

TOWER TIMES

February/March 2025



US Army Corps
of Engineers®
Rock Island District

TOWER TIMES

CONTENTS

- 3 Embracing Change:
Building Resilience in Uncertain Times**
Col. Aaron M. Williams, District Commander
- 5 First Construction Contract Awarded for
Brandon Road Interbasin Project**
- 6 Rock Island District Crews Perform
Maintenance on Chicago's Lockport Lock**
- 8 Celebrating Service to Our Nation**
- 10 Wings Over Water: Wildlife Watching
With the Army Corps of Engineers**
- 12 Employee Spotlight- Santiago Lopera**
- 13 Kirk Atwater Honored as Senior Engineer
of the Year**
- 14 Tower Times Over The Years**
- 16 New Employees**
- 17 Maj. Gen. Peeples Visits Brandon Road**
- 18 Around The District**



On the Cover

In commemoration of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' 250th anniversary, the Department of the Army has introduced a special logo marking this historic milestone.

View on the web: www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Media/Publications/TowerTimes.aspx

Mission

The Rock Island District's mission is to deliver vital engineering and water resource solutions in collaboration with our partners to secure our Nation, reduce disaster risk and enhance quality of life, providing value to the region and Nation.

Vision

A premier public service, engineering organization of trusted, talented professionals delivering innovative and sustainable solutions to the region and Nation.

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Disclaimer

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Embracing Change: Building Resilience in Uncertain Times



Col. Aaron M. Williams
District Commander

Rock Island Team,

Another quarter has quickly passed since assuming command last spring, and I continue to learn and grow in this role. I am constantly gaining new insights from my position while continuously getting educated by each of you every day.

As many of you know, we have experienced significant changes in the federal government within the past month. In many cases, these changes, along with expectations of more to come have created stress within our workforce. I understand that everyone has their own perspective on these changes, and individual reactions vary based on your own personal beliefs. The purpose of this column is not to debate those changes or share my personal stance on them. As a U.S. Army organization, we follow laws, policies, and we all take an oath to do so. As always, I am continually impressed by the professionalism of our workforce.

Change often brings turbulence and stress, especially when it disrupts the status quo. The real question is how do “we” respond to the change. In early February, I attended the Chief of Engineers Senior Leader Forum. During his opening remarks, Lt. Gen. Graham stated [paraphrased], our mission has not changed, only the environment has; Congress and our Nation’s leaders continue to value the work provided by the Army Corps of Engineers and will continue to do so if we do our jobs well.

This sentiment echoes what we all saw a few short years ago during the pandemic. Personally, I choose to focus on how I react to change rather than the change itself. I can control my reactions whereas I cannot control the changes directed. This philosophy has served me well throughout my 28 years as a Soldier.

A strong sense of duty and the will to persevere and accomplish our mission will allow us to overcome internal and external conditions that create turbulence and stress. Maintaining our confidence in our abilities to do our jobs is key to success. This confidence will allow us to maintain our composure, think and act reasonably, and project outward calmness by demonstrating control over our emotions. Mental agility is the flexibility of one’s mind, and an ability to anticipate or adapt to uncertain or changing situations. It has been said to me a few times recently by senior leaders in USACE that Rock Island District is viewed as reliable and consistent by USACE senior leaders. I cannot think of two better words I would want our team to be described as. Confidence, sense of duty, mental agility, and the will to overcome adversity leads to reliability and consistency and results in accomplishing our missions.

Team players or teamwork are two additional phrases I believe best describe our District. I see this every day at every level. We operate exceptionally well as a team both internally and externally. I have personally observed this across all facets of our missions; from a lock operator assisting a new deck hand, to two division leaders working together to solve a complex problem. Supporting one another during times of change, encouraging each other and reinforcing the value of every employee through words and actions, communicating effectively fosters a climate of resiliency. Whether is lifting someone up when they are down, having a meaningful conversation, taking care

Continued on page 4

COMMANDER'S COLUMN (Continued)

of our teammates during hardships, displaying empathy, or any number of other acts are a testament to our organization's character and reinforces resilience, both individually and organizationally.

I encourage each of you to reflect on your own resilience and the resilience of those around you. We all have experienced organizational change and will continue to learn and grow through the experiences. Focus on how to respond to a changing environment and how you and those around you can persevere. We will continue to set the standard for reliability, consistency, and teamwork. The work each of you do every single day is deeply valued.

Continuing Building Strong and Essayons! 

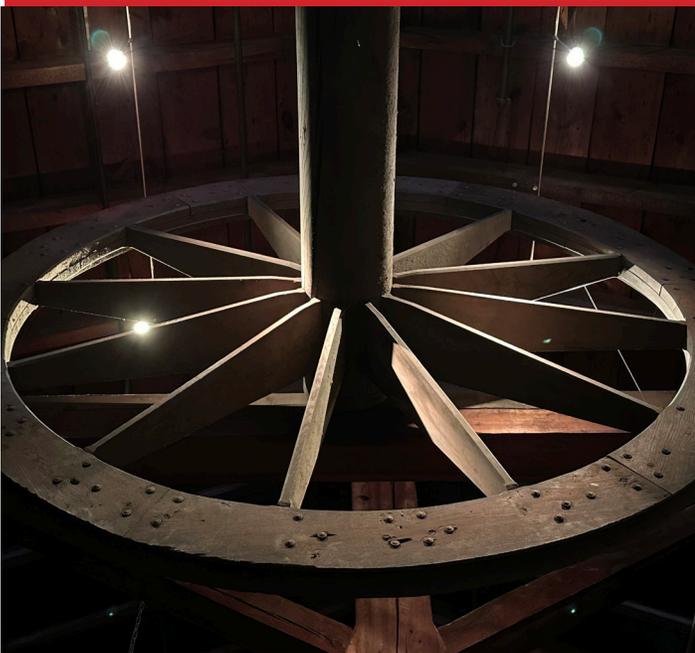


Need the Commander's ear but not comfortable emailing or talking with him directly? His inbox is always open anonymously at: <https://usace.dps.mil/sites/INTRA-MVR/SitePages/Suggestion-Box.aspx>

Appreciate you,



Col. Aaron M. Williams
Rock Island District Commander
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



Can you name where this photo was taken?

