



Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
Division of State Parks  
1-800-334-6946

## The Battle of Pilot Knob Driving Tour

Fort Davidson State Historic Site

(573) 546-3454

[www.mostateparks.com/ftdavidson.htm](http://www.mostateparks.com/ftdavidson.htm)

### On the Road...

**To begin your journey**, take a left out of the parking lot of Fort Davidson State Historic Site. At the four-way stop, make a left. At the junction of Highway 221, turn left onto Highway 21 south. Follow the signs for Highway 72 east. Stay on Highway 72 east for approximately 2.5 miles. You will come to a narrow bridge just as you approach Lake Killarney. Turn around at Lake Killarney and head back on Highway 72 west. On the west side of the Lake Killarney/Stouts Creek bridge (the narrow bridge you just crossed) will be the first marker. Marker #1 resides in this area, but due to an unsatisfactory pull-off area, away from highway danger, travelers will not be able to access it.



### Shut-In Gap

The entrance into the Arcadia Valley on the Fredericktown Road was Shut-In Gap, a narrow pass created by Stouts Creek that afforded an easier passage into the valley. W.F. Slemon's Brigade, riding in advance of the main Confederate column, passed undetected through the undefended gap shortly after noon and was not spotted until it approached a Union picket post at the Russellville Junction.

### On the Road...

Traveling west on Highway 72, continue until you reach the green Arcadia city limits sign on your right, where you will make an immediate left onto Thompson Road. Markers #3 and #4 are just off of Highway 72, approximately 1.9 miles.



### The Arcadia Valley

The battle swept over the entire Arcadia Valley. The three towns of Arcadia, Ironton and Pilot Knob, nestled in the valley, suffered the full ravages of warfare. Citizens fled, homes and businesses were looted and farms were laid waste. Today, the battle is long past, but the citizens of the Arcadia Valley still remember the days when war visited their homes.



### Russellville Junction

After passing undetected through Shut-In Gap, Slemon's Brigade was discovered at approximately 1 p.m. by seven Union soldiers who were on picket duty at the Russellville Junction.

After they sounded the alarm, a Union cavalry patrol hurried to the junction. The rebels opened fire and the patrol fell back toward Ironton.

This phase of the battle ended around 2:30 p.m., when the Union cavalry retreated and left the road open to Slemon's advancing Confederates.

### On the Road...

Return to Highway 72, again heading west. Immediately after crossing the bridge over Highway 21, make a left turn onto College Road and then an immediate right onto Church Street. Continue up the hill, where you will find marker #4. Approximately 0.5 mile.



## Fort Curtis

Fort Curtis was an earthen fort constructed on this hill overlooking the junction of the roads that connected Ironton and Pilot Knob with Fredericktown. In 1863, the Union abandoned it in favor of Fort Davidson. Originally it was named Fort Hovey, but after Gen. Curtis's victory at Pea Ridge, Ark., the fort was renamed in his honor.

### Note: The Grant Monument

This impressive statue of the Civil War soldier was dedicated in memory of Gen. Ulysses S. Grant, who received his orders at that spot, promoting him to the rank of brigadier general in the Union Army in 1861. The statue is located on the grounds of the Ste. Marie DuLac Catholic Church.

### On the Road...

Return to Highway 72, again heading west (right turn). At the stop sign, make a left. At the next stop sign, make a right onto Main Street. (If you would like to visit the Grant Monument, take the first left after Shepherd Street. There will be a road nestled in-between a stone gateway.) Soon you will approach the Iron County Courthouse on your left. Located on the front lawn beside two 3-inch ordinance rifles will be markers #5 and #6. Approximately 0.6 mile.



## Montgomery's Battery

A section of Montgomery's Battery, two 3-inch ordinance rifles, commanded by Lt. Morgan Simonton, helped Union cavalry drive the Confederates back into Shut-In Gap and hold them until fighting halted at sunset on Sept. 26, 1864.

