

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Fort Benton

other names/site number Fort Hill

**2. Location**

street & number Missouri Highway U, 3.5 miles south of the intersection of Highways 34 and U

[n/a] not for publication

city or town Patterson

[n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Wayne code 223 zip code 63956

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO

Date 5 Sept. 02

Missouri Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(See continuation sheet for additional comments [ ].)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- removed from the  
National Register
- other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper

Date

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	0	0	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	1	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

n/a

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
 Defense/fortification

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**Current Functions**  
 Recreation and Culture/outdoor recreation

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**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
 no style

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**Materials**  
 foundation earth  
 walls earth  
 roof n/a  
 other n/a

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**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

**B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

**C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

Property is:

**A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

**B** removed from its original location.

**C** a birthplace or grave.

**D** a cemetery.

**E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

**F** a commemorative property.

**G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

Military

**Periods of Significance**

1862-1865

**Significant Dates**

April 20, 1863

September 22, 1864

**Significant Person(s)**

n/a

**Cultural Affiliation**

n/a

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

# \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State Agency

Federal Agency

Local Government

University

Other:

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property** less than acre

**UTM References**

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
15	717140	4117900			
C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title see continuation sheet

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Wayne County Historical Society

street & number Route 1, Box 1117 telephone n/a

city or town Piedmont state MO zip code 63957

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National Park Service

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 7 Page 1

Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

**SUMMARY:** A major fieldwork of the Civil War known as Fort Benton is located immediately south of the town of Patterson, Wayne County, Missouri. The site may be found 3.5 miles south of the intersection of Hwy 67 and Hwy 34 on a hill overlooking both the town and Patterson Valley. The rectangular site is overgrown with trees, but its earthen walls have maintained their shape. Its dimensions measure approximately 100 feet by 100 feet. This work resembles a better-recognized work, Fort Davidson in Pilot Knob. Within the walls of the fort are features that indicate a possible powder magazine as well as the remains of a small house constructed in the early 1920's and a concrete cistern that was placed there about the same time as the construction of the house.

**ELABORATION:** Fortifications were defensive works constructed of earth and wood. The two basic components were the parapet and the ditch. The ditch provided the soil to construct the parapet and further serve as an obstacle to an assault. The ditch around Fort Benton today measures 2 " feet in depth and is generally 5 feet in width. The bottom of the ditch is flat and could have been contained obstacles such as palisades and stockades. The scarp or wall of the ditch closest to the parapet has a slope sufficient enough to support the weight of the parapet. The exterior slope had an inclination that soil, when thrown into a pile, would naturally assume. The counter scarp or outside of the wall of the ditch had a much steeper angle since it had no weight to support other than the glacis. In the case of Fort Benton and its location upon a hill, the slope away from the fort on all four sides was a natural glacis.

Competent military engineers had a large repertoire of standardized figures they could use to design field works. These field works consisted of redoubts, redans, batteries and earthen forts. However, during the Civil War, each site was designed to meet the conditions of the particular site that was chosen, the limitations of time and materials that were available.

When a work was designed and then laid out on the ground the line of the crest was established first and all other elements of the work were laid in relation to it. The crest was the line where the interior slope met the superior slope. Fort Benton's crest would have been about 5 ½ feet in height. Since the interior crest was the highest point of the parapet, it determined how well troops within the work would be protected from enemy fire. Most field works constructed on level ground had to have an interior crest of at least six feet above the terreplein or gun platform.

Since the interior slope of the parapet required a steep inclination, a reverment probably had to be constructed to prevent the interior slope from sliding down. Posts or planks were the most widely used materials for revetments. Posts or planks could be laid horizontally and stacked along the interior slope with posts every 4 or 5 feet to retain the wall in place. A reverment of this type could be built quickly, held the soil well and was very durable when good wood was used. The walls of Fort Benton have retained their form quite well. The clay and small rocks in the soil are not conducive to rapid erosion and this has further helped maintain the appearance of the fort walls today.

The terreplein should have been about 4 or 4 ½ feet below the crest of the interior slope so that even the shorter troops could fire over the superior slope. Today, the surface of the fort within its walls lies only 2 to 2 ½ feet below the parapet. There are factors that could explain this discrepancy with the general format applied when constructing a fortification. In the early 1920's, a man and his wife named Ralph and Olah

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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

Hunter built a small house located centrally within the walls of Fort Benton. Although no remnants of the house remain, its foundation probably measures approximately 24 x 25 feet. There are two excavated areas within the fort today. One area appears to be the powder magazine, which measures 12 x 16 feet and is approximately 2 ½ feet in depth. Ordinarily, wood and earth would have covered a magazine of this nature. The other excavation could have been the cellar of the house built by the Hunters. The family also constructed a cement cistern 4 x 4 feet in the northeast portion of the interior.

According to Patterson sources, the Hunters did not live in the house long because it was impossible to get to the top of the hill during rainy weather. The house was finally dismantled and removed from the site by the Hunters. Thus, the steep hill utilized by the Union forces was still an impediment in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The site is now overgrown with trees of second and primarily third growth. They have contributed to the earthworks preservation. It would be prudent to remove the accumulated leaves and tree debris as well as the small diameter trees as a first step in both the restoration and preservation of this fort. The removal and redistribution of soil within the walls could restore the fort's original floor level.

Erosion over the years appears to have been minimal because of the distinctive features of the fort's walls. Entry into the fort apparently was at its southeast corner with the exit located at its southwest corner. Today, the exterior walls stand as high as 6 feet above the surrounding ground level and as low as 3 ½ feet at one point on the western side of the wall. The height above the ditch floor ranges anywhere from 6 to 7 ½ feet around various sides of the walls.

The setting of the fort is still essentially undisturbed, its association with the war and its strategic location are intact and consequently it retains evocative power. The integrity of this site is particularly significant because of its association with Fort Davidson (NRHP 2/26/70) in Pilot Knob. Fort Benton has remained relatively undisturbed since its abandonment by the Hunter family and later ownership by non-residents. Hunting and some metal detecting has occurred in the area but has caused no significant damage. In addition, the fort has escaped development and other detrimental factors allowing it to appear much like it did in 1864. Today, the fort and a thirty-acre tract of land around it are owned by the Wayne County Historical Society.

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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

From March 5 to March 7, 2000, Neal Lopinot, Gina Powell, and John Peterson, with the Center for Archaeological Research, Southwest Missouri State University, conducted a Phase I survey of the fort and its immediate surroundings at the request of the Wayne County Historical Society. Although their findings did indicate the fort and its surrounding area had the potential to yield information, they were not sufficient to demonstrate significance under Criterion D. Their description of the site follows:

The fort comprises a square earthwork measuring appr. 30 m (100 ft.) to a side. The parapets or embankments were formed from rocky sediments gathered from the exterior of the embankments. Construction of the parapets resulted in the formation of a ditch or trench around the four sides. Two breaks occur in the embankments that are perhaps original pathways into the fort—one in the northeast corner and one in the southwest corner. There are several large trees within and immediately around the fort, but most trees measure less than 6 inches in diameter.