If so, send your answer to jordan.n.raiff@usace.army.mil to be featured in the next issue of the Tower Times.



Answer: Fossil Trail- Coralville Lake, Iowa
Winner: No Correct Answers Submitted

First Construction Contract Awarded for Brandon Road Interbasin Project

By Sam Heilig, Public Affairs Specialist

Work has officially begun on the Brandon Road Interbasin Project at Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet, Illinois. A \$15.5 million contract for Increment 1B of the project was awarded Nov. 27 to Miami Marine Services for site preparation and riverbed rock removal. Miami Marine is partnering with Michels Construction Inc. of Milwaukee to complete the work.

The \$1.15 billion project, a collaborative effort between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the states of Illinois and Michigan, is designed to prevent the upstream movement of aquatic nuisance species into the Great Lakes. Construction is scheduled to take place in multiple increments.

The current work includes clearing the site for staging, removing rock from the riverbed, and improving site access. The next phase will include the installation of three types of deterrents: an automated barge-clearing deterrent, a bubble curtain deterrent, and an underwater acoustic deterrent.

“We are thrilled to have construction underway on this critical project,” said Brad Houzenga, Deputy District Engineer and Chief of Programs and Project Management. “The innovative technologies planned for this site are key to protecting the ecological balance and economic vitality of the Great Lakes region, now and into the future.”

Brandon Road Lock and Dam was identified as a critical pinch point where layered technologies could be used to stop invasive carp populations from moving into the Great Lakes. If established, invasive carp could out-compete native species and significantly damage the region’s ecology and \$20 billion fishing and boating industries.

For more information on the Brandon Road Interbasin Project, visit www.mvr.usace.army.mil/BRIP/. 



Contractors remove sand, silt and riverbed rock from the channel below the Brandon Rock Lock in preparation for construction of the Brandon Road Interbasin Project. *Photo by Jim Finn*

Rock Island District Crews Perform Maintenance on Chicago's Lockport Lock

By Frances Candelaria, Public Affairs Specialists

Maintenance crews with the Illinois Waterway Project Office, based in Peoria, Illinois, maintain the waterways connecting Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River to keep the navigation system strong and steady.

The Lockport Lock and Dam, located in the Chicago District, previously belonged to the Rock Island District. Cam Klein, Illinois Waterway maintenance chief, explained that as part of a prior agreement, Illinois Waterway maintenance crews handle any necessary maintenance there.

The closure began with dewatering the lock on Jan. 28 and is expected to conclude by late March. While crews anticipate unforeseen delays or obstacles, their dedication to the task and commitment to safety will ensure the lock operates efficiently.

"The weather has definitely been a concern," said Ryan Randall, a repairer with the Illinois Waterway. Crews have continued working despite subzero temperatures, rain, and snow. "The cold has definitely forced us to take unplanned breaks. We make sure the guys are getting warmed back up and trying to make them as comfortable as possible while working and taking their regular breaks as well."

Lockport has been in operation since 1933 and has not undergone large-scale maintenance since the mid-1990s, according to the Illinois Waterway Project Office.

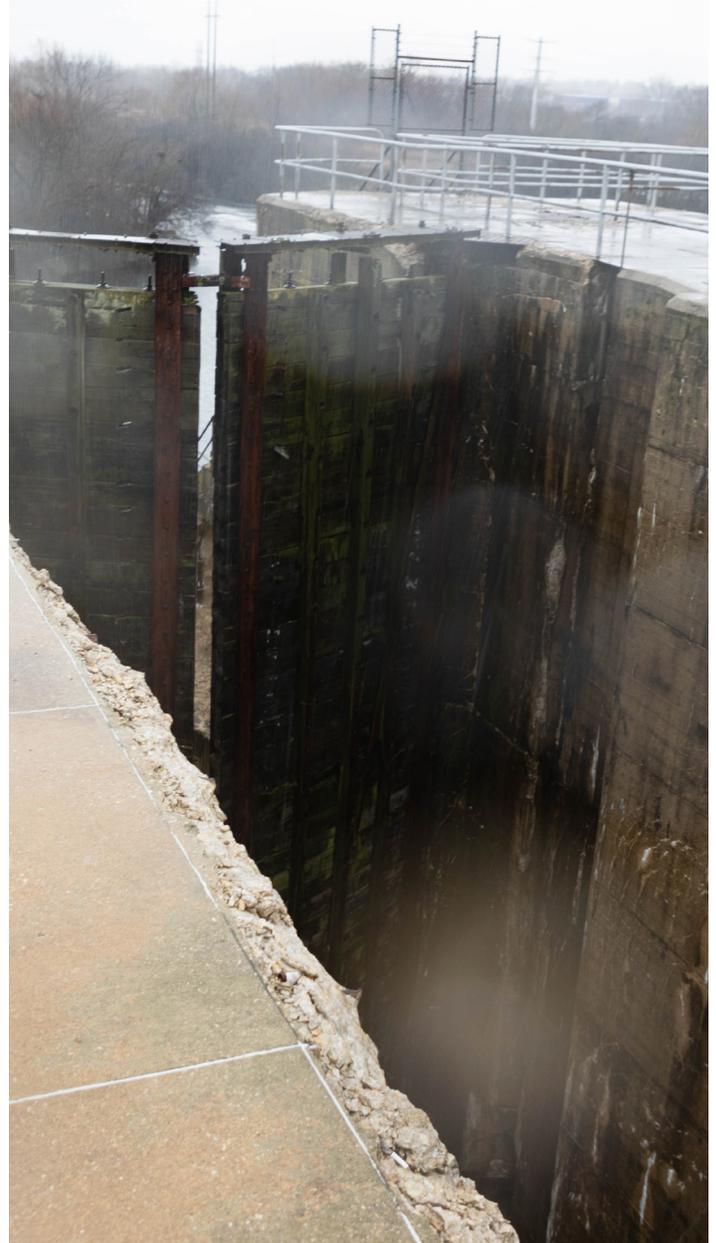
"We did an emergency closure in 2019 to replace a worn pintle ball bushing," Klein said. "We, of course, have done miscellaneous maintenance here through the years, just nothing this major."

