

# **FORT ATKINSON**



*Fort Atkinson, Iowa 52144  
(319)425-4161*



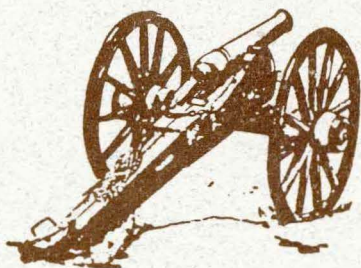
*Iowa Department of Natural Resources  
Wallace Office Building  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034*

## What Was This Fort?

The story of Fort Atkinson is not the stuff of which legends are made. No famous battles were fought here. No glorious victories or ignoble defeats occurred in its vicinity. No great decisions were made within its walls. In this way, the story of Fort Atkinson is like that of most of the army posts in the upper Mississippi Valley.

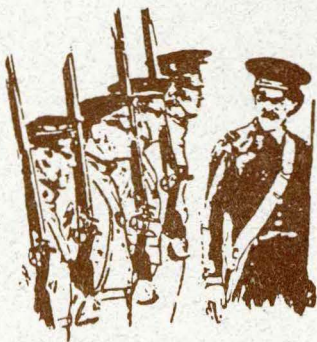
Fort Atkinson was built to keep the Winnebago Indians on Neutral Ground (a 40-mile-wide strip of land established by the Treaty of 1830) after their removal from Wisconsin in 1840, and to provide protection for them from the Sioux, Sauk, Fox and from white intruders on Indian land.

On May 31, 1840, camp was made on the site of the future fort. The camp was named Atkinson in honor of the commanding officer in charge of the Winnebago resettlement efforts. Of the six years regular army troops were garrisoned at Fort Atkinson, half were spent garrisoned at Fort Atkinson, half were spent constructing the fort. Despite crowded conditions, the fort was essentially complete by the end of summer, 1842. It included 24 buildings and a stockade wall. Outside the 11'9" wall were 14 additional buildings.



On June 20, 1846, the regular army troops were pulled out of Fort Atkinson to fight in the war with Mexico. On July 15, 1846, Iowa volunteers staffed the fort and continued to carry out their duties until the post was abandoned. In June, 1848, the Winnebagoes were removed from Iowa just as they had been from Wisconsin. With their removal from Iowa, the reason for Fort Atkinson was removed as well and the last company of infantry marched out of its gates on February 14, 1849.

*\*Excerpts from the Fort Atkinson Technical Report, by Bradley Williams.*



## **LOCATION**

The Fort Atkinson Preserve is in Winnebago County, approximately 175 miles northeast of Des Moines, 95 miles north of Cedar Rapids, 80 miles northwest of Dubuque and 65 miles northeast of Waterloo. The preserve lies just west of State Highway 150 on State Highway 24.



## **THE FORT AS A STATE PRESERVE**

*The state of Iowa acquired the fort in 1921 and reconstruction was started in 1958. In 1968, the fort was dedicated as part of the State Preserves System because of its geological, archaeological and historical value.*

*The State Preserves System attempts to protect and preserve examples of (1) the state's diverse natural features and species, (2) significant archaeological, geological and historical features, so all citizens will have the opportunity to observe, study and appreciate the natural and cultural base from which Iowa has developed.*

*Once dedicated by the governor, these preserves are afforded a higher degree of protection from encroachment or exploitation than any other land classification.*

## **GEOLOGY**

The northeastern Iowa landscape is part of the region designated as the Paleozoic Plateau, and has been exposed to weathering and erosion longer than any other region of the state. The topography here is rugged and the area is referred to popularly as "Little Switzerland." The preserve is geologically significant as the location of the Fort Atkinson Limestone Member of the Maquoketa Shale. These beds of sedimentary rock were created by deposits left about 430 million years ago when the region was part of a marine environment. A regional variation of Maquoketa Shale was identified by Samuel Calvin in 1906 and designated the "Fort Atkinson Member." The location selected by Calvin as the place where the character of this particular rock formation was most typically exposed was the quarry west of the fort buildings in the town of Fort Atkinson. \*Excerpts from A Regional Guide to Iowa Landforms by Jean Prior.



# ANNUAL FORT ATKINSON RENDEZVOUS

## TRADITION

The Rendezvous is the last full weekend in September. It is free to the public.

## SPONSORED BY

Iowa Department of Natural Resources and the people of the Fort Atkinson area.

## ABOUT THIS EVENT

Although trappers' rendezvous was an event which actually took place in the mountainous west and not in Iowa, the presence of an authentic frontier fort gives 20th century Iowans the opportunity to witness what frontier life in the 1840s might have been like, had there been such a gathering at Fort Atkinson. With the Neutral Ground closed to all but authorized people, visitors to the fort were few.

Crafts people will be working to produce goods needed in frontier everyday life. Foods of the period are cooked over open fires and contests spring up which test actual skills against bragging. You may even be lucky enough to hear some folk music from the frontier period. Representative regular army troops who manned the fort from 1840 to 1849 are present and carry out routine fort duties.

### Equal Recreational Opportunities

All persons are entitled to full and equal enjoyment of the recreational opportunities, privileges and advantages available in Iowa's great outdoors.



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# RENDEZVOUS SCHEDULE

## SATURDAY

- 9:30 a.m. **Fort Opens to the Public**  
Morning Colors with Cannon Drill
- 10:00 Cannon Drill
- 10:45 Geology Program
- 11:00 Anvil Shoot
- Noon Cannon Drill
- 1:00 p.m. Shooting Contest - Post Cut  
(Quarry Area)  
Skillet Throwing Contest
- 2:00 Cannon Drill
- 2:15 Geology Program
- 2:30 Melodrama
- 3:00 Tomahawk Throwing Contest
- 3:30 Anvil Shoot
- 4:00 Cannon Drill
- 4:30 Evening Colors
- Fort Closed to the Public**

## SUNDAY

- 9:00 a.m. **Fort Opens to the Public**  
Morning Colors with Cannon Drill
- 9:15 Church Service (on Fort Grounds)
- 10:30 Anvil Shoot
- 11:00 Cannon Drill  
Rendezvous Period Baking,  
Contest Judging
- 11:30 Melodrama
- 1:00 p.m. Cannon Drill  
Shooting Contest - String Cut  
(Quarry Area) \*\*
- 2:00 Anvil Shoot
- 2:30 Melodrama
- 3:00 Cannon Drill
- 4:00 Evening Colors with Cannon Drill
- Rendezvous Ends**

\*\*Contests will spring up testing actual skills against bragging — so listen for the camp announcements.

Volga River Recreation Area  
Rural Route #1  
Fayette, Iowa 52142