The landscape within the fort's embankments is very irregular and includes two depressions. One depression is quite large and square in shape (appr. 6-7 m square), whereas the other is smaller and more rounded (appr. 3 m in diameter). The larger depression exhibits two basic levels. The east half is about 1 m below the ground surface and the west half is about 1.3 m below the ground surface. The surface around the large depression is covered with piles of backdirt from its excavation. The large depression and its backdirt pile are believed to have dated to the 1920s-1930s occupation, although other scenarios have been proffered. . . .

. . . the smaller depression may have been associated with the fort's powder magazine. Such magazines were often dug into the ground and covered over with wood or canvas to keep the powder dry. Three large boulders occur in this depression and could have served to elevate the a magazine platform or floor off the ground. Conversely, the boulders could represent displaced foundation or footing stones from the twentieth-century house.

According to Linda Lunyou (personal communication 2000), an old house had been moved to the middle of the fort in 1928 or 1929. The house was occupied for several years during the Depression, but was abandoned well before World War II. Oral tradition indicates that a depression was already in existence before the house was reconstructed. A photograph in the possession of the Wayne County Historical Society was taken during the occupation of the house. The photograph shows a child standing in front of the cistern. The porch and corner of the house are captured in the dim background. From this photograph, it is evident that the house was built over the place where the large depression occurs today. Backdirt piles appear to be present under the porch and around the cistern. The smaller depression also appears to be evident in this photograph.

The break in the east wall of the fort could date to the Civil War, but this breach also could

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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

have been constructed by the twentieth-century occupants. The fact that it faces east toward an old wagon road leading to Patterson, where many supplies were stored and Union troops were stationed, lends some credence to the possibility that it dates to the Civil War. However, it is also wide enough for access by early twentieth-century vehicles such as Model A and Model T autos/ trucks. In this regard, early twentieth-century vehicle parts were found in the east trench and about 100 m down the south slope.

A cistern with a concrete cap and metal lining also occurs in the southwest part of the fort, and earth from its construction also has likely added to the irregular topography inside the fort. Daffodils, often found near historic house sites, are prevalent along the eastern embankment within the fort. A Depression-era trash concentration was located about 30 m downslope on the south hillside. It contained clear glass sherds from ketchup bottles, light aqua Mason jar fragments, pieces of milk glass canning jar lids. Depression-era cut-glass vase fragments, rusted cans, dinnerware plate sherds, a post-1920 medicine bottle, etc. Other twentieth-century historic debris also was found strewn about on various slopes to the north and west.<sup>1</sup>

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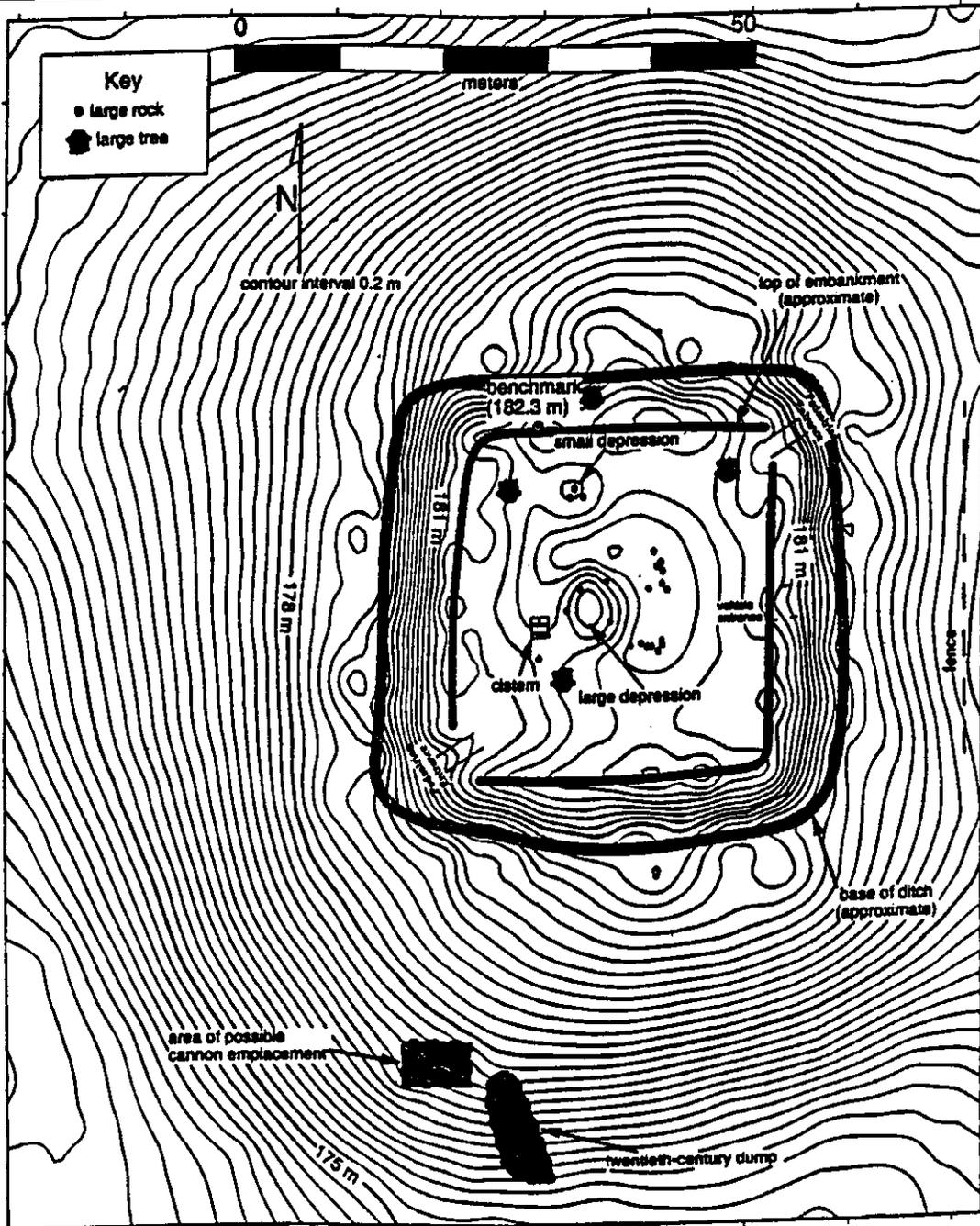
<sup>1</sup>Neal H. Lopinot, Gina S. Powell, and John K. Peterson, "Mapping and Preliminary Archaeological Assessment of Fort Benton, Wayne County, Missouri," Project: CAR 1127, prepared for Wayne County Historical Society (Springfield, MO: Center for Archaeological Research, Southwest Missouri State University, March 2000).

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Fort Bento,  
Wayne County, NC



Topographic map of Fort Benton and surrounding hillside, showing embankments, depressions, possible cannon emplacements, and twentieth century disturbances. Source: Lopinot, Powell, and Peterson.