Randall said he and the rest of the maintenance crews are committed to delivering high-quality work at Lockport.

"Replacing gates is pretty common, but we've also rehabilitated the descending valve holes and replaced the screens, which catch debris. We have removed the wear tracks and installed newly fabricated ones. The most challenging task has been the seal, which required removing large sections of concrete and extensive rebar work—it was in desperate need of repair."

Summing up the character of Rock Island District maintenance workers, Randall emphasized their dedication to the upkeep of locks and dams, regardless of harsh conditions.

"The cold is not great, but we fight through to get it done." 



The auxiliary lock at Lockport has been drained for maintenance and inspection.

Photo by Jordan Raiff



Crane operators remove the old gate from the Lockport lock. *Photos by Jordan Raiff*





1866

USACE Rock Island District was born when Lt. Col. James H. Wilson opened the first District office in Keokuk, Iowa.



1932

The District moved to the Clock Tower Building, to oversee construction of Locks and Dam 15 on the Mississippi River.

Celebrating Service to our Nation

By Sam Heilig, Public Affairs Specialist

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is celebrating 250 years of service to the nation in 2025, marking a legacy that began on June 16, 1775, when the Continental Congress authorized the first Chief Engineer to oversee the construction of fortifications and military infrastructure. Over the centuries, USACE has remained at the forefront of engineering excellence, tackling the nation’s most complex challenges with unmatched expertise and dedication.

One of the many important chapters in USACE history was the establishment of the Rock Island District, which traces its roots back to a Congressional Act of 1866. This act appropriated funds for the first sustained attempt to improve navigation on the Upper Mississippi River. While the term “District” was not officially adopted until 1908, the arrival of Lt. Col. James H. Wilson at Keokuk, Iowa, on August 3, 1866, marks the district’s official birth. This key moment laid the foundation for what would become an integral part of the Corps’ mission in managing vital waterways for the nation’s economic and military growth.

From constructing fortifications during the Revolutionary War to creating the infrastructure that contributed to America’s rise as a military and economic powerhouse, USACE’s mission has remained clear: to deliver engineering solutions for the nation’s toughest challenges. The Rock Island District has played a vital role in improving navigation along the Upper Mississippi River, contributing significantly to the development of transportation and trade in the region.



2023

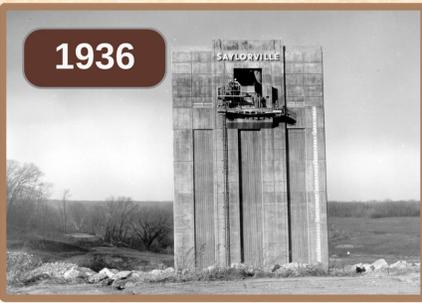
The Rock Island District broke ground on the first navigation project for the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program.



2021

The Red Rock Hydroelectric Plant was commissioned for full operation on Rock Island District’s Lake Red Rock Dam.

1936



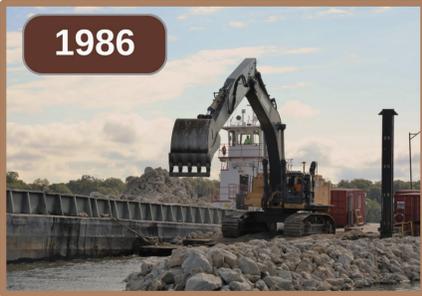
Flood control was added to the USACE mission, leading to five reservoirs being built in the Rock Island District.

1942



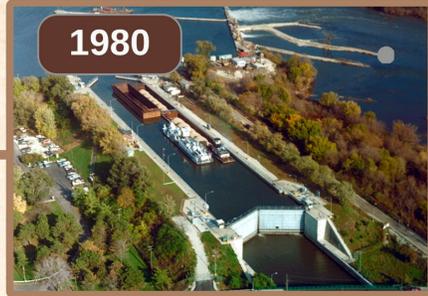
During World War II, the District shifted from civil works to military construction, completing \$80 million in projects.

1986



The Upper Mississippi River Restoration Program was authorized to build a healthier, more sustainable waterway.

1980



A realignment transferred river-related responsibilities of the Illinois Waterway and its tributaries to the Rock Island District.

1993



The Flood of 1993 broke records throughout the District and became one of the most devastating floods in U.S. history.

2006



The National Flood Fight Materiel Center at the Rock Island District was first recognized as a center of expertise for all of USACE.

2016



The Lockport Lock and Dam Upper Pool Project became one of the largest civil works projects ever completed by the District.