The two guns that you see here are identical to the guns in Montgomery's Battery.



## Iron County Courthouse

After the cavalry patrol retreated at about 2:30 p.m. on Sept. 26, Slemons sent part of his rebel brigade forward in an attempt to take Ironton.

Company E, 47<sup>th</sup> Missouri Infantry, took cover in the courthouse and fired at the rebels. They watched helplessly as Pvt. William Rector of Company I, 3<sup>rd</sup> M.S.M. Cavalry, raced his horse toward town, closely followed by a Confederate trooper. Suddenly, Rector's horse stumbled and Rector was thrown over its head. He scrambled to his feet, throwing his hands in the air in an attempt to surrender. He was shot and killed by the rebel. He was the first to die in the battle.

Company E then shot and killed the rebel.

A cavalry detachment commanded by Maj. James Wilson, assisted by Simonton's two guns, drove the rebel's back into Shut-In Gap. At about 5 p.m., Wilson led his cavalry in an unsuccessful charge against the gap. Wilson received a wound to his head and fell from his horse. He was able to remount, however, and ordered the column to fall back.

The first day of battle ended at sunset.

The second day began with an attack at dawn by Brig. Gen. William Cabell's Brigade. Simonton's two guns, from their position in front of the courthouse, fired several shots at the charging rebels, before beating a hasty retreat. Confederate artillery responded by firing into Ironton and hitting the courthouse. The imprint of one of the shells can still be seen in its façade.

### On the Road...

Remain on Main Street, heading north, until you come to the stop sign, which tees with Hwy 21. Cross Highway 21 onto Valley Street. Make an immediate left turn after the railroad tracks. Just a few yards down on the left is marker #7. Approximately 0.8 mile.



### **Ironton Gap (Wagonwheel Gap)**

Ironton Gap, about one-quarter-mile wide, separates Pilot Knob and Shepherd mountains. It divides the Arcadia Valley into northern and southern halves.

Cabell's Brigade, positioned in the center of the rebel line, charged Fort Davidson from the gap.

#### **On the Road...**

Retrace your steps back to Highway 21, where you will make a right, heading north. On your left will be a Save-A-Lot, where marker #8 resides. Approximately 0.6 mile.



### **Shepherd Mountain**

Fort Davidson is situated on a plain surrounded by four hills; Cedar Mountain to the northwest; Oak (Rock) Mountain to the northeast; Pilot Knob Mountain to the east; and Shepherd Mountain to the southwest.

Prior to the main assault of Fort Davidson on Sept. 27, skirmishes between Brig. Gen. John Clark's Brigade and the 14<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry were fought on Shepherd Mountain. Two rebel cannons were placed on the mountain, but due to accurate Union artillery fire from the fort, the guns were not important factors in the battle.

During the assault of the fort, Clark's Brigade anchored the left wing of the Confederate army at the base of Shepherd Mountain.

#### **On the Road...**

Again head North on Highway 21. At the junction of Highway 221, make a right turn onto McCune Street (Highway 221). Take the first right where marker #9 resides. Approximately 0.3 mile.



### **Knob Creek**

Knob Creek flows through Ironton Gap. Cabell's Brigade, positioned in the Ironton Gap at the center of the rebel line, crossed Knob Creek east of this point during its assault on the fort. Soldiers of the Confederate battleline, including those of Clark's, Slemmons' and McCray's brigades, as well as Cabell's, took shelter here when the furious fire from Fort Davidson halted their advance.

#### **On the Road...**

Make a left onto McCune Street (Highway 221). A few hundred feet ahead on the right is a pull-off located just past Fort Davidson for marker #10. Approximately 0.2 mile.



### **Pilot Knob Mountain**

Prior to the Confederate attack on Fort Davidson, a detachment of cavalry and infantry, under the command of Maj. James Wilson, was attacked on Pilot Knob Mountain by Slemmons' and McCray's brigades.