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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

**SUMMARY:** Fort Benton, near Patterson, Wayne County, is significant under Criterion A in the area of military. Constructed in late 1862, the earthen fort served two primary missions during the American Civil War: it supported an encampment of Union troops stationed at Patterson to secure the area against local Confederate guerillas; and it was one of a series of forts and camps in Missouri, including Fort Davidson (NRHP 1970) at Pilot Knob, fortifications at Cape Girardeau, and a smaller fortification at Barnesville (NRHP 1998), which were designed to protect Union Missouri from invasion from Confederate Arkansas. Fort Benton was the southern most fort in southeast Missouri and was be the first obstacle the Confederates would encounter in their attempts to take control of the state. While the fort supported a number of expeditions and scouts against local secessionist forces, it was less successful as a defensive bastion against more organized incursions by Confederate forces. Fort Benton played a key role in two Confederate invasions of Missouri, the 1863 raid by John S. Marmaduke, when it was abandoned by its Union defenders, and the larger 1864 expedition led by Sterling Price, when it was again abandoned and reported as destroyed by J.O. Shelby. However, the fort and post were once again reoccupied and remained in use until the end of the war. This major fieldwork is the only one of its kind in Wayne County and is an excellent example of this type of earthwork construction employed by the Union army during the Civil War. Because of its condition, the fort may offer clues to many unanswered questions regarding its construction. The development of land by commercial ventures, neglect, looting and irresponsible care has taken a toll of works of this nature in other areas associated with the Civil War.

**NARRATIVE:** During the Civil War, the Ozark Highlands between St. Louis and northern Arkansas was a virtual no-man's land, where the rules of conduct which governed war in the eastern theater of the war did not apply. Like twentieth century Lebanon, Nicaragua, and Northern Ireland, the Civil War in Missouri consisted of neighbor fighting neighbor and brother fighting brother, and the loyalties of any one participant were liable to change with the winds of the war and local political stability, or instability, however the case might have been. The Ozarks of the nineteenth century were characterized by unforgiving topography; steep rock strewn hills, thick virgin forests of oak, hickory and pine, and deep narrow river valleys lent to a particularly brutal type of guerilla warfare which produced notoriously vicious raiders on both the Confederate and Union sides. The vast majority of roads which traversed this wilderness were little more than deer paths that either snaked through the river bottoms or followed high hard ridges over the crests of the towering hills. These woodland routes, many of which had been used by Native Americans for centuries and Anglo-American hunters for decades, provided little more than a clear path for horse and rider, and contributed to the mounted guerilla style tactics that remained prevalent through the war. Small bands of mounted marauders would ride out of the deep hollows and attack the small scattered communities which dotted the region. Once the guerillas, the majority being Confederate partisans, had accomplished their goal of looting and destruction, they would simply ride off into the deep, silent forests, hiding until the time came when they could once more attack. This type of hit and run warfare also made travel between the populated areas of eastern Missouri and the Arkansas River valley virtually impossible for Federal control of the country. The need for a Union military presence in the Ozarks was paramount, if the Civil War was to be won in the west.

The greatest obstacles to achieving and retaining military control of the Ozarks were topography and the state of transportation in the region. While both were conducive to guerilla warfare tactics, they extremely detrimental to more typical military operations. Wagon roads, where they existed, were jealously guarded by those troops which held them and were essential for the movement of troops and supplies. The primary wagon road over this ground, the Military Trail (originally called the Belleview Trail), ran from St.

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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

Louis to Pilot Knob, and then on southward to Pocahontas, Arkansas. This trail was reportedly laid out prior to the war by Pocahontas Randolph, a settler of northern Arkansas. A number of struggling settlements developed along this primitive transportation routes, Belleview (for which the trail was named), Lesterville, Centerville, Van Buren, and Barnesville. The trail wound its way south from St. Louis to Potosi, then on to Caledonia, then jogged southeast to Pilot Knob, then southwest to Lesterville and Centerville, then south to Barnesville and Van Buren. From Van Buren, the trail continued south through the Irish Wilderness to Acton and then on into Arkansas. When the Civil War opened in 1861, this all important artery of transportation ran through a virtual no-man's land, and the strategic importance of holding the territory was imperative to both Federal and Confederate concerns.

Patterson was at the crossroads of four major roads in Southeast Missouri. The old military road between Van Buren to the south and Pilot Knob to the northeast had its midpoint at Patterson and ran along the east side of the fort. From 1858 to 1871, Patterson was also a stop on the stage route from Pilot Knob to Batesville, Arkansas. Patterson, formerly referred to as "Crossroads,"<sup>2</sup> also had a road leading to Cape Girardeau 60 miles to the east and Iron Mountain about 40 miles to the west. With its selection as a Union outpost, Patterson served as a dispatch center on a telegraph line which linked it to Fort Davidson, the fortification at Barnesville, and other points.

From the opening months of the conflict, southeast Missouri was regarded as both crucial to Union control and as a bastion of secessionist support. On July 7, 1861, Chester Harding Jr., Assistant Adjutant-General, Missouri Volunteers, reported to Adjutant-General of the Army Lorenzo Thomas, that "secessionists in the southeast began to organize their forces" in response to troop movements by General Nathaniel Lyon that were intended to secure Missouri for the Union. According to Harding's assessment,

The whole of the southeast requires permanent occupancy by our troops, as it contains more enemies than any other portion of the State. . . . It is apparent that the enemy [in Arkansas] design an invasion of the southeastern portion of the State with a considerable force, and rely upon the inhabitants of the swamp counties for active cooperation.<sup>3</sup>

As defensive measures, a regiment from Quincy, Illinois, was dispatched to Greenville, in Wayne County, and five companies of the Sixth Regiment, U.S. Volunteers, were stationed at Ironton, with the remainder to follow when organization of the regiment was complete.

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<sup>2</sup>Patterson was also known as Isbell's Store and the Virginia Settlement. Robert Sidney Douglas, *A History of Southeast Missouri* (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912; reprint ed., Cape Girardeau, MO: 1972), p. 273; and Cramer, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup>*The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Record of the Union and Confederate Armies* (73 vols., 128 parts; Washington 1880-1901; reprint ed., *The Civil War CD-ROM, The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, version 1.55 [Carmel, IN: Guild Press of Indiana, 1997], series 1, vol.3, pp. 391-392; hereinafter cited as *O.R.*, series, volume., part, and page numbers.



