

John Gamble



On June 3, 1920, John Gamble (third from right) was one of twelve men who received from Colonel Harry B. Jordan a silver faithful service award for 40 years of employment at Rock Island Arsenal.

John Gamble began working at Rock Island Arsenal in 1874. He was assigned as a guard to Post No. 5, the Moline Bridge. He kept a work journal during his time as a guard at the Moline Bridge. His five work journals have entries dated from April 1, 1877 to September 30, 1916. These journals chronicle his employment history and give insight into the daily work experience of an arsenal employee of that time. He also mentions events that occurred at Rock Island Arsenal.

109

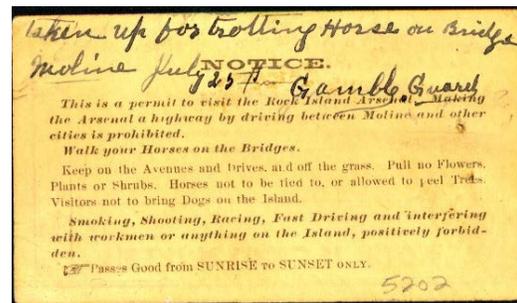
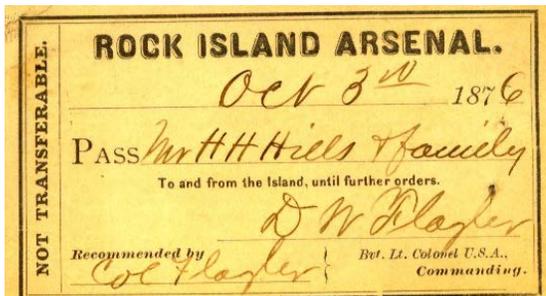
Fish caught with line & hook 1888

Salmon		Croppy		Bass		Cat		Pickled	
Apr 2	2			Apr 9	w 3	May 6	Small 1	Apr 9	1
3	3			16	B 1	23	26	18	1
7	1	Apr 7	4	25	B 1				2
10	2	9	2	25	W 1	June			
11	11	12	3	26	B 2	6	5	Sum	
12	6	19	1	26	W 2	7	1	May 25	2
13	11	17	1	31	B 2	8	1	27	2
14	8	15	13		12	9	1	28	1
15	5	16	5	May		10	1	29	1
16	3	17	5	5	B 1	13	10th	6	
18	4	18	2	9	w 11	18	2	June	
20	3	20	7	11	B 3	20	2	3	1
21	5	21	1	15	w 1	21	1	17	1
22	1	25	5	23	w 1			17	2
23	7	26	4		18	30			
24	14	27	4	June					
25	5	28	3	8	5				
26	3	29	2	14	w 3				
27	7	31	5	16	w 3				
29	1		67	17	8				
Apr 1888	38			21	w 8				
103	108	May		June	Croppy 27	54	Base		
Total 184		3	2	9	8				
May		4	1	11	1				
3	2	9	5	14	3				
9	1	13	6	16	7				
11	2	15	2	17	2				
22	2	23	7	21	16				
23	1	25	4		31				
27	2	29	3		67				
May		10			29				
83		29	3		19				
June		29			30				
2	1		29		145				
8	1	June 1	4		Croppy				
9	7	2	6						
21	5	5	4		103				
	8	6	2		108				
					18				
					5				
					Salmon				

One of Gamble's journals includes a chart of fish he caught while on duty at the Moline Bridge.

As a guard, John Gamble initially worked 12 hour days, 7 days a week. Guards rotated night and day shifts monthly. On July 23, 1888, guards' tours of duty were reduced to 8 hours a day. A Soldier came on post to stand one shift until a permanent guard was appointed. In August 1901, Gamble reports that guards received their first 15-day paid vacation.

Sundays 13 30 6.20 took up Mr. H.H. Hills Pass for trotting horse on bridge



On July 25, 1880, Gamble wrote in his work journal that he took up Mr. H.H. Hills pass for trotting his horse on the bridge. That pass with Gamble's annotation of the infraction are in the collection of the Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

Due to John Gamble's journals, we can document that the Rock Island Arsenal paid fire department replaced its all-volunteer predecessor on October 15, 1896. We can also verify that guards at Rock Island Arsenal did not wear uniforms until December 31, 1905, when they purchased them for \$18.60 at the M&R in Rock Island.



Prior to wearing uniforms in 1905, Rock Island Arsenal guards wore a prominently displayed, large shield-shaped badge. This example is in the collection of the Rock Island Arsenal Museum.

Like many early Rock Island Arsenal employees, John Gamble was a Civil War veteran. He served with Company C, 11th Iowa Volunteers, and participated in the Battle of Shiloh, the Siege of Vicksburg, and Sherman's Atlanta Campaign. He was captured, imprisoned at Andersonville, and was fortunate to be exchanged. He finished his military career as a nurse in Union hospitals.

John Gamble was an active member of the R.H. Graham Post, Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) in Moline, Illinois. His journals mention his GAR activities and his many comrades in arms.

Prior to the Retirement Act of May 22, 1920, government employees did not have retirement benefits. Sick leave was not available until 1936. Individuals worked until they were no longer capable of working, but often filled a less strenuous or responsible position. During the First World War, John Gamble served as a building guard.

On June 3, 1920, John Gamble was one of twelve men who received a silver faithful service award for 40 years. These awards were conferred by Colonel Harry B. Jordan, Commanding Officer of Rock Island Arsenal, at a full military ceremony to honor the veteran employees and show the government's appreciation for their long and faithful service. Four gold awards for 50 years of service and twenty-three bronze awards for 30 years of service were also presented.

John Gamble claimed annuity under the Retirement Act of May 22, 1920, and Colonel Jordan signed his annuity letter on July 27, 1920.