2013



The Inland Navigation Design Center - Mandatory Center of Expertise was created at the Rock Island District.

Wings Over Water: Wildlife Watching

By Jordan Raiff, Editor

Across the various districts of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, there are breathtaking sites to visit and opportunities to learn about nature and the majestic animals that call our country home. Due to migration, some animal species experience dramatic shifts in activity and population locations depending on the season.

During the winter, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District is fortunate to temporarily host the second-largest population of American bald eagles in North America—second only to Alaska, according to Jacques Nuzzo of the Illinois Raptor Center.

From mid-December through mid-March, roughly 2,500 of these magnificent birds make their way south to the region's waterways. They establish new nests along the Mississippi River and nearby areas, seeking open water that isn't frozen solid, unlike the deep freeze covering much of Canada and the northern United States. Thanks to the turbulence and churn of the lock and dam system along the river, the water remains at least semi-permeable, keeping fish plentiful.

Along with the national bird, hawks, owls, and other predatory birds flock to the area, taking advantage of abundant prey such as mice, rats, and rabbits, which makes hunting easier than in more northern regions.

To capitalize on this unique opportunity, the Rock Island District helps host multiple eagle-watching events in January and February. These events, held in communities along the Mississippi River, the Illinois Waterway, and smaller tributary rivers in Iowa, offer education and entertainment for participants of all ages.

Attracting thousands of visitors from across the country, these events have contributed to aviary conservation efforts. Presentations on topics such as pesticide runoff, residual lead poisoning from hunting and fishing, and long-term pollution impacts have successfully encouraged people to take an active role in keeping ecosystems clean and functional.

In Rock Island, Illinois, the Quad City Bald Eagle Days event welcomed both children and adults to view exhibitions and explore three unique outdoor eagle nests and perches. Anchored by live animal presentations from the World Bird Sanctuary and Big Run Wolf Ranch, the event provided an up-close look at some of nature's most majestic creatures.



Despite missing an eye, Scout is one of the biggest attractions from the World Bird Sanctuary at the Quad City Bald Eagle Days event. At an estimated age of 55 years old, she is considered to be one of the oldest bald eagles in captivity.

Photo by Jordan Raiff

This year, the World Bird Sanctuary showcased a harpy eagle, a golden eagle, a Eurasian eagle-owl, and a bald eagle during its live show. All were rehabilitated birds, including a bald eagle named Scout, who is missing an eye and has adapted to her captive environment. At 55 years old, her keeper believes she may be one of the oldest bald eagles in captivity. The Rock Island District also helped facilitate a special Jan. 10 exhibit for local schools, providing an in-person demonstration for students from around the Quad Cities area.

Meanwhile, on the Illinois Waterway near Utica, Illinois, the Starved Rock Eagle Watch Weekend kicked off with a children's exhibit at the Illinois Valley YMCA on Jan. 24. Staff from the Illinois Raptor Center—home to the largest flight cage in the United States—brought a red-tailed hawk, peregrine falcon, barn owl, and snowy owl for children to see up close.

With the Army Corps of Engineers

For 29 years, the Illinois Raptor Center has played a key role in this event. Since its early involvement—dating back to the festival’s humble beginnings in the basement of the Starved Rock Library in 1996—it has touched countless lives and made a tremendous impact on the region’s aviary population. In 1998, rangers from the Rock Island District’s Illinois Waterway Visitor Center partnered with the Illinois Raptor Center to expand the event further.

Due to flooding at the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center in 2024, event organizers scrambled to find a new location. The Village of Utica stepped in, offering its gymnasium for various programs. The community’s increased involvement and expanded awareness efforts helped make the 2025 Starved Rock Eagle Watch Weekend a success.

The event drew more than 2,250 attendees at the Illinois Waterway Visitor Center; 5,000 at Starved Rock Lodge; 3,000 at Starved Rock State Park; and 600 at the Utica Gym

Events like these highlight the uniqueness of the Rock Island District. Witnessing such a diverse array of wildlife—both in its natural habitat and up

close at these events—serves as a reminder of the delicate balance the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers helps maintain.

Conservation isn’t just about protecting individual species; it’s about preserving the interconnected web of life that sustains them all. Without action, future generations may only experience these majestic creatures behind glass or in photographs. But through education, awareness, and continued conservation efforts, we can ensure that bald eagles and other wildlife continue to soar over the Midwest for years to come. 



Boomer the peregrine falcon assumes his perch and Lilith the barn owl comes in for a full throttle landing. Kept in captivity with the Illinois Raptor Center, these are just two of the raptors which have been rehabilitated thanks to the organizations’ 55-foot flight cage; the largest in the U.S.

Photos by Jordan Raiff

EMPLOYEE SPOTLIGHT

By Jordan Raiff, Editor

Santiago Lopera Internal Review Chief



The Rock Island District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has a complex and far-reaching mission—one that requires hiring top talent, even beyond its immediate region. That’s why employees like Santiago Lopera play a crucial role in supporting the district’s operations.

Lopera joined the Rock Island District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in July 2023 as the district’s Internal Review Chief. A 2016 graduate of Georgia State University, his degree in accounting and finance made him a perfect fit for the position.

“I like that I get to work with different individuals and offices across the district, depending on the audit I’m conducting,” Lopera said. “I’m constantly meeting new people, learning new district business processes, and traveling to new facilities. In a nutshell, it never gets boring!”

A native of rural Georgia, Lopera conducts audits that often have no existing blueprint, requiring a flexible and adaptive approach to financial and management challenges. With a consistently positive attitude, he emphasizes the importance of relationships in making his role successful—one of the aspects he enjoys most about working at USACE.