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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

The occupation of Southeast Missouri by the Union army was an effort to protect the state from falling under the control of Confederate forces. One of the earliest Union outposts established in Southeast Missouri was at Patterson. The camp may have been initially called Camp Benton, but was later referred to as Camp Patterson, perhaps to distinguish it from the later fort. The camp may have had its beginnings in November 1861, when the Independent Company Missouri Cavalry, commanded by Captain Henry P. Hawkins, camped at Patterson. Hawkins and the Independent Company were "loyal Missourians, driven from Wayne and surrounding counties."<sup>4</sup> According to Hawkins, he was ordered to remain in Greenville with his company, but "Want of subsistence and shoeing of horses compelled me to return to this point [Patterson]. It is 10 miles north of Greenville, and a much more desirable place to camp."<sup>5</sup> Hawkins also reported on the state of the region and its inhabitants:

I find the southern part of the State stripped of almost every kind of produce, and many families along our route are absolutely suffering for many of the necessaries of life. I found the inhabitants in great fear of outrages supposed to be committed by the Federal troops. I adopted a mild and uniform course of treatment towards those persons with whom we came in contact. It was expected by the rebel citizens of Doniphan [Ripley County] that we would destroy their town. Mr. Leeper, myself, and one or two others acquainted with the families of some of the prominent citizens, called on their families, and advised the men to remain at home and live as they had heretofore, loyal citizens. I am well satisfied our trip below has done much good towards reconciliation and establishing a friendly feeling towards our Union troops.<sup>6</sup>

Camp Patterson and, later, Fort Benton were located on the farm of William Patterson, for whom the town of Patterson had been named. In 1835, Patterson, with his wife and two children, came to Wayne County from Virginia to join other settlers from his home state in what was referred to as the Virginia Settlement. Patterson purchased 640 acres of land, taught a subscription school at his home, and was minister of the Clark's Creek Presbyterian Church. Apparently a staunch Unionist, Patterson would often camp with the troops on his land and, after the 1863 raid, the Patterson house was used for a hospital.<sup>7</sup>

By December 1861, a camp was established and garrisoned by troops which included what was probably a detachment of the First Minnesota Battery of Light Artillery. According to one member of the battery, Thomas D. Christie, in a letter written from Camp Benton on Christmas Eve to his sister, duty was light, at least initially: "In my present life I have plenty of leisure, as we do not drill any yet until we get our guns."<sup>8</sup> Christie also described both the accommodations and his fellow troopers:

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<sup>4</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 3, p. 364.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 365.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>*Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*. (Chicago: Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1888; reprint ed., Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfre Press, 1955), p. 1140; and Rose Fulton Cramer, *Wayne County, Missouri* (Cape Girardeau, MO: Ramfre Press, 1972), pp. 115, 425, and 508.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas D. Christie to Sarah J. Christie, December 24, 1861, Minnesota Historical Society, <http://www.mnhs.org/library/Christie/transcriptions/td611224.html>, accessed January 30, 2002.

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Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO

Our company is quartered for the present in a room about 60 feet by 30, all round this room are the bunks for the men, three tiers in height [sic], formed of uprights, crosspieces joining them together and boards laid on the crosspieces, on these the bedtick is laid, two men sleeping together. . . .

We have all kinds of Characters in our battery, some of whom I hope to describe to you someday, 3 men have been members of the Legislature, 3 were in the Crimea, 1 served under Lieutenant -- now Commodore -- Dupont, 1 was with Fremont in his first Expedition, west of the Rocky Mountains, and 6 or 7 were in the Mexican War.<sup>9]</sup>

During the course of the war, other units stationed at the camp and later fort were the Twenty-third Regiment Infantry, Iowa Volunteers; Eleventh Regiment Infantry, Wisconsin Volunteers; and the First Regiment Infantry, Nebraska Volunteers. However, the Third Regiment, Missouri State Militia Cavalry would be most closely linked with Camp Patterson and Fort Benton. By some estimates, the camp may have housed as many of six thousand troops.

Camp Patterson, before the construction of Fort Benton, may have served primarily as a staging area from which numerous scouts and expeditions were launched to secure the surrounding area for the Union. For example, the August 22, 1862 expedition by Major B.F. Lazear and the First Battalion, Twelfth Regiment Cavalry, Missouri State Militia, may have been typical. Lazear and his command departed Patterson on a search for a Confederate recruiter named Jeffers. With 268 men, Lazear marched to Greenville, then Dallas. From Dallas, 110 men proceeded to Crooked Creek, where the Confederates, in an estimated strength of 500, were encountered. The Union troops were initially routed, but the retreat was finally halted sufficiently to form a defensive line before which the Confederates retreated, although Union forces were sufficiently confused that a pursuit could not be organized. In the ensuing skirmish, Lazear reported six Confederates killed, although losses may have been as high as forty killed and wounded, with Union losses of three killed, six wounded, and two missing. As a comment on the loyalties of citizens living in the area, Lazear noted that "Feed and provisions abundant about Dallas, and all owned by rebels."<sup>10</sup>

On September 22, 1862, Major General Samuel R. Curtis was appointed commander of a resurrected Department of the Missouri. His top priority was the strategic defense of Missouri and, to accomplish this end, he emphasized more permanent outposts, which included the construction of fortifications at settlements such as Patterson, Barnesville, and Centreville. In late 1862, Brigadier General William P. Benton, commander of the First Division of the Army of Southeast Missouri,<sup>11</sup> was sent to oversee the

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>O.R., Series 1, volume 13, 258-259.

<sup>11</sup>The Army of Southeast Missouri was organized in October 1862, with General J.W. Davidson in command. According to Davidson, his new command consisted of thirteen regiments and three batteries, and in November 1862 was camped below Pilot Knob, Missouri (J.W. Davidson to H.W. Halleck, November 14, 1862, O.R. Series I, Volume 13, page 790). The commander of the First Division, William Plummer Benton, was first captain and later colonel of the 8th Indiana Volunteer Infantry Regiment. In April 1862, Benton was appointed brigadier general and assigned command of the First Division of the Army of Southeast Missouri ("William Plummer Benton, 1828-1867,"

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construction of a new fort in Patterson. Patterson was apparently selected, in part, because of its location at the crossing of four major roads in southeast Missouri. Topography was also an important consideration. Immediately south and adjacent to the edge of town, there is a crest of a two-mile long ridge that separates the valleys of Clark and Rings creeks. The Union troops chose a hill which rose, according to the USGS topographical map, to an elevation of 598 feet.

In a letter dated November 18, 1862, a volunteer in the Twenty-third Iowa Infantry reported that the "fort is in the course of construction a little to the right of our camp and one regiment is employed in building bridges and making a good road between here and Pilot Knob, the terminus of the St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad."<sup>12</sup> On December 19, 1862, Union General Davidson and his army departed Fort Benton, leaving only a small force to protect supplies and await incoming troops that would soon occupy the fort and town of Patterson.

Fort Benton, although rather small, is typical of a major field work, a square redoubt, and is typical of the construction techniques employed by the Union forces in their campaigns west of the Mississippi River. Its walls are constructed of packed earth and face in the directions of the compass. The walls are approximately 100 feet on all four sides. The construction methods at Fort Benton can also be seen in fortifications at Barnesville, and in Fort Davidson, located at Pilot Knob. All three fortifications were built in 1862 as a series of forts to protect the important railroad junction at Pilot Knob and the city of St. Louis. Major field works were designed to protect both the garrison from enemy fire and to offer a significant obstacle to an assault. Minor field works were primarily intended to serve as protective cover. Another feature that distinguished the two works from each other was the location of the ditch. Major field works tended to have a ditch around the exterior of the parapet where minor field works did not have a ditch or the ditch was found on the interior of the parapet. It appears Fort Benton would be categorized as a major fieldwork.

