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Galena Illinois' Old Stockade Used during the Black Hawk War 1832

To have a background for this story of Galena's oldest land mark, "The Old Stockade," it will visualize it more clearly if the era leading up to its building and its use as a refuge, during the uprising of the Sac Tribe under the leadership of Black Hawk in 1832, is given.



Galena's Old Stockade on the Cobblestone Street.

So we turn back the pages of Galena's early days; when the first American mining development began; the story of the glittering lead that came from the rocky hills in the distant section, of the North-west, started the trek of adventurers seeking wealth by extracting the mineral from the ground that was filled with the precious ore.



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As early as 1820, Julian Dubuque, a French trader, came up the river from "La Salle's Villages" to the locality of the mines. His first operations were on the west bank of the Mississippi River where the city of Dubuque is located. Seeking further ground for mining, he followed a small stream that flowed east for four miles from its junction with the "Great River" that started in the far north and curved its mighty stream south until it reached the Gulf, making the highway for the future development of trade and transportation. Doubtless, Julian Dubuque knew of the tale carried back to France by a trader who gave a report that "Indians were digging lead from the hills on a small stream that flowed east from the 'Great River/ and this stream was called 'The River of Mines' by the early traders."

Reaching this location, Dubuque found a village of Winnebagos with their crude implements taking the ore from the earth and bartering it for corn, corn whiskey and trinkets of adornment that the traders gave them in exchange. He made friends with the tribe and taught them better methods of mining.

Tales of the fabulous wealth that was in this new found El Dorado was far flung, reaching not only to the new Republic, but over the sea. Spain, France, and the British Isles had eyes open for the North-west and its unbroken wilderness.

By 1822, the first American Klondike was in full swing. In New England, the story was heard by the sturdy men whose lives had been bounded by the narrow rocky farms that held a meager livelihood. Professional men and college graduates from the larger towns came with men for business enterprises, all having the call as well as the urban population and joined the caravan headed for the "Lead Mine District, "Virginia, Kentucky and the Louisiana country that had promoted the fur companies and traders "up the River," followed the newer adventure and cast their lot with the uncertain undertaking. The journey to this land of promise was filled with hardships; transportation by stage, team and boat; peril from Indian ambush and unbroken virgin forests to break through, locating a road that lead to the prospective wealth they hoped to find at the "End of the Trail."

The setting given this locality way back in the yesterdays of the ice and glacial period made one of the most beautiful landscapes in which to plant a home or found a city. It was surrounded by entrancing hills and bluffs, deep and fertile valleys between them, and lime stone rocks rising from the heights like sentinels or fortified castles guarding the steep incline that rose hundreds of feet above the level of their base.

In such surrounding beauty the first settlement in this locality was made. The early French traders had chosen a site on the top of the high bluff that rose from the "River of mines" (now the Galena River) to a height of several hundred feet. A log shack served



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as a post for barter and trade with travelers, Indians and miners. This location was called LaPoint.

In the spring of 1820 Thomas January and his wife emigrated from far off Kentucky. This brave pioneer woman was the first white wife to settle in this untamed wilderness. She must have had the spirit of endurance and courage to be willing to face Indian warfare and forego all life's comforts. Soon January Point became the center of the growing community. One by one log cabins were built near the post and on the river bank. For two years these pioneers were isolated from the outside world with only the natives, prospectors and settlers as the companions of January and his wife.

An intelligent Frenchman, named Francis Bouthillier, established a rude shack for trade down on the levy. He had an eye for future business. By 1822 steam boats began to make regular trips as far north as Fort Snelling. The first boat to land on the Galena River (that was three hundred fifty feet wide) was The Virginia, it came from New Orleans by way of St. Louis. So an active trade was started in the lower part of the village though January's Point was the real center of the increasing population.