“During my time here, I’ve been able to build relationships with some of the smartest and most caring people I’ve ever met,” he said. “Once I started interacting with others in the Rock Island District, I immediately noticed the Midwest’s friendly attitude, which can make or break how one sees a job.”

This mindset, coupled with his dedication to mission success, is guided by an ethos he holds dear: “You’re never wrong to do the right thing.” While easy to say but often hard to live by, he strives to uphold this principle daily and expects the same from those around him.

For Lopera, this level of dedication extends beyond words—it’s about believing in the impact of USACE’s mission.

“I’m a firm believer in the USACE mission and the impact we make on local communities and the nation,” he said. “I like that our projects benefit and can be enjoyed by all levels of society, regardless of social status, ethnicity, or faith. It’s work that creates lasting benefits for generations to come.” 



Mississippi Valley Division Commander, Maj. Gen. Kimberly Peoples and Santiago Lopera standby as Rock Island District Deputy Commander, Maj. Matthew Fletcher lauds Lopera for his exceptional service to the Rock Island District.

Photo by Frances Candelaria

Kirk Atwater Honored as Senior Engineer of the Year by Quad City Engineering and Science Council

Sam Heilig, Public Affairs Specialist

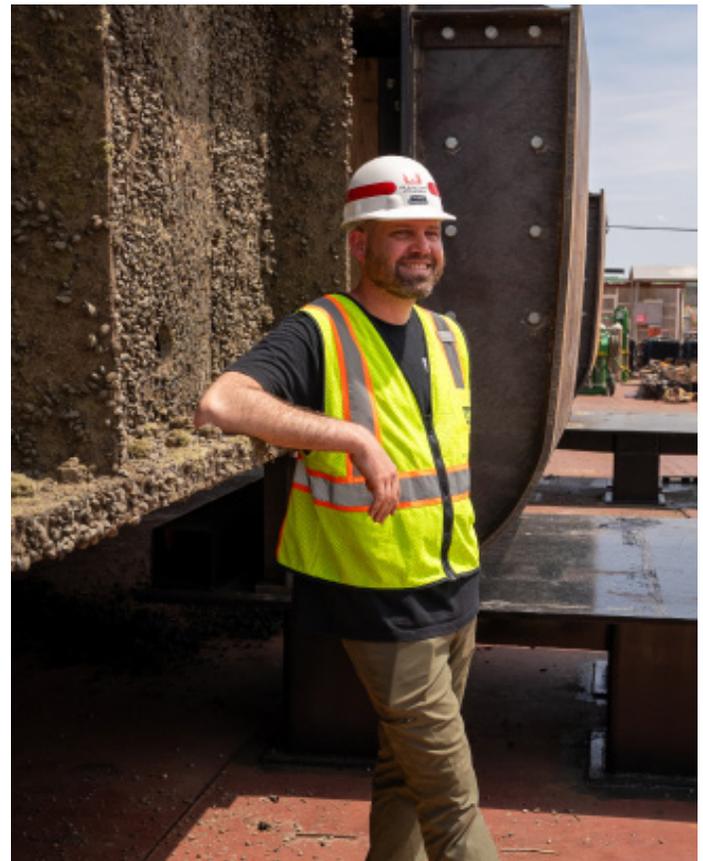
The Quad City Engineering and Science Council (QCESC) recently recognized outstanding Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math professionals at its 63rd annual STEM Celebration. Among the honorees, Kirk Atwater, a structural engineer with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District, was awarded the prestigious Senior Engineer of the Year Award.

Atwater's contributions to structural engineering have had a significant impact on the region's waterway infrastructure. His expertise and commitment to innovative engineering solutions have played a vital role in modernizing and maintaining critical structures, particularly within the locks and dams system. Through his work, he has helped save millions of dollars while ensuring the long-term sustainability and functionality of these essential infrastructures.

"Kirk is uniquely talented in that he can take extremely complex engineering problems, often with limited information, quickly analyze them, and provide sound, implementable solutions for a field environment," said Aaron Dunlop, operations manager for the Mississippi River Project.

The award highlights Atwater's dedication not only to engineering excellence but also to the broader STEM community in the Quad Cities region. His efforts reflect the mission of QCESC, which seeks to honor professionals whose work advances technology and benefits society.

The annual celebration, which coincides with National Engineers Week, serves as a platform to recognize individuals and organizations making a difference in STEM. Atwater's recognition as Senior Engineer of the Year underscores his lasting impact on the engineering field and his invaluable contributions to the nation's infrastructure. 



Engineer Kirk Atwater stands beside the large rolling feet he helped design in 2022 for the Mississippi River Project. These specialized supports enable massive lock miter gates to be laid on their side for repairs, improving both safety and efficiency. Now adaptable for all bolt-together lock gates on the Upper Mississippi River, they streamline maintenance operations across the region. *Photo by Nick Brown*

Sharing a Love of Science and Engineering

Several employees from the USACE Rock Island District recently volunteered and competed in the Quad City Engineering and Science Council's Battle of the Bridges along with their families. Participants built scale model bridges to test their efficiency. Aaron Dunlop and Kirk Atwater from the Mississippi River Project secured 1st place in the professional category, and Eric Johnson, from the Inland Navigation Design Center, and his family placed 2nd.

Photo by Nick Brown



Tower Times Over the Years

The Rock Island News

**BUILDING
TOMORROW
TODAY**



VOL. 1
NO. 2
APRIL 1978

ROCK ISLAND DISTRICT • U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

RID MAN NAMED "ENGINEER OF THE YEAR"

Robert H. Hurlbutt, the Assistant Chief of Engineering Division, was named "Engineer of the Year" by the Quad-Cities Joint Engineering Council of Iowa and Illinois at their National Engineers Week dinner on February 25, 1978.

