

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