Companies to Forts Mason & Madison, and establish Posts at Prairie du Chien, Peoria, & if possible at Green Bay — These Posts with those already named . . . would require no more than one thousand men, which will be but one regiment. . . . These may be considered as chimerical Ideas of mine, but I would if necessary pledge my life for the existance of the efficiency of such a plan.

Eventually some of these steps would be taken, although Hamilton's letter probably had little influence. Certainly the Secretary had no intention of reinforcing Fort Madison; instead, he spoke of abandoning it. He told Colonel Bissell at Fort Belle Fontaine to confer with Governor Benjamin Howard of Missouri Territory, and, if Howard concurred, the troops should be withdrawn from Fort Madison and Fort Osage.

But the mails were poor that autumn, and Bissell did not receive the Secretary's letter of October 7 until after Christmas. By then the Mississippi and Missouri were closed by ice and it was impossible to evacuate either Madison or Osage. Bissell thought, however, that they should both be given up in the spring and that new garrisons

should be established on the Illinois and Mississippi. The new posts, he wrote, should be built "in the most favorable bends of the river, where they nearest intersect, and where good sites may be found, the one on the Illinois, at or near the Peoria, and the other on the Mississippi below Stoney river [Rock River], and perhaps nearly as low down as the rapids, and that those posts be garrisoned with Field Officers. . . ."

Here the matter rested until spring. When Bissell finally got an opinion from Governor Howard, who had been away during the winter, it ran counter to Bissell's views. Howard wanted Fort Madison retained.

> . . . I never considered it a happy selection of Scite for a Garrison either as it respects the Defence of the Post itself, or its efficiency in affording Protection to the Frontier, had my Opinion been taken before we were in Hostility with the Indians, it certainly would have been in favor of its evacuation, but from a variety of considerations, arising from existing circumstances, I deem the abandonment of it unadviseable, were it to take place at this time the measure could be employed with great Dexterity among the Indians by B.[ritish] Agents as evidence of our inability to maintain it, and would embolden those who are now hostile, and possibly decide the wavering to take part against us. . . ."

At about the same time, the Secretary of War clinched the matter by writing to William Clark that the fort should be definitely continued.

What made the planners feel sure that Fort

Madison could survive was a scheme to transplant the confederated tribes of Sauk and Fox Indians below the fort, where, if they could be isolated from the warlike Winnebagoes and undecided Potawatomis, they might cause less trouble. The project dragged because the government had no large team of knowledgeable men to send among the Indians. Finally, the assignment fell to dependable Nicholas Boilvin and a Fox half-breed named Maurice Blondeau, who was influential among the tribes. These two men set out early in 1813 to persuade the Indians to move their villages downriver. Their job was made harder by an untimely bit of violence; down at Fort Mason, at the mouth of the Salt River, some militiamen had killed Quashquame's brother and sent a wave of suspicion through the ranks of Sauk and Fox warriors. But by the beginning of summer all the friendly members of these nations were living near the mouth of the Des Moines, including about 1,000 fighting men who could have caused much trouble had they decided to fight for the British. Blondeau estimated that 120 men still lived at the old village of Saukenuk on the Rock River, of which 100 under Black Hawk were avowedly pro-British and 20 were wavering in allegiance.

The problem now was to keep the relocated Indians happy, and the best way to do it was to give them a blacksmith and a factory. Johnson

was now open for business in St. Louis, with nobody in particular to trade with. By autumn a second relocation of the tribes had been accomplished for the purpose of getting them further away from the hostile Indians, and to a place where Johnson could conveniently establish another factory. The place was on the Missouri, at the mouth of Little Moniteau Creek.

This migration did not change Thomas Hamilton's problem very much. His assignment was the same: watch out for those renegades on Rock River, and for the Winnebagoes, and for stray Kickapoos or Potawatomis, too. Any warrior now near the fort might be looking for trouble.