By 1825 the settlement had spread out over the hillsides and along the river. It included the settlers, the miners, the Indians and travelling adventurers. About a thousand people lived in its outpost in temporary cabins, tepees and shelters of rude construction. The log houses were built from virgin timber of oak and walnut, devoid of comforts and conveniences, but able to withstand storms and Indian warfare. "The population of January's Point at this time was seven hundred souls." On December 27th, 1826 the importance of January's Point became significant enough to receive a new name and at the same time a post office. It was officially and most appropriately named "Galena" which is the scientific name for the valuable sulfide of lead ore found in the deposits deep in the earth of the age old hills on which the expected city was to be built.

In 1830 Galena was the center of interest in the state. It had made great advances in population, commerce and building. Young Chicago to the east was slowly awakening to be a city. It was the terminal of the Frink & Walker Stage Line from Galena with its relay stations for refreshing men and beast along its route.

In this historically minded day, many of these old taverns and inns have been preserved and marked, especially in the vicinity of the Black Hawk country. Local chapters of the Daughters of American Revolution, true to the tradition of preserving American history have placed these markers along the old stage route, showing to this generation the hard struggle that their ancestors endured to make our land the great republic that now stands for what all the world is fighting for today.



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The population was ten thousand. Quite a town. It was incorporated and lots and building sites were sold. A motely gathering with all sorts and conditions of men and women made this population. Being located between Fort Armstrong to the south and Fort Crawford to the north, it was the center of gay social life. One eastern writer describing his visit to the mining district said, "The lead district is an island of white people surrounded by thousands of Indians, adventurers and miners." The gay dances, the open hospitality of the people, the friendly hand of friendship that was extended without formality or convention to all comers, gave this period the reputation that one pioneer lady described vividly, "A girl did not have to be beautiful or wealthy to be a belle, if she could ride, or dance a quadrille, sing a song, laugh and be merry, she was sought after. We were a happy-go-lucky lot of youngsters among the hills in that old Galena town."

The dawn of the year 1832 brought fear to this peaceful settlement. To the south where the Rock River flows into the Mississippi, Black Hawk, the Sac chief, had his land and village that was faithfully guarded on a high rocky island. The fur traders who went up and down the river, the emigrants who travelled by ox team, or the enemy Indian tribes, did not escape the watchful eye of "Black Hawk" who held his land according to the sacred treaty made in 1804 in St. Louis. Black Hawk, chief of the Sacs, and Keokuck, of the Foxes and four other chiefs were makers of the treaty that was signed under the direction of the President, Thomas Jefferson, and officers of the state and army. The treaty was signed by citizens of St. Louis who were Charles Gratiot, Francois Vigo, and Auguste and Pierre Chouteau; All attached their names to the treaty in the presence of Major Stoddard of the army.

By this treaty, the Indians gave up fifty million acres for white settlements east of the Mississippi River. However, Black Hawk, who was in complete sympathy with the British, was violently opposed to this disposal of the Indian's rights to the land of their fathers. Regularly, as years went by, he and Keokuck journeyed to St. Louis to consult Governor Clark in regard to their lands and their people, to the emigration, of the white man was day by day coming nearer to the border of the Indians' sacred hunting ground on the edge of Black Hawk's village. The government was making every effort to induce the tribes to move westward, but such policy stirred the wrath of Black Hawk, and he avowed in council that "The Sacs never sold their lands as Keokuck sold the land of the Foxes." General Gains, in command of Fort Armstrong at Rock Island, asked, "Who is Black Hawk? By what right does he speak?" The reply by the haughty chief warned the "Pale face" intruders who they had for a foe. He said, with dignity "I am a Sac. I am a warrior. Provoke our people to battle, and you will not ask who Black Hawk is."

In the early spring of 1832, he saw from his watch tower on the Rock River, a train of settlers moving near his island retreat. Calling his warriors and their women and



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children, he headed up the Mississippi, and Governor Reynolds dispatched the frightful news "Black Hawk has invaded Illinois," and Galena was in that state. So the people were warned that they must be prepared for an attack.