Bob was nominated by the Tri-City Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers for his many achievements during this professional civil engineer career.

He has 42 years of experience in the engineering field, covering both civilian and military service. While most of his career has been associated with the Corps of Engineers, he also had short periods of employment with Chicago Bridge and Iron Company, and Turner Construction Company.

Bob began working for the Rock Island District in 1936 as a civil engineer in design, where he worked on a number of major design and planning projects, including the earliest post-authorization study for the Coralville Lake project. He also investigated and prepared reports on sites for airfields, a hospital, and other proposed military installations.

In 1942, Bob was commissioned as a Captain in the Corps of Engineers, while assigned to the construction of the Green River Ordnance Plant at Dixon, Illinois, where later on he became Area Engineer. Then, he was assigned to work on the construction of the Alaska Highway, airfields and other military work in the Fairbanks, Alaska, District Office. While here he received a promotion to Major. In 1944, he reported to the Office, Chief of Engineers, for assignment as an engineer liaison officer on supply of divisional engineer troop units and others, in preparation for overseas movement.

In 1946 he came back to the Rock Island District to stay. From 1946 to 1966 as Assistant Chief and Chief of the Design Branch, he was responsible for all design work for the Red Rock Dam and Lake Red Rock project on the Des Moines River southeast of Des Moines, Iowa; for the 1200-foot lock at Keokuk, Iowa, on the Mississippi River; and the preparation of plans and specifications for 49 other navigation, flood control, and military construction projects in the District. In 1966, he assumed his present position with the District.

Bob attended high school in Galva, Illinois, and received his C.E. and M.C.E. degrees in civil engineering from Pensacola Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. He also attended graduate courses in airport engineering and advanced strength of materials at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. He is a registered professional civil and structural engineer in the State of Iowa.

Bob has received numerous awards during his distinguished career with the Corps of Engineers, including the Meritorious Civilian Service Award in June 1976. This is the second highest award that can be presented to a civilian employee of the Department of the Army.



Hurlbutt (r) receiving award from Bob Jackson, Chairman, Engineer of the Year Awards Committee, Q-C Joint Engineering Council.



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Rock Island District

Tower Times

Vol. 3, No. 10 February 1982

District receives new computer system

January was a very big month for the District's ADP Center, as the long awaited Harris computer was delivered and installed in the ADP Center. This \$300,000 computer replaces the old General Electric 225 computer system which the District has been using since 1968.

The new Harris computer not only has many more processing capabilities than the old GE computer, but it also performs these functions in a shorter time because it has a greater storage and memory capacity. The new computer is considered by many experts to have the latest "state-of-the-art" in various types of processing including: communication to other Corps-wide computers and in-house computers such as the District's Omni system, time-sharing, dedicated terminal support and high volume processing. For those familiar with the computer work, the new Harris system is comparable in memory, storage and printing capabilities to the recently installed NCD centralized computer system.

While the new computer system has been installed it will take a while to program all of the functions that the system will handle and to work out the "bugs" which every new system has. In the end it is planned that the Harris computer system will process a large part of the District's data processing applications including those programs used by Comptroller, Personnel, Procurement and Supply, and other organizations. In addition, the system will process most of the engineering applications workload. By utilizing this new computer system it is estimated that the District will save over \$200,000 annually through decreased contracted computer services.



Sandy Wilkins, operates the new Harris computer which was installed in the District's ADP Center in January. The Harris computer replaced the General Electric 225 computer that the District had been using since 1968.

Terminal users throughout the District will be able to tie into the Harris system through dial-up methods on the terminals presently used interactively to contracted computer services. There will also be dedicated screen-type terminals (similar to the Omni system) which when switched on will be automatically tied into the system.

The US Army Corps of Engineers Headquarters purchased 21 of these Harris systems as part of the Corps-wide replacement of obsolete equipment. There were two different sized systems contracted by OCE, one which had less memory, printing and storage capabilities

than the other. Our District, because it had a high volume of processing workload, was chosen by OCE to receive the larger capability system. The new Harris computer system, and the Burroughs computer system, will allow our ADP Center to offer District employees more services in a shorter amount of time.

Rhymes of the Times



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
Rock Island District

Tower Times

VOL. 5, NO. 4, August 1983

Golden anniversary of Locks 15.

The month of August marks the 50th anniversary for the locks at Locks and Dam 15. The locks opened to river traffic on 16 August 1933, when a commercial fisherman locked through. Later that day the first steamboat, the LONE STAR, locked through the locks.

The locks were built between 1931-32, by the Merritt-Chapman and Whitney Corporation, of Duluth, Minnesota, at a total cost of \$1,326,472.05. Construction of the main lock began in the spring of 1931, and it was completed in March 1932. Work on the smaller auxiliary lock began in April 1932, and the construction was finished in December 1932.

The locks were built as part of the Upper Mississippi River Nine-Foot Navigation Project, which was authorized by Congress in July 1930. They were among the first built in this project because of their location at the lower end of the Rock Island Rapids, long a nemesis of river traffic.

Commodities passing through Locks 15 have dramatically increased over the past 50 years. One and a half million-tons of cargo passed through the lock in 1943. Ten years later, cargo moving through Locks 15 totaled 4.5 million tons, nine times more than the entire District total in 1933. By 1963, the tonnage at the locks had more than doubled to 10.5 million tons. This figure increased to 16.3 million tons of cargo in 1973, and last year more than 22.5 million tons of cargo passed through Locks 15.