In the summer of 1813, Lieutenant Hamilton decided to build a small blockhouse by the ravine to discourage Indians from gathering there. On July 8, when the structure was still no more than an underpinning of stone with a few courses of logs laid upon it, the ravine brought death to two more soldiers. A party of Winnebagoes and Sauks opened fire on a fatigue party chopping logs. One man was killed instantly and another died later; a third man was wounded. The soldiers were not identified in the *Missouri Gazette*, which ran an account of the incident, but Hamilton's company book carries the notation "shot by Indians July 8, 1813" after the name of Private John Minard. He was a thirty-six year old farmer from New London, Connecticut.

Another week of hasty construction followed, and when the men quit work on the afternoon of July 15 the blockhouse was chinked and plastered as high as a man's head. Above that point the raw, fresh-hewn logs were fitted loosely together and the cracks let sunlight through. But Hamilton felt it was Indian-proof if the sentinels would only keep the door barred. At guard-mounting he assigned a corporal and three privates to the blockhouse and ordered them not to open the door for any reason until relieved by the new guard.

But the men he assigned were volunteer Rangers, new to the fort and, as Hamilton later wrote, "not accustomed to obey such injunctions."

At 6:30 A.M. the guards were seen sitting in the doorway of the blockhouse, facing the fort. One of them was walking between the blockhouse and the fort when he might more logically have been on the other side, keeping an eye on the ravine.

At 7:00 A.M. an Indian crept to the blockhouse from the west, where he could not be seen by the men on duty. He thrust his musket through a loophole and fired on the men in the doorway. They leaped to their feet and scrambled to get inside, and just as they barred the door another Indian sprang upon it and tried to force it open with his feet. He was shot, either from the blockhouse or the fort.

Inside the fort, a gun crew raced to the south-

west blockhouse and trained a six-pounder on the group of Indians now frantically trying to get at the four men inside.

While some of the attackers began to dig at the stone underpinning, others jumped high in the air and attempted to shoot arrows between the unchinked logs. But the angle was wrong and the arrows clattered into the room without injuring any of the men. However, one Indian managed to kill perhaps two men by thrusting a spear through a crack on the south side of the blockhouse. The other two men seem to have been mortally injured in the first flurry of fighting before the door was barred.

A burst from the six-pounder severed one Indian's arm above the elbow and broke another's at the wrist, and the ravine was soon cleared. But already the underpinnings of the blockhouse had been torn open and two of the dead soldiers pulled outside and mangled.

Now the Indians took positions on the bluff behind the fort and continued firing. From this point they harrassed a party that went out in mid-afternoon to try to bring in the dead. No one was injured but the party fell back without the four bodies. The firing stopped before nightfall.

Two days later, Hamilton wrote a bitter and discouraging letter to Colonel Bissell at Belle Fontaine. He was ready to give up.

A man is positively in danger of losing his life to be-

seen outside of the garrison. They can actually . . . arrange for the execution of any plan they choose without being discovered. Of course they can come down upon us like a flash of lightning — to be ready to meet which, we are harnessed up day and night. . . . We must have wood, and I shall remain entirely inside the fort until I hear from you, even if in so doing I should be compelled to burn some of the petty mouldings in some of the fine buildings. . . . If I do not hear from you by the 20th of August and the Indians continue to harass me in the manner they appear determined to do, I do not know but I will take the responsibility on myself, that is if they will permit me to go away. It is impossible for us to do duty long in the manner that I have adopted.

He was allowing a full month for Bissell's reply. His message would have to be carried down-river by boat or on horseback; Bissell would have to confer with Benjamin Howard, who was now General Howard, commanding the western end of the military district; then Bissell would have to send his reply up the river by the same tedious route.

From here the historical record becomes almost blank. Sometime between late August and mid-November, 1813, Fort Madison was abandoned and burned. In the surviving papers of Bissell and Howard, and in the records of the War Department, no trace of a report on the evacuation has been located. It is little comfort to this writer to assume that such a document still exists, and that some day, in the great vault called the National Archives, it will come to light.