When the news of the uprising of the Sac and Fox Indians was confirmed and that they were headed for the Illinois country, Col. Henry Gratiot the government agent for the Winnebago Indians in the Lead mine District, was hurriedly sent to "Prophetstown" below Farmersburg with power to offer a treaty to Black Hawk, But it was most indignantly refused and at once the enraged warriors attempted to take Gratiot prisoner. The "Prophet Chief" interceded and took him into his wigwam, saying "He is good man; friend of Indian; he my friend. I keep him with me in my wigwam." Gratiot attempted to escape during the night in canoes up the river but the "Braves" gave him a frightful race for his life before he reached safety back in the Illinois lead district.

The Winnebagos in the district were friendly, and had no resentment to the white settlers and miners. Especially were they devoted to Col. Henry Gratiot, who, with understanding and friendship, had won their loyalty. However, some of them were drawn into sympathy with the Sacs.

Hurriedly the United States government erected two block houses in Galena, forts or stockades as they were called, on opposite hill tops. The most important was erected one hundred fifty feet above what is now Bench and Perry streets. It was commanded by Colonel Strode of the 27th Regiment of the Illinois Militia. The block house was garrisoned by one hundred fifty regular soldiers. From this vantage point the country for miles around could be seen, and the fort was supplied with cannons, guns and ammunition to fight the invader. Col. Strode proclaimed martial law for the district May 31st, 1832. Every able bodied man, regardless of occupation or position, was ordered to work on a run-way from the block house to the large underground room in Amos Farrar's log house, the logs placed upright according to the French plan of building. This room was excavated from the rock hillside. It was walled with limestone and upheld by giant oak timbers rudely cut from the virgin forests nearby. The man power of the settlement fell in line and worked day and night to build the run-way from the block house to the stockade in the Farrar place of refuge. This run-way was made by digging a deep trench and placing timbers upright in it. These timbers were from six to twelve feet in diameter and from ten to fifteen feet in height. They were cemented together after being placed in the trench with clay mud and in so doing formed a solid wall of wood with port holes on either side so that guns could be used by the people if they were attacked from the outside.

It was planned to fire the cannon at the block house when danger threatened the settlement. At this signal all were to flee to the stockade for safety. A large bell was kept



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and rung in the stockade simultaneously with the firing of the cannon. At midnight June 4th, the dreaded sound came and the cannon gave the alarm.

The scrambling of the inhabitants to reach the shelter was vividly described by Dr. Horatio Newhall, a pioneer physician, writing to his brother in Lynn, Massachusetts. He said, "On Monday we had the alarm that the attack was imminent, for the Indians were close at hand. All the men, women and children fled to the stockade. Within fifteen minutes after the alarm was sounded there must have been seven hundred in the shelter, some with dresses put on back to front, men putting on their trousers, some with only night clothes on. All were wildly screaming and shouting to each other. Three babies were born during this mad scramble for safety."

When the grand stampede into the shelter of the stockade at the midnight hour came, the following pioneers must have been a part of that excited group for they are listed in an old diary as some of the inhabitants at that time - June 1832: Major Campbell, Dr. Muir and Indian wife, Miss Emily Billon, Mr. Moses Meeker, the Nicholas Dowlings, James Johnson, the Chetlains, the Soularads, the Gears, the Stahls, the Gratiots, the Hempsteads, the Harris', the Hunts and the Newhalls.

The Indians were met by the Militia west of the village, but hurried away on their ponies with their leader to a point on Horse Shoe Mound. When they saw the fort with its cannons and gun on the high hill, and its block house, they made a wild dash overland to the north, where, seven miles from Galena, they were met by Colonel Henry Gratiot and Thomas Wylley, a scout for the inhabitants of the district. Black Hawk was in a mood to call his war ended. The council was filled with understanding, and the chief gave his word that the Illinois country would no longer be molested. This council was held in the yard of the Branton House, under a large white oak tree. It was a hot summer day and the Indians were weary of their war fare, feeling that the superior military tactics of the well-trained militia was too great for them to try and conquer. However, the treaty was only a matter affecting the Illinois Lead Mining District. The "war hawk" had other places and other settlements that he planned to destroy when he could get help from other tribes.