In its 50 year history, all types of vessels have passed through locks 15: from steamboats and towboats with their barges hauling cargo, to excursion boats and recreational craft. During World War II, ocean-going tankers built in the midwest passed through the locks on their way to the Gulf of Mexico.

Since its opening many vessels and millions of tons of grain, coal and petroleum have passed through the lock. Bulk commodities and vessels are not the only items that have passed through the lock. Many people from all walks of life have utilized the lock in recreational



crafts and excursion boats, such as the DELTA QUEEN and MISSISSIPPI QUEEN.

President Carter passed through the lock in 1979 while taking a cruise on the passenger steamboat DELTA QUEEN. More recently, Dale Brown, the head basketball coach at Louisiana State University, locked through Lock 15 while attempting to break the speedboat record for the fastest trip down the Mississippi River from St. Paul, Minnesota, to New Orleans, Louisiana. Other more basic forms of transportation, such as kayaks, canoes and even float rafts have passed through the lock. Many forms of leisure craft such as houseboats, cruisers, motor boats and runabouts utilize the lock to travel the Mississippi.

There has been a steady increase in the number of pleasure boats using Lock 15. In 1953, 750 recreational craft passed through, by 1955, the number had increased to 2,000,

and just two years later this figure exceeded 3,700. A record 8,265 recreational craft passed through the locks in 1980. Last year, over 5,300 pleasure boats locked through the Quad-Cities lock.

Four men have directed the operations of Locks 15 during its 50-year history. The first lockmaster was John P. Hinsberger, now deceased, who directed lock operations from 1936 to 1959. He was succeeded by Walter Winblad, who served as lockmaster from 1959 through the great flood of 1965. Winblad now lives in Florida and visits the Quad-City area in the summer. The next lockmaster was Charles T. Rodin, of Davenport, who served from 1965 to 1976. The present lockmaster is James L. Morgan, of Andalusia, Illinois.

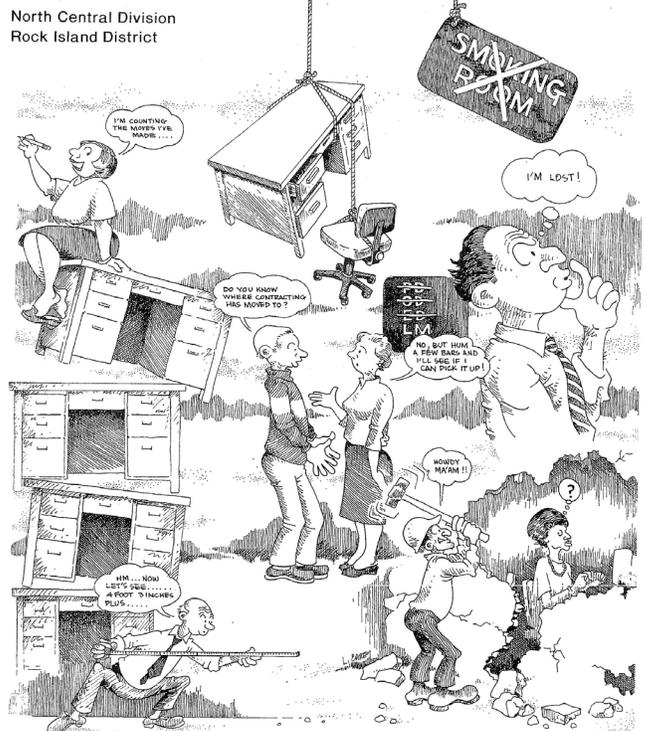
Locks 15 (cont. pg 4)



**US Army Corps
of Engineers**
North Central Division
Rock Island District

Tower Times

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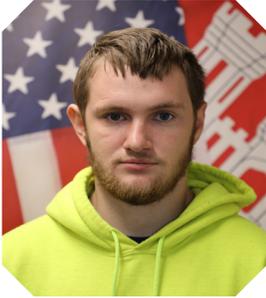




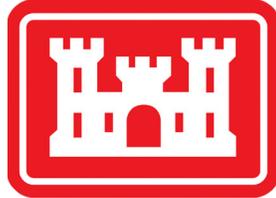
As the years have gone by there have been significant change in the look and the coverage of the Tower Times. The one thing that hasn't changed is our dedication to shining light on the achievements, milestones, and crucial work done across the Rock Island District. How many covers do you recognize??

Welcome

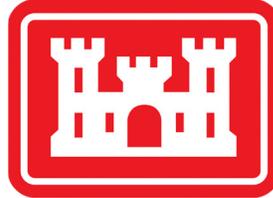
NEW EMPLOYEES



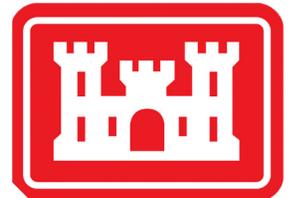
Ian M. Balliu
Lock and Dam
Operator



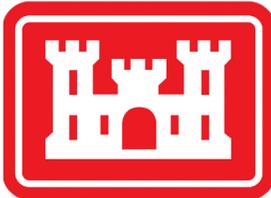
Alexander J. Berlage
Lock and Dam
Operator



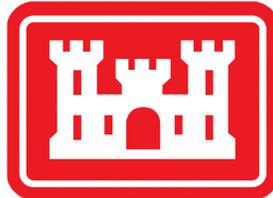
Benjamin E. Butterworth
Support Services
Specialist



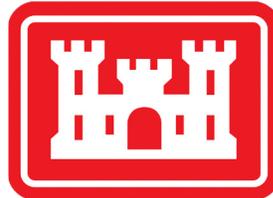
Tyrone P. Christian
Lock and Dam
Operator