As late as 1897 the files of the War Department apparently contained some record of Fort Madison's final days. An anonymous clerk in the Department prepared a brief paper in that year, published in the *Annals of Iowa*, sketching the history of the fort. It contained this passage:

> During the night of the 3d of September, a trench was dug from the southeast block-house to the river. The boats belonging to the garrison had already been secured, and to them was hurriedly conveyed the remainder of the provisions and the most valuable of the movable property. Then the garrison moved stealthily on their hands and knees along the trench, and gained the boats; the order was given to apply the torch, and although the savages were encamped in force within gunshot of the fort, so secretly and cautiously had the movements been made that Hamilton and his men were far away on the bosom of the Mississippi, and the fort completely wrapped in flames, before the enemy was aware of their departure.

The *Missouri Gazette*, which had followed the affairs of Fort Madison faithfully for five years, did not mention the evacuation until November 20. It then carried two sentences about the event, mentioning that one reason for the abandonment was the failure of the civilian contractor to supply rations. The date of the evacuation was not given.

Though the author of the 1897 article in the *Annals* was clearly working from original documents, and though his report is basically accurate in other respects, there is some reason to doubt his statement that the fort was abandoned on Septem-

ber 3. If so, the boats of the garrison could easily have reached St. Louis by September 7; yet on September 11 the *Gazette* ran a letter about Fort Madison affairs and gave no hint that word of the abandonment had reached the editor.

The burning of the fort was but a small loss to the war machine. It could not have alarmed a nation that was soon to hear of Captain Perry's success on Lake Erie and the reoccupation of Detroit. And the war that was finished for Fort Madison was not finished for its men, who moved on to new duties. William Henry Harrison had yet to defeat the British and kill Tecumseh at the Thames. Andrew Jackson still must whip the Creeks at Talladega and Horseshoe Bend. The Atlantic waters still must churn with the frigates, brigs, and sloops of opposing navies. The British were about to take Fort Niagara, burn Buffalo and Black Rock, and later destroy the Capitol itself in Washington. Ahead were such battles as Lundy's Lane, Fort Erie, and Plattsburg. Francis Scott Key had yet to watch the bombs bursting in air at Fort McHenry.

But at Fort Madison, one episode and one great effort had ended.