The location of the Branton Tavern was on the highway where the Frink and Walker Stage Line, making its forty-eight hour trip from Chicago to Galena, passed. The hotel was used for a relay for the horses and a rest for the weary travelers. After the treaty, the location was called the "Hill of Council," later the shorter name of Council Hill was used.

After this pipe of peace the Indians dashed off to the West. There were only four hundred of their braves left and they had the burden of caring for their squaws and



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children, and the aged men. A sad caravan of worn men, they left the Mississippi River, crossing it at the mouth of the Bad Axe River in the state of Wisconsin. There they were met by General Armstrong, with his army of trained men, amounting to one thousand, and the poor red man had no chance of victory against such skilled soldiers. This battle of Bad Axe is called one of the bloodiest and most disgraceful battles in the history of American Indian warfare.

Col. Jefferson Davis, who was the commandant of Fort Crawford (Prairie du Chien) in the name of the United States, took "Black Hawk" prisoner; and in chains he was carried down the River to St. Louis and incarcerated in Jefferson Barracks, much to the sorrow of Governor Clark, who interceded with President Jackson for his release. This was granted and Black Hawk was invited to visit Washington as a guest and honored citizen of the United States.

He passed into the Indians Happy Hunting ground Oct. 3, 1838 and his burial place is in sight of his beloved river and island home. Like a Sac chief he was buried sitting upright, clad in a military uniform.



The oldest home in Galena Illinois, the Nicholas Dowling stone house, built in 1826.



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And now we come to the story of the old historic site which is in Galena as we of this generation have known it. Before the Indian uprising, a group of log houses were built on the hillside going up to Elk and Prospect streets. They were the homes of some of Galena's most enterprising citizens, and this section might well be called "exclusive."

The locality in which the stockade and cabins were built at the time of the Black Hawk war were those of Colonel Strode, Dr. Hancock, Amos Farrar and Nicholas Dowling, his was a stone house, the first substantial structure to be built in Galena. Across the narrow cobblestone street, he built a stone store which was -used as a trading post and early court house, with a public hall over the entire building. Colonel Amos Farrar's log cabin had a large, under-ground room that was to be used for protection if the Indians ever attacked the town. It had seats and benches around the wall where people could rest. Reflecting mirrors were placed to the north, south, east and west so that an invader could be seen if they approached the stockade. It had high timbered boards around the enclosure to the south of the cabin.

Colonel Farrar was one of the important men of the settlement, being the factor of the local American Fur Company. From his name, he doubtless was of Scotch ancestry, and, like many pioneers who came into the wilderness, he married an Indian woman, who, with their three children, died during the Small Pox epidemic. Later, he married Miss Sophia Gear, daughter of Captain Gear, who was a leader and a progressive man on the range. His daughter was an educated and refined lady, with an ambition that led her to establish a school in her home, the second one in the district.

Colonel Farrar died suddenly during the summer of the Black Hawk war and it was then that Colonel Henry Gratiot, the government Indian agent, became the commander of the stockade. With two brothers he had made the treacherous overland journey from St. Louis in the spring of 1826 and was appointed by the government for care and supervision of the Indians in the district. The early solution of the Indian problem needed men like Colonel Gratiot to befriend them and understand their problems. He had experience in those earlier days in St. Louis, being a brother-in-law of Manual Lisa whose history with the Indians and development of the west is part of history. He was also the direct descendant of Laclède, the founder of St. Louis, and related to the fur trading Chouteau Brothers. In the history of the Indian wars of Wisconsin, Mr. Moses Strong said, "There never was a white man in his time or any other time that had so much influence over the Indians of the Northwest as Colonel Gratiot." The knowledge of the Indian character was obtained by him from his contact with these very pioneer spirits, who were his ancestors. To obtain confidence and influence with the Indians he knew it was necessary for him to deal with them with kindness and good faith and never practice deceit. He obtained an almost unbounded control and influence over the Winnebago Tribe, which in his time claimed all the country which is now southwest



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Wisconsin and Northwest Illinois.