Following Curtis's assumption of command, in April 1863, Colonel Edwin Smart's Third Missouri State Militia Cavalry was stationed at Patterson.<sup>13</sup> Militia in the form of five hundred unmounted cavalry remained in Patterson. The union had installed a telegraph line from Patterson to Pilot Knob and then to St. Louis and Union headquarters. On April 16, 1863 Union Brigadier General J.W Davidson instructed Colonel Smart to "Collect all fire-arms in the neighborhood, except those in armories of the Enrolled Militia, or in the hands of thoroughly loyal men, who will come into our lines on the advance of the enemy."<sup>14</sup> Davidson also made clear that Smart was not to defend the post and fort if attacked, but to withdraw in the

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<http://indianainthecivilwar.com/hoosier/benton.htm>, December 3, 2001). In March 1863, Benton was transferred to the Department of the Tennessee (J.W. Davidson to H.Z. Curtis, March 19, 1863, O.R. series 1, volume 22, part 2, page 161). On February 23, 1863, Davidson was placed in command of the District of St. Louis, which encompassed southeast Missouri. O.R., series 1, vol. 22, part 2, p. 122.

<sup>12</sup> Hagler, David, "Excerpt from letter from volunteer, 23<sup>rd</sup> Iowa Infantry," *Wayne County Journal Banner* (Feb. 12, 1998).

<sup>13</sup>O.R., volume 22, part 2, p. 273.

<sup>14</sup>O.R., series 1, vol. 22, part 1, p. 254.

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face of force, probably to Pilot Knob: "Don't keep any amount of ammunition on hand, nor subsistence on hand at Patterson. This hint is given you that you may feel your regiment is part of a movable force"<sup>15</sup>

On April 17, 1863, Confederate General John Sappington Marmaduke entered Missouri with a force of about 5,000 men (although only about 3,800 were armed) and consisting of Shelby's Missouri cavalry brigade, Greene's Missouri cavalry brigade, Carter's Texas cavalry brigade, and Burbridge's brigade, made up of Burbridge's Missouri cavalry regiment and Newton's Arkansas cavalry regiment. The raid was planned primarily as a diversion for the larger goals of expelling the Union forces from Arkansas and Louisiana and drawing Federal forces from the Mississippi River. The immediate goals were to destroy forts, bridges, and telegraphs through the Iron Mountains, destroy the Federal supply depot at Cape Girardeau, and to gather as many recruits as possible in Missouri.<sup>16</sup> Marmaduke's initial goal was the rail head at Rolla, but he discovered that the area around the Phelps County town had been stripped of forage, "it having been destroyed to prevent raids or army movements."<sup>17</sup> Instead, Marmaduke decided to move to the east of Ironton, capture the Union outpost at Patterson, consisting of a regiment and Fort Benton, and then move against and capture McNeil's force of about 2,000 at Bloomfield. Then, well armed at McNeil's expense, Marmaduke hoped demonstrations by his forces would force the federals to withdraw their forces from northern Arkansas and southwest Missouri. Because of the scarce forage, Marmaduke divided his force into two columns, one commanded by Shelby and consisting of Shelby's and Burbridge's brigades, and the other under Carter and consisting of Carter's and Greene's brigades. Marmaduke traveled with Carter, who was instructed to surprise and capture Patterson.

The column under Colonel Shelby was to march via Van Buren to Patterson and reach it by April 20. The other column would march through Doniphan and also reach Patterson by the 20th. However, to the detriment of the operation, a part of Carter's command encountered a federal picket near Patterson and provided a warning to the troops at the fort and camp. According to Marmaduke,

About midnight April 19, when 30 miles distant from Patterson, Carter detached Lieutenant-Colonel [D.C.] Giddings--in command of his regiment (about 450 men), Reyes' independent company of spies and guides, and two pieces of [J. H.] Pratt's battery--to move rapidly, cautiously, and secretly by a more direct and unfrequented route to surprise Patterson. When 12 miles from Patterson, about daylight, Colonel Giddings surprised and handsomely captured the whole Federal picket from Patterson--1 lieutenant and 24 men. He marched on and could have successfully surprised the whole garrison, but that he moved too slowly; did not take sufficient risk for the nature of his expedition, and allowed his artillery to open when within 2 miles of the fort. The troops there (about 600 cavalry, under Colonel Smart) took the alarm, and precipitately fled to Pilot Knob, burning everything they could, but leaving behind a large supply of subsistence and some quartermaster's stores. Colonel Giddings pursued them vigorously for 7 miles, killing, wounding, and capturing a number. All the prisoners taken except those in hospital I paroled.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 254-255.

<sup>16</sup>Stephen B. Oates, *Confederate Cavalry West of the River* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1961), p. 123.

<sup>17</sup>O.R. Series 1, volume 22, part 1, p. 285-286.

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Source: Oates, p. 116.



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On the evening of the 20th, as ordered, the two columns entered Patterson. Colonel Shelby's column encountered a Federal, picket from Patterson, and killed or captured 8 or 10 of them.<sup>18</sup>

Carter was ordered to pursue McNeil, who fled Bloomfield for Pilot Knob, and then for Cape Girardeau. Marmaduke's forces pursued their prize to the heavily defended river town, then retreated in the face of Federal reinforcements and the formidable defenses of the town. On May 1, Marmaduke withdrew across the St. Francis River at Chalk Bluff and back into Arkansas, after a hard-fought retreat. In his report on May 20, Marmaduke gave an optimistic assessment of the abortive expedition:

My loss in the expedition is some 30 killed, 60 wounded, and 120 missing (stragglers), perhaps captured. I gained on the raid about 150 recruits and a great improvement in the number and quality of horses. The Federal loss must have been at least five times as great as mine in killed and wounded. In every instance when he made the attack he was repulsed.

The officers and men deserve special mention for their bravery, steadiness, and endurance. At no time were they in the least demoralized, but were always willing, even anxious, to fight.<sup>19</sup>

According to Confederate Major John N. Edwards, Colonel Shelby's adjutant, a special prize awaited the Missouri Confederates at Fort Benton: Union Captain William T. Leeper.<sup>20</sup> Leeper gained a reputation among Confederates as especially vicious. According to Edwards, several Home Guard companies were stationed at Patterson, "the most bloody and vicious of which was commanded by a certain Captain Leper [sic]. . . . Leper, as every one knew, was a goodly prize, and the rope had been duly prepared for the

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<sup>18</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 1, pp. 285-286.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 289.