DONALD JACKSON

In Quest of the Location

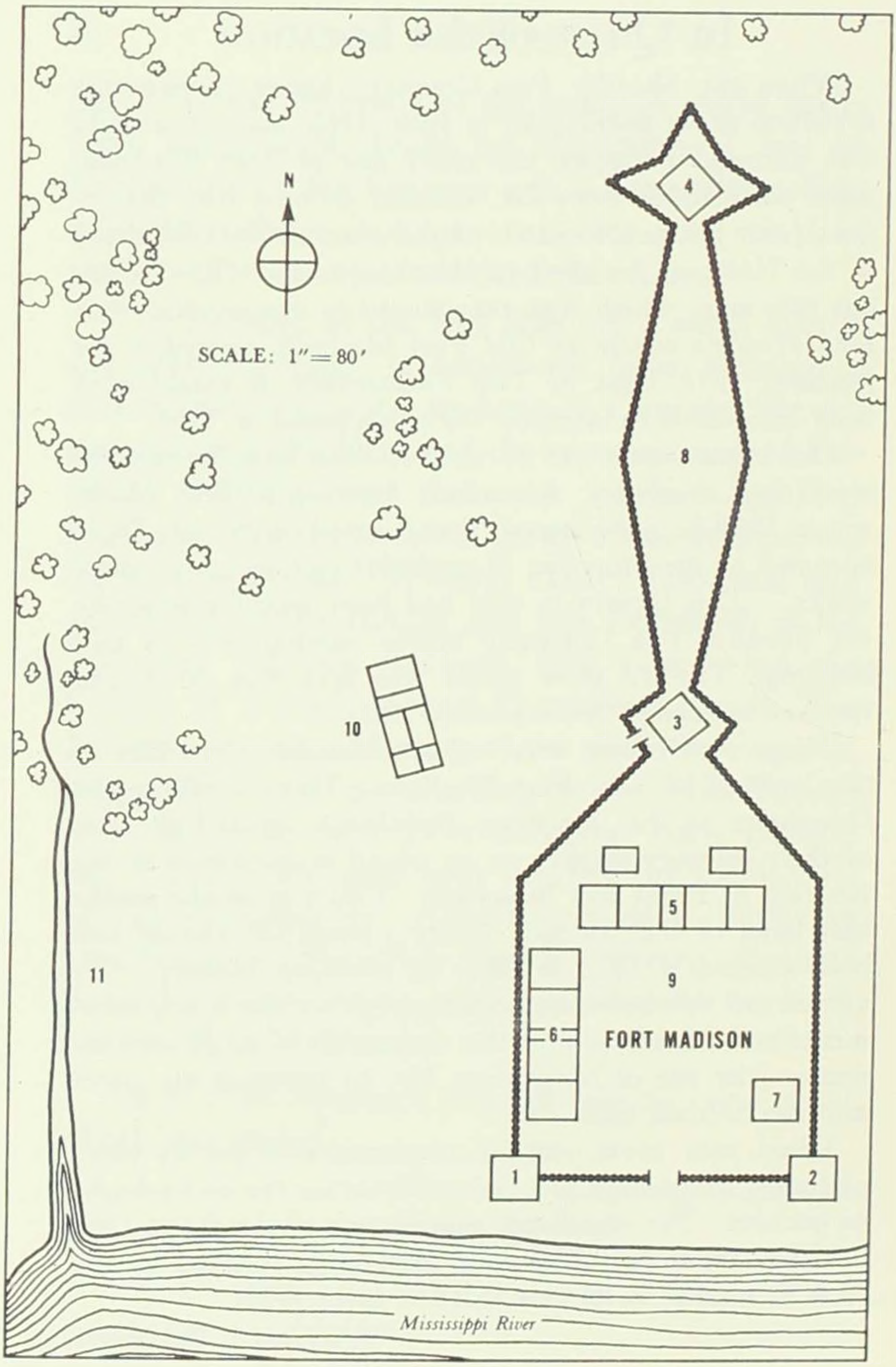
When the Sheaffer Pen Company began to excavate a portion of its parking lot in June, 1965, the opportunity was afforded to locate the exact site of Fort Madison, more particularly since Dr. Donald Jackson had discovered John Johnson's sketch of the plan of Fort Madison in the National Archives in Washington in 1956. Without this map, which was reproduced in conjunction with Dr. Jackson's article on Old Fort Madison printed in the January, 1958, issue of THE PALIMPSEST, it would have been impossible to interpret the excavations of 1965.

The approximate site of the fort had been known for more than a century. An artist's drawing of Fort Madison in 1899 bore the legend that it stood on the site "now occupied by the Morrison Manufacturing Company's plow works." This factory in turn had been used for years by the Sheaffer Pen Company before moving into its new building. The old plow works was then torn down and the land converted into a parking lot.

There were others who had a reasonably clear idea of the location of Old Fort Madison. Thus, in 1908, the Daughters of the American Revolution located the site of their chimney marker on an island in the street at the junction of Front and Broadway. This was on the northeast bank of the "ravine" where a small blockhouse had been erected in 1813 to drive off skulking Indians. The advent of the horseless carriage led to street improvements and the removal of this monument to its present location (the site of blockhouse No. 1) between the street and the railroad track.

