



# WORLD WAR II MILITARY HISTORY

- 1777 The American Flag is flown for the first time during a skirmish at Cooch’s Bridge, Maryland.
- 1814 American’s are victorious over the British at Lake Champlain.
- 1847 American troops capture Mexico City.
- 1862 Battle of Antietam.
- 1863 Battle of the Cumberland Gap in Tennessee ends in a Union victory.
- 1918 COL George S. Patton leads the 1st U.S. Tank attack at St. Mihiel.
- 1918 U.S. troops land in Arkhanglesk, Russia.
- 1943 Carrier launched U.S. aircraft and B-24’s raid Tarawa.
- 1944 George H. W. Bush is shot down by Japanese forces after a bombing run on Bonin Island.
- 1945 Japanese forces in the Philippines surrender to the U.S.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Brevet Brigadier General Thomas J. Rodman is often credited as the father of the Rock Island Arsenal. Under Rodman’s watch, the arsenal’s stone shops were started, and a plan for the installation forward was established. However, the first commandant of the Arsenal was Major Charles P. Kingsbury who assumed command on 3 August 1863. Under Kingsbury’s tenure that lasted until 4 June 1865, he all but completed Storehouse A—the modern day Clock Tower (Building 250).



- 1 Which World War II produced tank was later auctioned off for use as a tractor for local farmers?
- 2 Which RIA produced rocket launcher concept borrowed its design from typical howitzers and field guns?
- 3 What was the name of the Sac village that was situated near the present day Black Hawk State Park?

### ANSWERS FOR AUGUST 2019 QUESTIONS

- 1 In what year was the Aeronautical Division of the Army established?  
➡ 1907
- 2 What was the largest caliber (mm) explosive shell ever produced by the United States?  
➡ 910 mm
- 3 Who was the first known European explorer to navigate the upper Mississippi River Valley?  
➡ Zebulon Pike



For answers to trivia, information on this month’s artifact spotlight, digital copies of old newsletters and more, visit the ASC History Office website at:

<https://aschq.army.mil/About-Us/History>



## The Army-Navy “E” Flag

The Japanese surprise attack at Pearl Harbor, left the American public aghast at the wreckage that was unveiled after the smoke cleared on the evening of 7 December 1941. This attack served as the motivation for people to “roll up their sleeves for the war effort.” The civilians employed by Rock Island Arsenal were no different.

Often times, the term “war production” is used to reference war materiel. However, in the spring and summer of 1942 food and rations were also included due to their strategic nature. In a write-up of Arsenal history by the Chief of the Historical Section of Weapons Command in October of 1965, around 300 arsenal employees continued their work beyond their shifts end. They “[took] rake and hoe in hand on 21 acres of rich Government-owned soil.” Multiple lots of this land had been given to these employees, and were dubbed “Victory Gardens.” Arsenal employees and their families tended to these gardens every day, keeping plants and crops in their neatly grown rows.

An honor that was designed to recognize “excellence in production of war equipment” during the Second World War, the Army-Navy “E” Flag was to encourage industrial mobilization. While any industrial manufacturer is eligible to obtain this award, they were subject to an Army and Navy reviewing board. They

evaluated items such as quality, quantity, overcoming obstacles, avoiding setbacks, and effective use of manpower.

The Arsenal’s wartime output by 20 September 1942 was so great, that it was awarded the coveted Army-Navy “E” pennant for “outstanding achievement in the production of war materiel.” Over 25,000 arsenal workers and their families, and local area citizens attended the award ceremony. “There was a distinguishable pride to be seen this day, as the heart of the community was recognized for its service to the Nation” during the Second World War.

However, Rock Island Arsenal’s spirit of excellence was not to be stopped simply by recognition. Later in March of 1944, the Arsenal was recognized again with the pennant. She would receive two more awards of this kind before the close of the War in Europe in May of 1945. The Arsenal workforce had grown exponentially, with over 10,000 employees in the Artillery Vehicle Department alone. “Today, the only business in America – is the business of winning the war”, said Illinois Governor Dwight Green. Truly, if history does show us what the nation needed at the time of the Second World War, Rock Island Arsenal clearly was able to provide that service to the Nation at arms.

## Building 390

When history is provided on Rock Island Arsenal, often times it is connected somehow to the ten stone shops that line Rodman Avenue. These stone shops comprised the core of the Arsenal up through about 1900. However, the two World Wars saw added construction on Arsenal Island, and a massive expansion that would grow the installation into what it is today. Part of this expansion in World War II included Building 390—the building that houses ASC’s Headquarters.

Constructed between July 1941 and May 1942, Building 390 was originally purposed to serve as the installation headquarters building. It is a concrete structure designed in the form of a letter “H.” The shape is a group of three sections that consist of two wings with a service core connecting those wings. It is four stories high with a basement. The dominating feature is the main entrance that is flanked by tall, massive, stepped back pilasters and surmounted by what used to be the seal of the Arsenal.

The wings are approximately 200x60 feet, and the building was constructed with fluorescent lighting. The original building had a spacious reception room with walnut walls, and corridors with glazed tile walls, steel doors and frames, and recessed lighting.

Construction of the building began with an estimated cost of \$938,000. The building is made of materials such as reinforced concrete and steel sash. There were many companies who aided in the construction, including: Priester Construction, Davenport Electrical Contract Company, Tri-City Shade Service, and Dewey Portland Cement Company. Once construction was completed, BG Norman Ramsey was the first Arsenal Commander to have his headquarters in Building 390. The last major renovations were in 2012.

The building has been the headquarters for the Arsenal, WECOM, ARMCOM, ARRCOM, AMCCOM, IOC, OSC, JMC, and AFSC, prior to becoming the home of today’s Army Sustainment Command.



RIA Bldg 390, 27 Feb 1945.

*To destroy a person is to deny and eliminate their own understanding of their own history.*

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