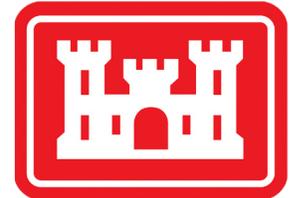
Seth M. Gentil
Lock and Dam
Repairer/Helper



Samuel L. Gordon
Lock and Dam
Operator



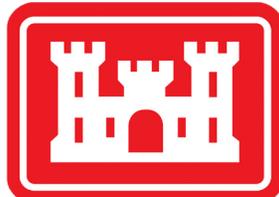
Christopher A. Jessen
Electrician



Nolyn A. Johnson
Lock and Dam
Operator



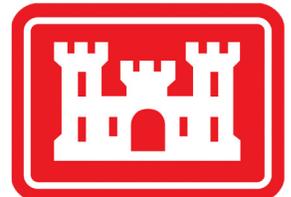
Jon W. Matthews
Lock and Dam
Operator



Lavetta T. Morgan
Support Services
Specialist



Lance L. Weipert
Support Services
Specialist



Andrew L. White Jr.
Maintenance Worker

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Maj.Gen. Peeples Visits Brandon Road

By Jim Finn, Public Affairs Specialist



During a visit to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District on February 11, Maj. Gen. Kimberly Peeples, commander of the Mississippi Valley Division, stopped at the Brandon Road Lock and Dam in Joliet, Illinois.

There, she met with members of the project delivery team for the Brandon Road Interbasin Project, a key initiative aimed at preventing the upstream movement of aquatic nuisance species into the Great Lakes.

Before departing, Maj. Gen. Peeples toured the site, observing ongoing preparation work in the lower approach channel of the lock. She also engaged with representatives from the project's contractors, Miami Marine Services and Michels Construction.

Photos by Jim Finn





AROUND THE DISTRICT



Paul C. Schnell passed away Nov. 7. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, Schnell worked with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and Rock Island Arsenal to continue serving this country after his time in uniform was up.



A.J. "John" Andrews passed away Dec. 21. Spending most of his working years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, He retired as a Value Engineering Officer in 2002 after 41 years of service.



Bryan J. Goodrum passed away Dec 25. Spending 36 years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, his impacts on the Hydraulics Branch established high standards, left a lasting memory, and legacy of excellence.



Paul E. Braddock passed away Jan 3. A welder by trade, he spent 20 years working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on Lock and Dam 14 until he retired in 2021.

In Remembrance



Dawn M. Gatlin passed away Jan. 19. Initially serving with the U.S. Navy, she continued her legacy of selfless service by contributing 40 more years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



Robert C. "Bob" Wild passed away on Feb. 1. A wartime veteran of the U.S. Navy, he then spent 25 years with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. When he retired in 2013, he was the only Crane Safety Administer in service.



Harold A. Rieck passed away on Feb. 9. A veteran of the U.S. Navy, he later found his calling with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Spending 30 years as a supervisor at Lock and Dam 16, he helped set the standard for supervisors who followed him.



David L. Penderson passed away on Feb. 14. A veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, he later retired from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. His selfless service was an inspiration for all who crossed his path.

CONGRATULATIONS

New Arrivals



Congratulations to Dedic and Aimee Bland on the birth of their daughter Brielle LeeAnn Bland. She weighed in at 8 pounds, 2 ounces and 19.5 inches long.

Career Departures

As of Nov. 29, Kirk Sunderman officially retired from the Inland Navigation and Design Center as a Civil Engineer.

As of Dec. 31, Peter L. Corken officially retired from the Construction Branch, Central Area Office as a Construction Control Representative.

As of Jan. 11, Catherine T. Tillberg officially retired from the Engineering and Construction, Design Branch as a Supervisory Architect.

As of Jan. 31, Aimee D. Vermeulen officially retired from Office of Counsel as a Legal Assistant.

As of Jan. 31, Gordon L. Rush officially retired from the Illinois Waterway Project Office as an Electronics Mechanic.

As of Feb. 23, David A. Groutage officially retired from the Construction Branch, Eastern Area Office as a Construction Control Representative.

As of Feb. 28, Jennie L. Hoover officially retired from the Construction Branch, Eastern Area Office as a Construction Control Representative.

As of Feb. 28, Luann R. Steen officially retired from the Resource Management, Finance and Accounting Branch as a Financial Systems Analyst.

As of Feb. 28, Donna R. Hardy officially retired from the Regulatory Division as a Regulatory Program Manager.

*Please send family news to
jordan.n.raiff@usace.army.mil to be
included in the next issue of the
Tower Times.*

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ROCK ISLAND
CLOCK TOWER BLDG. - P.O. BOX 2004
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61204-2004



Lockmasters from across the USACE Rock Island District met March 4 at the Waterfront Convention Center in Bettendorf, Iowa, for the annual Lockmasters Workshop.

Front Row (L-R): Alma Vasquez, Lisa Wenzel, Andrew Barnes, Kelly Thomas, Aaron Dunlop, Col. Aaron Williams, Tom Heinold, Bob Castro, Doug Morgan, Nichole Traver

Back Row (L-R): Jeff Shephard, Michael Bielser, Jeffery Tripp, Jon James, James Knight, Joshua Hathaway, Brad Hank, Jim McDaniel, Earnest Green, Cliff Wright, Craig Blazekovich, Scott Cooper, Daniel Thiele, Matt Traver, Jerry Snyder, Alan Shillington, Eddie Sanchez, Jeffery Gibbs, Gary Kilburg, Tim Koehn, Matt Alberhasky, Matt Whitley *Photo by Jim Finn* 