

# A bit about Fort Dodge



**F**ort Dodge is a community with a colorful past, an optimistic present and an unstoppable future.

In 1850, U.S. Army soldiers, charged with building a garrison in the area, pitched their tents on a site near the mouth of Lizard Creek where they found plentiful timber, good water and plenty of stone for building.

They also found a land full of wild game. By one early account, there were elk, deer, bear, panthers and wildcats. “Buffalo wallows and trails were to be seen in every direction,” according to Maj. William Williams, considered to be the founder of Fort Dodge.

Building began in late August and by Nov. 12, buildings were habitable at the new post, Fort Clarke. In the fall

of 1851, the post was renamed Fort Dodge in honor of Wisconsin Territory Gov. Henry Dodge because another Fort Clarke already existed and having two was causing mixups in the delivery of supplies and mail.

The fort was abandoned by the military in 1853, and Williams purchased the property from the state of Iowa and began to lay out the original plat of Fort Dodge in 1854.

One of Iowa’s most valuable mineral resources is found in a small area of central Webster County, in and around Fort Dodge.

The resource is gypsum, and the local deposits are one of the most pure gypsum deposits on Earth. Today, gypsum is primarily used to produce wall-board.

Gypsum mining began in Webster

County in the 1860s, and the first plaster mill in the area, Fort Dodge Plaster Mill, was built in 1872. In all, there were 13 gypsum mills, and today four plants still exist: Certaineed, Georgia-Pacific, National Gypsum Co. and USG.

Iowa ranks second only to Oklahoma in annual gypsum production in the nation, and 75 percent of the gypsum mined in Iowa comes from Webster County.

The community also receives national name recognition from the presence of Fort Dodge Animal Health, which was founded in 1912 as the Fort Dodge Serum Plant by Dr. D.E. Baughman.

Today, the company is a worldwide manufacturer of veterinary pharmaceuticals and biologicals.