<sup>20</sup>William T. Leeper was born March 8, 1823, in Maury County [his tombstone indicates Hickman County], Tennessee. In 1857, Leeper moved to Wayne County, Missouri, where he purchased 225 acres of land. In 1858, he was elected county surveyor and was admitted to the bar. Leeper was the delegate from Wayne County to the 1861 state convention which replaced Governor Claiborne Fox Jackson with provisional governor Hamilton Gamble. On the outbreak of the war, he organized Company B [or D] of the 12th Cavalry Regiment, Missouri State Militia and was elected its captain. Leeper's family was a microcosm of the fratricidal rivalries engendered by the war. Of the six Leeper brothers, three enlisted in Union service and three served with the Confederacy. On February 2, 1863, the 12th Cavalry was disbanded and Company B became Company L of the 3rd Cavalry. Near the end of the war, Leeper was promoted to Colonel and succeeded James Lindsay as commander of the recently organized 23rd Regiment of Enrolled Missouri Militia. Following the war Leeper served as state representative for Wayne County from 1868 to 1872, then practiced law until 1882. He also was appointed county and circuit clerk in 1865 and elected prosecuting attorney in 1872. A member of the Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union, he was also vice-president of the Farmers and Merchants Bank (failed 1898), director of the Bank of Piedmont (1902), and a member of the board of Wayne Academy (1889). He died May 19, 1912. The town of Leeper in Wayne County was named for him. According to the 1888 history of southeast Missouri, Leeper was "a man of strict integrity and has much influence in the community in which he resides." *Goodspeed's History of Southeast Missouri*, p. 1134; Cramer 115-116, 121, 174-175, 188, 201, 206-207, 346, 410, 413, 447, and 616; and *Come Home: Cemetery Inscriptions of Wayne County, Missouri* (Piedmont: Wayne County Historical Society, n.d.), pp. 266-267.

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stretching.<sup>21</sup> According to Edwards, the destruction at Patterson created a controversy which endured after the end of the war.

The burning of Patterson has been unjustly and falsely attributed to the Confederates, and, since the termination of the war, some zealous but contemptible fanatics have been annoying many of the officers acting on this expedition with suits and claims for fabulous damages. . . . if it is deemed desirable to soothe the wounds of outraged loyalty by confiscating and imprisoning as a retaliation, the suggestion is made that Colonel Smart and Captain Leper [*sic*] be indicted for arson.<sup>22</sup>

Following Marmaduke's raid, the camp and fort at Patterson were quickly reoccupied. On May 29, 1863, Major L. Lippert, Thirteenth Regiment, Illinois Cavalry, found Lt. Samuel R. Kelly and sixty-nine men of the Third Missouri State Militia stationed there. Kelly and his men accompanied Lippert on an expedition against Confederate guerrillas, and Lippert complained "During my efforts to make the Third Missouri State Militia hold their position, I received eight balls in different parts of my body."<sup>23</sup> Two officers and twenty-seven men of the Third Militia apparently deserted the battlefield and returned to Patterson, without their horses, later that same day; the deserters were subsequently ordered arrested by Brigadier-General Davidson. On October 11, 1863, Captain W.T. Leeper requested that Brigadier General Clinton B. Fisk station part of Leeper's command at Patterson: "I do not wish to go back to Pilot Knob. Let me move the balance of our companies to Patterson."<sup>24</sup> By November 14, Leeper and companies A and L of the Third Missouri State Militia Cavalry were stationed at Patterson, listed as an outpost.<sup>25</sup> By December 3, operations at the outpost had returned to normal, according to Leeper: "All is quiet below. . . . I have heard of a small bunch or two of guerrillas. My men are after them. I will keep them hot."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>John N. Edwards, *Shelby and His Men, or The War in the West* (N.p., Robert J. Lawrence, 1867; reprint ed., Waverly, MO: J.O. Shelby Memorial Fund, 1993), p. 152. From the fall of 1862 to the end of the war, Edwards served as Shelby's adjutant. If Leeper had been captured, his fate might have been similar to that of Major James Wilson, Third Missouri State Militia Cavalry, who was captured by the Fifteenth Missouri Cavalry during Price's 1864 assault on Fort Davidson. Wilson and six enlisted men, accused of crimes against Southern sympathizers, were executed, allegedly on the order of Major Timothy Reeves. In retaliation, Union authorities executed six enlisted Confederate prisoners in St. Louis. It was also announced that a Confederate major would be executed, but that threat was never carried out. Albert Castel, *General Sterling Price and the Civil War in the West* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968), p. 214. According to Edwards, Wilson's execution "was an act of eminent justice, for he was a common murderer, and entirely destitute of manly and soldierly feelings." Edwards, p. 389.

<sup>22</sup>Edwards, p. 154.

<sup>23</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 1, 345-347.

<sup>24</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 1, p. 683.

<sup>25</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 1, p. 742; and part 2, p. 766.

<sup>26</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 2, p. 729.

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<sup>24</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 1, p. 683.

<sup>25</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 1, p. 742; and part 2, p. 766.

<sup>26</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 22, part 2, p. 729.

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On September 14, 1864, Leeper wrote Brigadier General Thomas Ewing to complain of rumors of rebel forces and the dispersal of Union forces from Southeast Missouri. As usual, Leeper was blunt in his requests:

The leaves will soon fall, and then we wish to kill all the guerillas. I wish to see the U.S. forces take possession of all of Southeast Missouri. The rebels now hold some five or six counties. . . . The force at Patterson is not large enough; we have now only two companies, when there should be four companies. That post is more exposed than any outpost in Southeast Missouri, except it may be Bloomfield.<sup>27</sup>

Leeper was not aware of it, but the adequacy of the forces at Patterson were about to be tested. On August 4, 1864, Edmund Kirby Smith, commander of the Confederate forces in the Trans-Mississippi, ordered General Sterling Price to proceed with the long deferred invasion of Missouri. The objective was St. Louis, which, if captured, would yield enormous supplies and stores and serve as a rallying point for an expected surge of Confederate sympathizers. Price, a former Missouri governor, also still harbored hopes of bringing the state into the Confederate fold. On August 28, Price departed Camden, Arkansas, with James F. Fagen's and John S. Marmaduke's divisions. At Pocahontas, Arkansas, they were joined by Joseph O. Shelby's division, for a total of 12,000 cavalry; however, nearly 4,000 were unarmed. On September 21, Price's force crossed the state line into Missouri.<sup>28</sup>

Patterson and its camp and fort were again in the path of the invading Confederate forces, this time led by General Shelby. Shelby's forces swept through Doniphan, and "pushed on then rapidly for Patterson, destroying on the way the bloody rendezvous of the notorious Leeper . . ."<sup>29</sup> The fort and camp at Patterson were under the command of Captain Robert McElroy, of Company D, Third Missouri State Militia. According to Shelby, on September 22, he found, upon reaching Patterson, about seventy-five Union cavalry. They were charged by troops led by Colonel Richard Elliott, who succeeded in killing fourteen and wounding several more; Shelby later reported the number of killed as twenty-eight. Once again, the Union troops, hearing of the approach by the Confederate force, had abandoned the fort and telegraph line the day before Shelby arrived, taking all their supplies with them. In his report from the battlefield, Shelby stated: "I shall burn the fort here, with all the barracks and stables, together with a large number of tents left standing."<sup>30</sup> In a later report, Shelby provided more detail on his actions:

on the morning of the 22<sup>nd</sup> [of September] I surrounded and charged in upon the town. Its garrison, hearing of my advance, retreated hastily, but not before many were captured and killed, and some supplies taken. All the Government portion of Patterson was destroyed, together with its strong and ugly fort.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 41, part 3, p. 190.