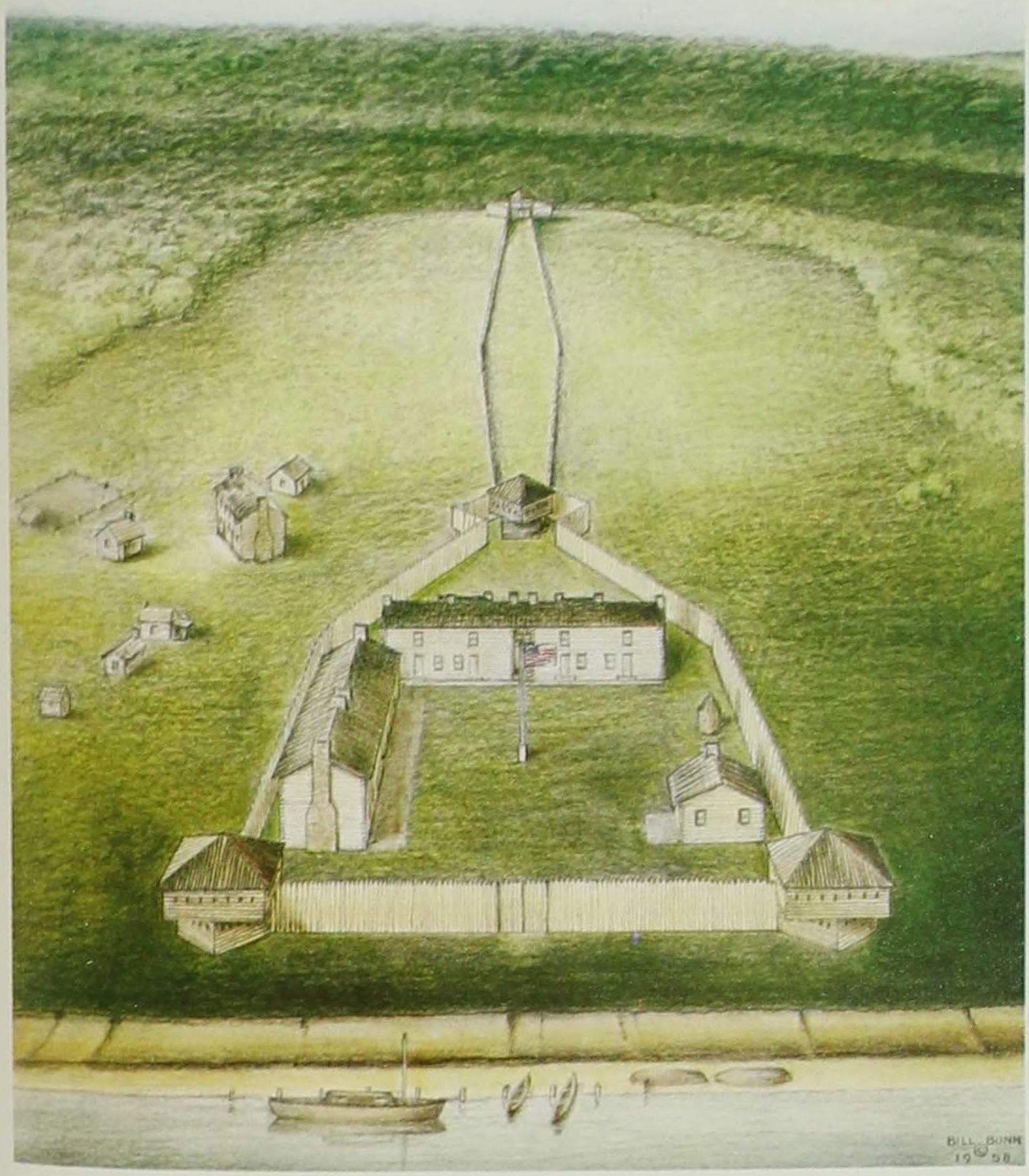
Wind, rain, snow, and fire, combined with twenty years of Indian occupancy, left few artifacts for the archeologist to uncover. The significant contribution of the dig of 1965 is the confirmation of the site already established by the D.A.R. marker in its new location since 1952.