Wilson, Capt. Dinger and five others were taken prisoner. A few days after the battle ended, Wilson was executed by the rebels for alleged war crimes near Union, Mo.

During the assault on Fort Davidson, Slemmons' and McCray's brigades anchored the right wing of the Confederate army at the base of Pilot Knob Mountain.

#### **On the Road...**

Make a right back onto McCune Street (Highway 221). At the four-way stop, make a right turn. Drive approximately 0.3 miles on Highway 221, go under the railroad bridge, and there will be a pull-off on your left. This is marker #11. Approximately 0.3 mile.



### **Iron Furnace**

The Pilot Knob Iron Furnace is the last remnant of the Arcadia Valley's once prosperous 19<sup>th</sup> century mining industry. The furnace was destroyed by Price's forces after the battle. It was rebuilt and its ruins still stand on the east side of the mine waste area at the base of Pilot Knob Mountain.

#### **On the Road...**

Get back on Highway 221 and head back the way you came. Make the first right off of Highway 221 onto Maple Street (the street is at a "V" with Hwy 221 and runs behind Bell's Station Restaurant). Make a left turn onto Bogy Street. Down just a few yards is marker #12. Approximately 0.4 mile.



### **Railroad Depot**

Pilot Knob was the southern terminus of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad. Iron ore from the Pilot Knob mines was shipped from here. In 1863, Fort Davidson was built a short distance south-southwest of Pilot Knob to protect the supply depot and its military stores.

#### **On the Road...**

Remain on Bogy Street for a few blocks, where you will turn left onto Mulberry Street. Take a right onto Ziegler Street. Marker #13 is next to Immanuel Lutheran Church. Approximately 0.4 mile.



### **Immanuel Lutheran Church**

Immanuel Lutheran Church was built in 1861 on land that was deeded to the congregation by the Pilot Knob Mining Company.

The church served as a Union hospital during the Battle of Pilot Knob and telegrams discovered in the building after the battle indicate that it may have been temporarily used as a Union headquarters. The church was established as a National Historic Site in 1979.

Tours are available through appointment. For information call (573) 546-2373 or (314) 630-8407.

#### **On the Road...**

Turn around on Ziegler Street and make a right onto Mulberry Street. Go left onto McCune Street. Just before you come to the four-way stop is the Elk's Lodge's parking lot on your right, where marker #14 sits. Approximately 0.3 mile.



### **St. Mary's Catholic Church**

St. Mary's Catholic Church was built in 1861. During the evacuation of the fort under the cover of darkness, some of the Union troops filed up the north rifle pit and formed in the shadow of the church created by a burning charcoal pile that had been ignited by an artillery shell during the battle.

The building was destroyed by a tornado in 1957.

#### **On the Road...**

From the parking lot of marker #14, take a left turn onto McCune Street. Approximately 0.8 mile down the road, you will find markers #15 and #16 on your left. Approximately 0.8 mile.



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### **Caledonia-Potosi Road**

The evening following Price's unsuccessful assault on Fort Davidson, Gen. Thomas Ewing decided to evacuate the fort.

Confederate Col. Archibald Dobbin's Brigade was encamped less than 1,000 yards to the north, near the road which led through Caledonia and on to Potosi. Slayback's camp, near Middlebrook Road, was also to the north of the fort.

Around 1 a.m., the evacuation began. Ewing marched his men to Caledonia-Potosi Road. They were not challenged as they moved up the road and no encounter occurred.

Capt. H.B. Milks remained behind in command of a detail with orders to destroy the fort's powder magazine.

At approximately 3:30 a.m., the magazine exploded with a force that was felt 20 miles away. When Gen. Price heard the explosion at his headquarters in Ironton, he assumed it to be the result of an accident and thought that the garrison would surrender the next day. However, the next morning, the Confederates discovered an empty Fort Davidson with a huge smoking hole where the powder magazine had been.



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