

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 Brechia 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 renown. These men were coopers, tanners, 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.

<i>Sergeants</i>	<i>Corporals</i>	<i>Musicians</i>
James Galloway	Frederick Guntrum	Charles Allen
Patrick Griffin	George Ilginfritz	John Dawson
Samuel Keeley	Edward Lynch	James Henry
Thomas Stevenson	Joseph Ozier	
<i>Privates</i>		
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.