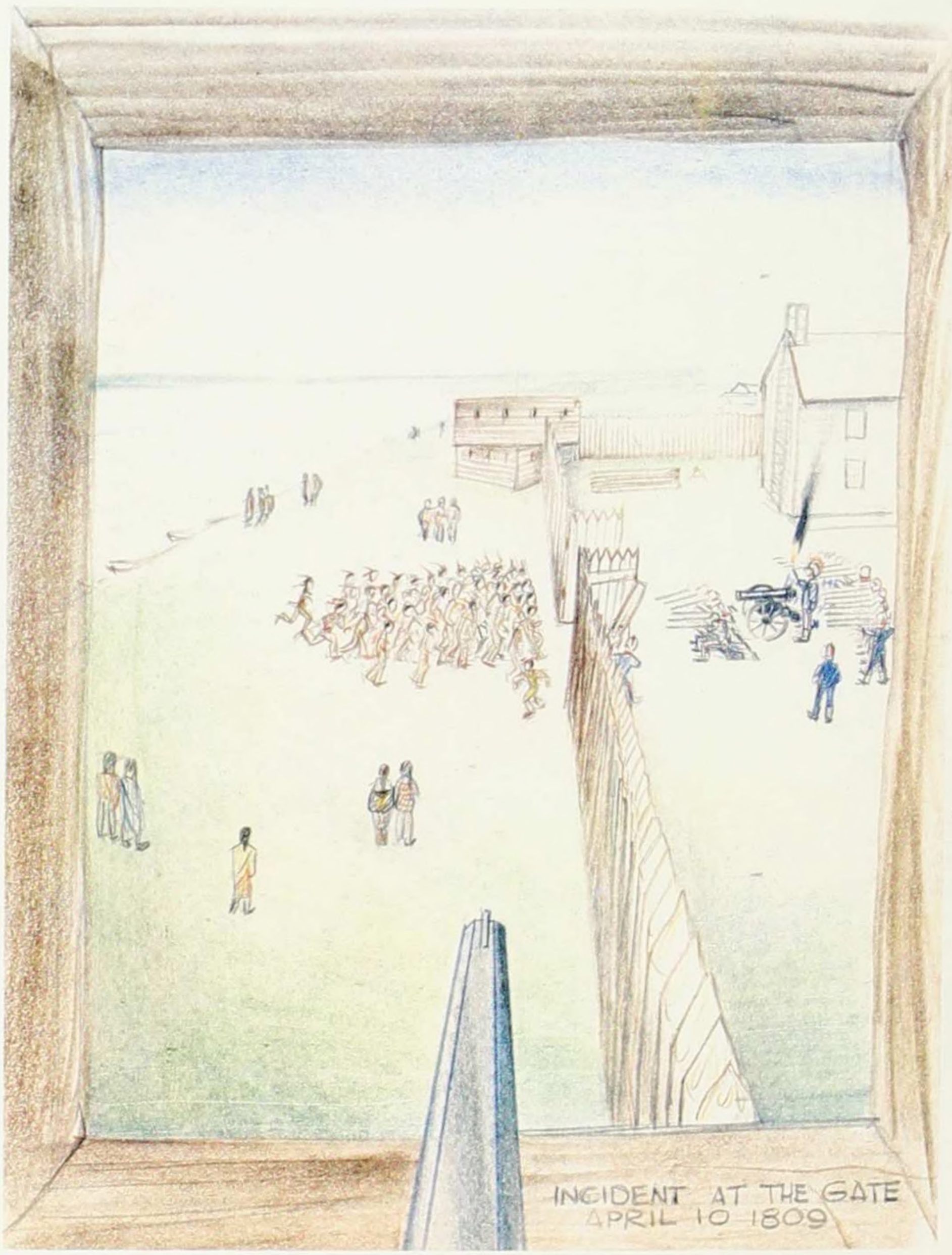
WILLIAM J. PETERSEN



Drawing based on John Johnson's sketch made in January, 1810.

Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4 — blockhouses
No. 5 — officers' quarters
No. 6 — barracks
No. 7 — powder magazine or hospital (?)
No. 8 — covered way
No. 9 — parade area
No. 10 — factory
No. 11 — ravine


BILL BUNN
1958


INCIDENT AT THE GATE
APRIL 10 1809