<sup>28</sup>Oates, pp. 142-145.

<sup>29</sup>O.R. Series 1, Vol. 41, Part 1, page 652.

<sup>30</sup>O.R. Ser. 1, Vol. XLI, Part 3, Page 951.

<sup>31</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 41, part 1, p. 652.

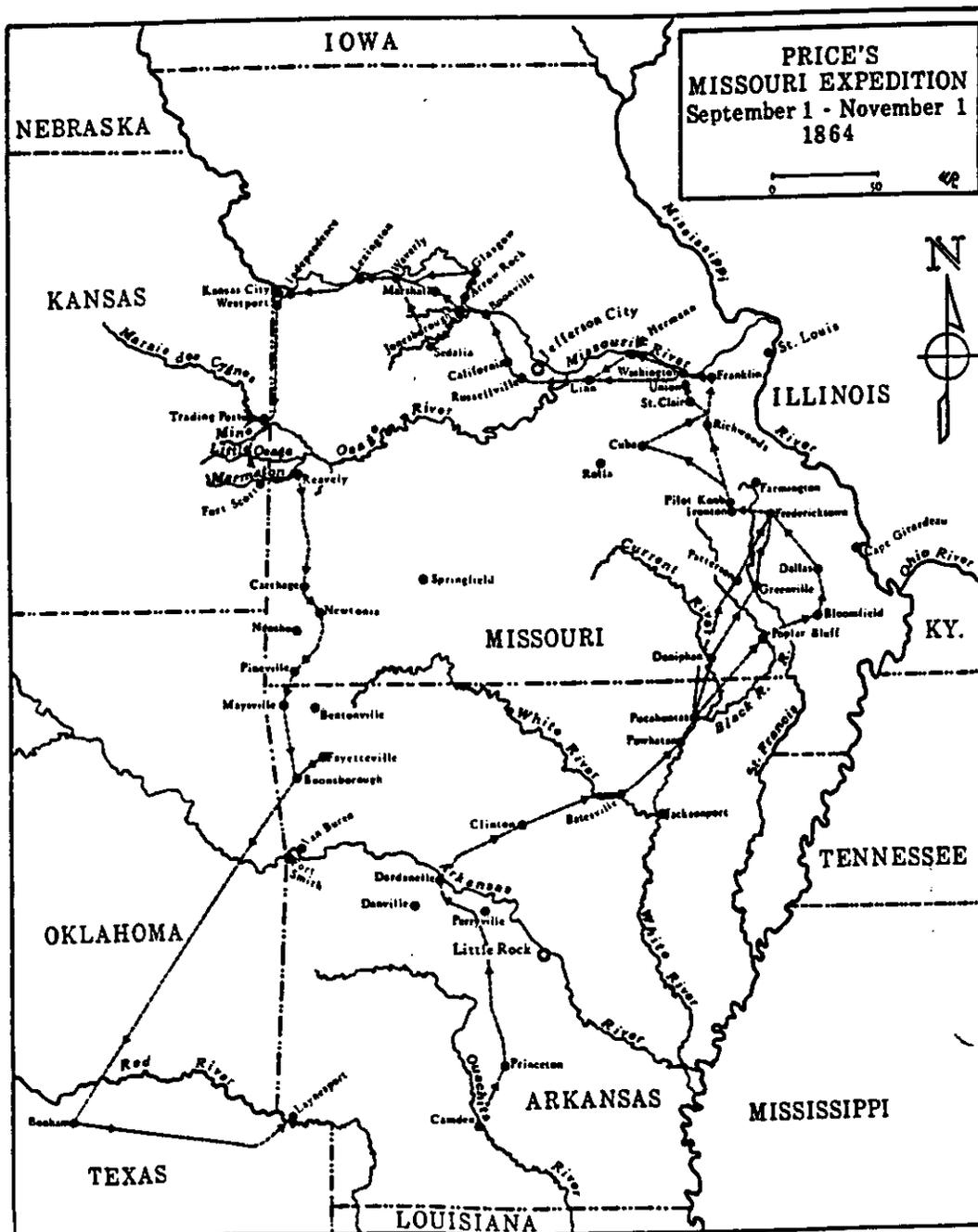
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Source: Oates, p. 143.



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Even before Price's raid had ended, Union forces had returned to Patterson on scouts. On October 23, Major H.H. Williams reported a number of "bushwhackers" were killed at Patterson and "Captain Leeper is on the warpath."<sup>32</sup> The following day, Williams urged General Ewing to reoccupy Patterson and Fort Benton: "Patterson is the key to this country and should be garrisoned. . . . Can't some of the troops that went to Rolla from here [Pilot Knob] be sent there?"<sup>33</sup> On October 28, General Ewing asked Major H.H. Williams to "Tell Captain Leeper to assure the people that Bloomfield, Patterson, and Centreville will be reoccupied."<sup>34</sup> Leeper was also ordered to expel from the area "the worst rebels and rebel families."<sup>35</sup> Despite Shelby's report of having destroyed the fort and camp, Patterson was reoccupied and manned, apparently until the end of the war. In April 1865, writing from Patterson in characteristically belligerent prose, Captain Leeper continued to emphasize the importance of the presence of Union troops in outposts such as Patterson, Fredericktown, and Centerville. Protesting recent agitation over a rumored invasion by Confederate forces under General M. Jeff Thompson, Leeper fumed, ". . . I wish to say that when the troops are ordered away from here on account of an enemy it is equivalent to moving every loyal man out of Southeast Missouri south of Pilot Knob. . . . Our wish is not to be ordered away until we see him [Thompson] or some other elephant."<sup>36</sup>

No great battles were fought at Patterson or its fort, but large armies passed through the area. Patterson was a town that represented the price paid for sympathy toward the Confederacy and forced loyalty to the Union. The terrain offered in this area could only allow skirmishes and guerrilla tactics. The confusion caused by Confederate Generals Sterling Price, Marmaduke, and Shelby in their raid into Missouri had motive that included keeping the Union from reinforcing their positions in Tennessee and Vicksburg. Although lacking the grandeur of a massive field battle, the skirmishes and strategies in Southeast Missouri were nonetheless capable of extracting the ultimate price for warfare.

Near the end of the war, Captain Leeper, the officer most closely associated with the outpost at Patterson, provided Major-General Grenville Dodge, the most recent in a long line of commanders of the Department of the Missouri, an assessment of the military and political situation in southeast Missouri:

SIR: Having been a citizen in Southeast Missouri before the war and soldier since the commencement of the rebellion, and having a good knowledge of the country and people of Southeast Missouri and Northeast Arkansas, I will state a few things in reference to the condition of this country. Our extreme outposts are Patterson and Bloomfield. This leaves our advance posts about fifty miles from the Arkansas line. The country is diversified by hills, valleys, swamps, marshes, generally heavy timber, underbrush, &c, interspersed with numerous creeks, rivers, and

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<sup>32</sup>O.R., series 1, vol. 41, part 4, p. 201.

