



## Willard Park History

Alexander Willard relocated to California after a lengthy career as a private in the Corps of Discovery, the official name of the Lewis and Clark Expedition. Alexander joined the Corps in 1803 and became one of nearly 50 to join Captains Lewis and Clark in their mission to map the West in 1804. Alexander Willard was born in Charleston, New Hampshire on August 24, 1778. He was known as a strong man and talented blacksmith. When the expedition ended, Willard was chosen as the government blacksmith for the Sauk and Fox Indian tribes. Later, Willard married and moved to Platteville, Wisconsin. His family grew to include 7 sons and 5 daughters. Two of his sons were named for his friends, Meriweather Lewis and William Clark.

In 1832, Willard, at the age of 54, fought alongside 4 of his sons in the Blackhawk War. In 1849, Willard's eldest son headed west to explore the gold fields of California. He wrote home about the lush valley of Sacramento. In 1851, at age 71, lured by the memories of his experiences out West, Alexander Willard moved his family to California. They settled in the area south of Sacramento, on lower Stockton Road, then known as Georgetown. The town later came to be known as Franklin. Alexander Willard lived out the remainder of his life in Franklin, dying on March 6, 1865. His grave remains at the Franklin cemetery at Franklin Boulevard and Hood-Franklin Road. A plaque placed there by the Daughters of the Founders and Patriots of America recognizes him as the "Giant of Georgetown."

(Portions of the profile come from the files of Elizabeth Pinkerton and "The Giant of Georgetown," published March 14, 1984 in the Elk Grove Citizen.)

*The information within this document was created at the time of park dedication and may not be current.*