Mrs. Sophia Gear Farrar lived in her stockade home until her death. There being no heirs it was sold at auction and was bought by Mrs. Mary E. Gardner, February 16th, 1884. She and her daughter, Margaret A. Gardner, beloved teacher in Galena, guarded this old heirloom home with most patriotic zeal. This remarkable teacher held a place in the educational life of Galena that few women are privileged to attain. She started teaching before she completed her college education and continued it in Galena for over half a century. Her life as a teacher was devoted to three generations of Galenians who passed under her guidance and inspiration.

After her public school service was over, she could not give up her desire to have youth about her and unfold to them, in her own splendid methods, the constructive elemental education of the child mind. So, for several years, she had a kindergarten in her own home, and proudly told of having as a pupil the five-year old great, great grandson of Colonel Gratiot, Meade McKinlay Morris, Jr., whose grandparents, the William Grant Bales, lived in the Dowling mansion across the street that was built in 1845 by James Dowling, the son of Nicholas Dowling. In addition to her educational part in Galena's life, she was an accomplished musician, being organist for many years in Grace Episcopal Church, although she was a member of "St. Michael's" parish, founded by the Italian missionary priest, Father Samuel Mazzuchelli. The organ in Grace church is over one hundred years old, brought to Galena from New York City via New Orleans and the Mississippi River in 1840.

On June 14th, 1932 the City of Galena, with Priscilla Mullins Chapter, D. A. R., the city council, and city school board celebrated the building of the one hundred year old stockade, and paying tribute to Margaret Gardner, who was devoted to its preservation. Doubtless the one historic and necessary place of refuge would have been obliterated had not her interest kept the treasured beams, walls and entrance intact; that we who survive that passing generation can venerate these ardent pioneers who built for the future. A member of Priscilla Mullins, Daughters of the American Revolution gave the following tribute to Galena's Margaret Gardner, "The Daughters of the American Revolution are vitally interested in the preservation of historic spots all over the United States, and the local chapter has marked the site of the blockhouse and the old stockade. We are grateful to Miss Gardner for her cooperation and her patriotic devotion to Galena's early history.

"The ancient Talmud has a proverb, 'Yesterday is a dream, tomorrow a vision, today is a reality.' After today may some of the coming generation catch the vision of the future and keep the old stockade as a memorial of the pioneers of an early day.



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The D. A. R., committee consisting of Miss Jessie Spensley and Miss Helen Boevers, communicated with as many of the pupils of Miss Gardner as could be contacted and invited them for a "homecoming" picnic in Grant Park thus celebrating her 62 years of her school year with a picnic and thus celebrating her 62 years of teaching in Galena with a fitting "dismissal of school."

This little story of the old stockade is written in the restored and modernized home that has the underground room for its foundation. From the window where my writing table sits I can look up the steep hillside to the site of the old blockhouse and visualize those stirring events on the spot that the run-way to the old stockade was built.

On May 29, 1941 Margaret Gardner passed on in her venerated home and the place became the property of her nephew James Marcellus Rouse and his sister May Belle Rouse.

They have carried on the tradition of the old building and treasure it as did their aunt; being a friend of man in time of war and peace, they have "The May Belle Tea Room" in it. Hundreds of interested guests desire the history of the century old building, and with deep reverence for its part in Galena's pioneer days and for its "Keeper of the Stockade" Margaret Gardner, I submit this story of a Landmark in Galena.

Compiled by Florence Gratiot Bale