<sup>33</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 41, part 4, p. 222.

<sup>34</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 41, part 4, p. 298.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

<sup>36</sup>O.R., series 1, volume 48, part 2, p. 209.

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rivulets, offering all the advantages that could be desired by a guerrilla force, where they can operate, and in many places elude capture or almost defy pursuit. The distance from our outposts to Little Rock is about 200 miles. The country between here and there is infested by guerrillas, bushwhackers, &c. With the advantages they have it is impossible for us to destroy them while we are at such a distance from them, and we cannot prevent them from making raids and murdering and robbing loyal men, and doing all other acts that these demons desire. Our outposts are generally weak and entirely insufficient for the vast work to be performed. From the present indications there will not be a loyal man south of Patterson in two months, unless something is speedily done for their relief, and no person can make anything to live upon, as he will be unable to keep any stock. All that portion of the country lying between Saint François River, and Big Black, White, and Mississippi Rivers, is level and swampy, but among those swamps are fine tracts of rich lands. In that country guerrillas live, concentrate, and have their families. They raise their crops, but are so far from us that an ordinary scout cannot well reach them. We are too far from our work. We, in my judgment, will never be able to clear this country until we put a permanent post at Batesville or Pocahontas (the latter place would be preferable), say two regiments, one infantry and one cavalry, and in four months two regiments can be organized in Arkansas that will protect themselves. The forces and operations we have here now will never clear this country or give peace to it, and furthermore we will be bound to clear the country of those who aid and conceal guerrillas; also of the families of all guerrillas, for, as strange as it may appear, while every loyal man is leaving the country, the families of guerrillas are allowed to remain amongst us and to give all the information that may be desired. I would say more, but I must leave after bushwhackers.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup>*O.R.*, series 1, vol. 48, part 1, p. 1054.

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

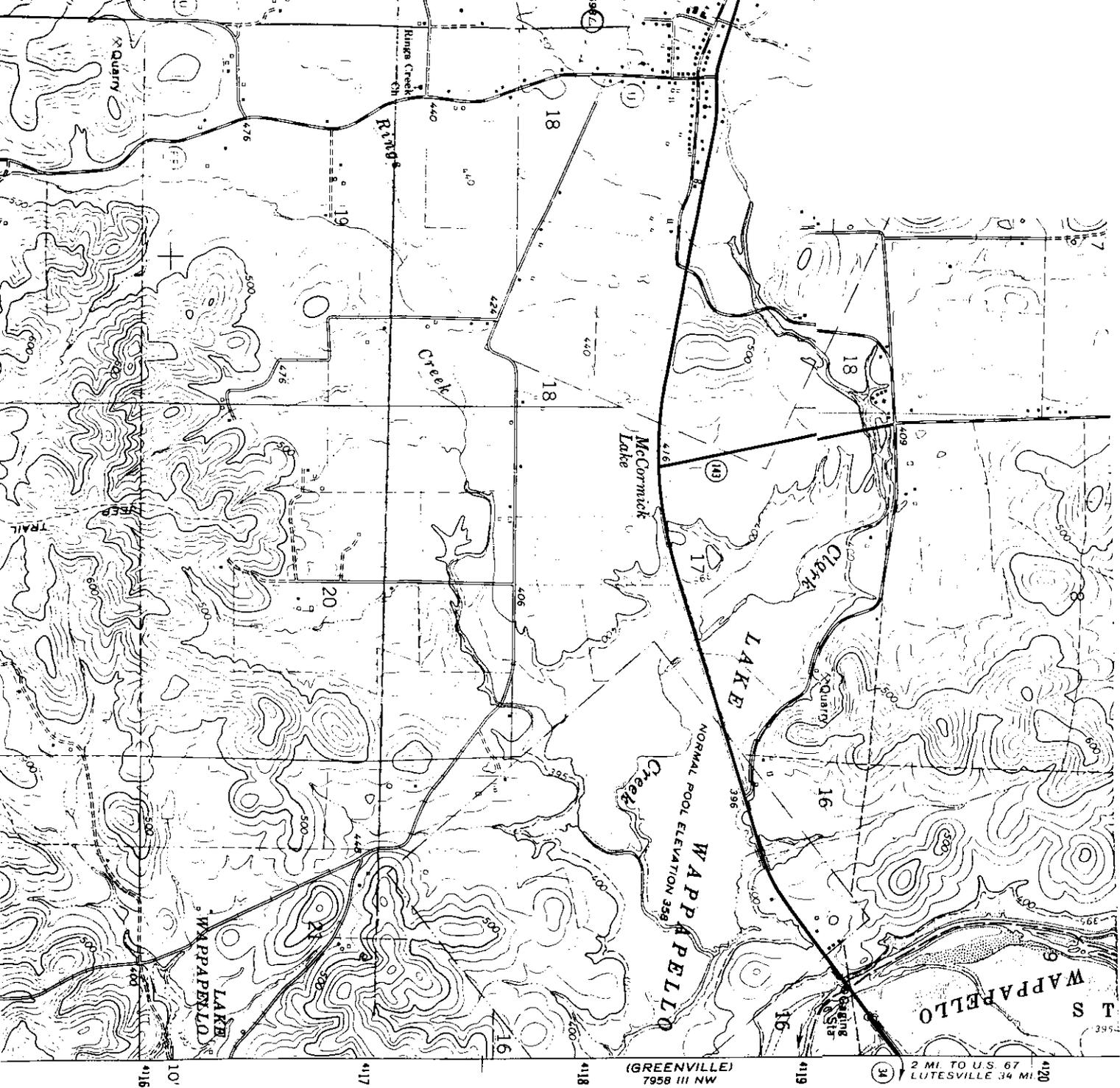
Fort Benton is located on Missouri Highway U, 3.5 miles south of the intersection of Highways 34 and U, in the northwest 1/4 of Section 13, Township 29 N, Range 4 E. The fort is located west of Highway U and approximately 220 meters from the highway, on a prominent hill (elevation 598 feet). The boundary of the fort is defined by the 580 foot contour interval (Patterson, MO 7.5" quadrangle).

### VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary has been drawn to include the fort and its immediate surroundings, a small portion of the thirty-three acre parcel owned by the Wayne County Historical Society. Additional archaeological investigations of the area outside the boundary have not been done; future investigations would likely provide justification for extending the boundary to include at least portions of the Civil War encampment associated with the fort, Camp Patterson. The boundary includes the features identified as associated with a Civil War fortification of this type, including the parapet, the ditch, and a small depression which may have housed the powder magazine.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**Section 11 Page 23**Fort Benton  
Wayne County, MO**

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