



U.S. ARMY

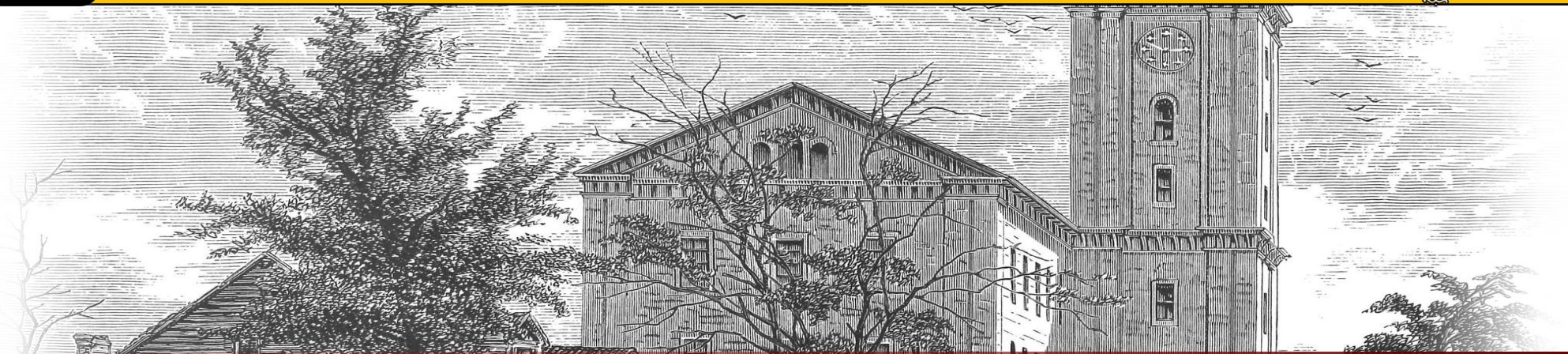
# THE ASC HISTORY NEWSLETTER

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## COMMEMORATING ROCK ISLAND ARSENAL'S 160TH ANNIVERSARY



### OCTOBER IN MILITARY HISTORY

### SGT Christiansen's Cannon and Rock Island Arsenal

- 1845 6 Bandits with the Banditti of the Prairie are hanged for the murder of George Davenport.
- 1866 6 Excavation work begins for Shop B – modern Building 60.
- 1866 10 Work begins to purchase the last remaining privately owned land on Rock Island.
- 1871 8 Quarters One is completed, with landscaping being completed in the Spring.
- 1882 30 The construction of Shop G – modern Building 108– is completed.
- 1917 2 RIA sends 6 employees to France to study the manufacture of recoil mechanisms.
- 1918 13 Liberty Day celebration takes place at Rock Island Arsenal
- 1941 11 The first M1919A4 Browning machine gun is delivered to Storehouse W1.
- 1944 1 COL C. A. Waldmann assumes command of the Rock Island Arsenal.
- 2006 1 The Army Sustainment Command is activated at Rock Island Arsenal.

### MONTHLY TRIVIA

- 1 What year did construction begin on Storehouse A, the modern Clock Tower Building?
- 2 What was the function of the clock tower portion of Storehouse A – besides telling time?
- 3 What other entity was on Rock Island Arsenal during the construction of Storehouse A?

#### ANSWERS FOR SEPTEMBER 2022 QUESTIONS

- 1 Besides COL King, who is the other arsenal commander that is buried at the Rock Island National Cemetery?  
➤ COL Thomas J. Rodman
- 2 Who was the arsenal commander prior to COL Rodman's arrival at Rock Island?  
➤ MAJ Charles Kingsbury
- 3 Another noteworthy street on the island is Davenport Avenue, who is it named for?  
➤ COL George Davenport



Trivia answers, digital newsletters, and more history is available on the ASC History website:

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

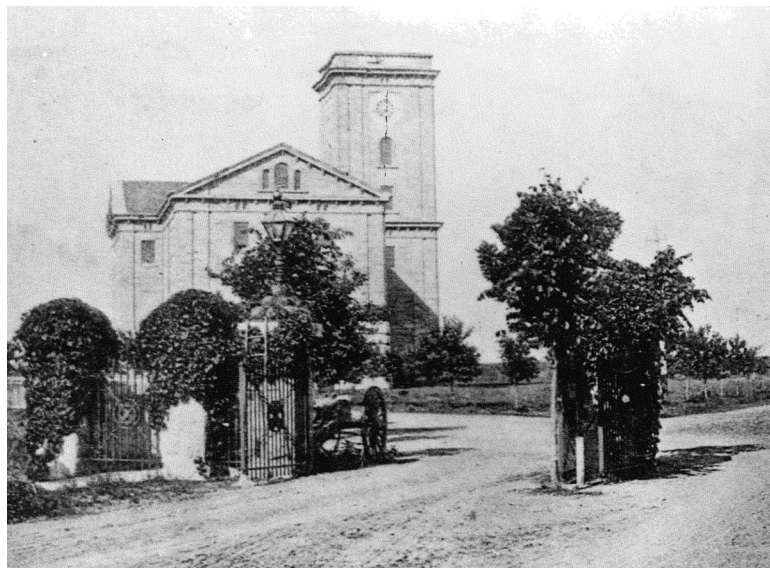
On a cold fall night at Rock Island Arsenal a Soldier named Sergeant Christiansen, who was described as “a giant” of a man with shoulders as broad as an elephant, found himself huddled near a fire while on guard duty at the Rock Island gate and wagon bridge. Meanwhile, his subordinate, Private Tumbleweed, who was described as a troubled young man found himself at “Sadie’s Bar” in Rock Island on liberty leave. PVT Tumbleweed had recently arrived from a previous duty station deep in the western desert. He had survived a near death experience almost succumbing to dehydration having been separated from his cavalry Troop in a barren desert. Near death, Tumbleweed swore off alcohol for life in return for a drink of water then quickly passed out. He soon awoke in a puddle of water and heard “so be it” as he was spared from death with a promise. Having relapsed and broken his promise by consuming a few spirits this evening, he finds himself meeting the gaze of a stranger at the other end of the tavern. He becomes unsettled after the stranger recites the terms of “the deal” that he made with the Devil in a desert far west of Rock Island.

The story goes that Tumbleweed let out a frightened yelp, then burst his way out of the tavern, running all the way back to the Arsenal. Convinced (and correctly so) that he was being pursued by the stranger, he is described as leaping into the arms of SGT Christiansen after crossing the wagon bridge.

Eventually, the stranger catches up with Tumbleweed who is now being guarded by Christiansen. The stranger never fully introduces themselves; however he alludes that he goes by “many names.” Christiansen refers to him as “Mr. Stranger.” After some exchange of words between the two, the Stranger informs Christiansen of the deal that Tumbleweed had made. Christiansen quickly retorts that he would not allow anyone to harm Tumbleweed. The stranger eventually changes his request to seek pieces of the uniform from Tumbleweed. This drives Christiansen into a tirade as the request is for perhaps more than Tumbleweed’s poor soul, its is a violation of what the uniform represents. Finally, the Stranger says that he’d settle for the flag flying over the Arsenal. This request sends Christiansen into a rage. He cites that the flag is more than just cloth as it represents “the most noble of dreams for which a generation has spired.” The reader is led to believe that Christiansen is a prophet for the U.S. and RIA. Finally coming to an end of his lecture, and seeing that Christiansen will not be persuaded, the Stranger attempts to flee, but makes one last dash for Tumbleweed. It’s during this attempt that Christiansen hoists a nearby large cannon over his head and brings it down on the heels of the Stranger who yelps and retreats in agony.

Many years have passed since the incident occurred between SGT Christiansen and “The Stranger” and as happens over time, the Soldier who defended the Arsenal from the Devil faded away to time. It was said, by the old timers to the Arsenal, that at his funeral it took two dozen men to carry him to his final resting spot due to his immense stature. He ensured that we would rest soundly as he left a cannon near the site of the entrance to the Arsenal loaded with a red, white and blue cannonball so it could be fired into Hell itself to destroy it. So, if you ever find yourself walking the Arsenal on a cold fall night and you are challenged “Halt! Who goes there? How fares the Arsenal?” just know that you safe from the greatest evil because SGT Christensen is still standing guard on the Arsenal. To this day SGT Christiansen’s cannon remains wedged in the ground at the intersection of Rodman and Rock Island Avenue.

That’s quite a Halloween story! Albeit cheesy. The written account is roughly based during the Civil War and was most likely written during the World War One period due to several patriotic “visions” by SGT Christiansen of future glory of the United States. Every once and a while your very own ASC historians will pull a gem like this account out of the archive and believe its too “good” not to share on the right occasion.



Storehouse A (Building 205) and the old Rock Island Arsenal Gate, circa 1880.



Present Day picture of “SGT Christiansen’s” Cannon.

The original story is called “The Devil & Sergeant Christiansen’s Cannon.” It has been digitized and is in the possession of the ASC History Office. The story is 13 pages long, and sadly too long to reprint for a history newsletter, however it is available in PDF upon request.

*History is being made every day at this command.*

Presented to you by your friendly ASC History Office. Feel free to call or stop by our office for any of your history needs.

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