

Battle of Pilot Knob Historical Markers

Marker #1

Battle of Pilot Knob
Shut-In Gap
September 26, 1864
12:30 P.M. - 6 P.M.

Through Shut-In Gap passed the most direct route from the Arcadia Valley to Fredericktown. Advance elements of the Rebel army rode through the gap undetected until they approached a Union picket post at the Russellville Junction. Following a skirmish in Ironton a cavalry detachment led by Major Wilson drove the Rebels back into the gap. After Wilson was wounded he and his men retreated toward Arcadia. Fighting ceased at sunset.

Marker #2

Battle of Pilot Knob
The Arcadia Valley

The three towns of Arcadia, Ironton, and Pilot Knob are located in the Arcadia Valley. The valley's iron mining industry helped spur its population growth and led the St. Louis & Iron Mt. Railroad to extend its tracks to Pilot Knob in 1858. The strategic nature of the railroad terminus and supply depot then situated in Pilot Knob explains the presence of Union forces in the valley during the Civil War and why the Battle of Pilot Knob was fought.

Marker #3

Battle of Pilot Knob
Russellville Junction
September 26, 1864
1 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

Slemons' Brigade, riding in advance of the Rebel army, was first spotted at 1 p.m. by pickets here at the Russellville Junction. After the pickets had sounded the alarm, a cavalry patrol rode here to verify the pickets' report. Despite much shooting there were no casualties on either side. This phase of the conflict ended at 2:30 p.m. when the Union cavalry fled, leaving the road to Ironton open to the Confederate advance.

Marker #4

Battle of Pilot Knob
Fort Curtis

On this hillside stood Ft. Curtis. It commanded the high ground overlooking the junction of the road that connected Ironton and Pilot Knob with Fredericktown. In 1863 it was abandoned for Ft. Davidson because it was too far from the rail terminus and supply depot in Pilot Knob. Confederate officers used this site as an observation post during the battle because it gave them a good view of the entire valley.

Marker #5

Battle of Pilot Knob
September 26-27, 1864

A section of Montgomery's Battery, two 3-inch Ordnance Rifles, under Lt. Simonton, helped drive the Rebels back into Shut-In Gap and hold them there until fighting ceased at sunset on the 26th. Early the next morning, Simonton's guns, positioned in front of the courthouse, fired at the attacking Rebels. Rebel cannon responded by firing into Ironton and hitting the courthouse. The two guns that you see here are identical to Simonton's.

Marker #6

Battle of Pilot Knob
Iron County Courthouse
September 26, 1864
2:30 P.M. - 6 P.M.

Pvt. Rector of the 3rd M.S.M. was killed in front of the courthouse. Co. E, 47th Missouri, firing from the courthouse, killed the Rebel who shot Rector. They were the first to die in the battle. A cavalry detachment led by Major Wilson drove the Rebels back into Shut-In Gap. Fighting ended at sunset. On the 2nd day, Rebel artillery fired into Ironton and hit the courthouse. The imprint of one of the shells can still be seen in its façade.

Marker #7

Battle of Pilot Knob
Ironton Gap
September 27, 1864
2 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

Ironton Gap, about a quarter mile wide, separates Shepherd and Pilot Knob mountains and divides Arcadia Valley into northern and southern halves. Through the gap passed the road which connected the villages of Pilot Knob and Ironton. Cabell's Brigade, positioned in the center of the Rebel line, launched three charges on Ft. Davidson from Knob Creek, which flows through the gap.

Marker # 8

Battle of Pilot Knob
Shepherd Mountain
September 27, 1864
1 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

Skirmishes between Clark's Rebel brigade and the Union's 14th Iowa were fought on Shepherd Mt. on the second day. Prior to the assault on Ft. Davidson two Rebel cannons were placed on the mountain, but because of the accurate fire from Union artillery in the fort they were ineffectual. During the assault on the fort Clark's Brigade anchored the left wing of the Confederate army at the base of Shepherd Mt.

Marker #9

Battle of Pilot Knob
Knob Creek
September 27, 1864
2 P.M. - 5:30 P.M.

The two branches of Knob Creek, a tributary of Stout's Creek, enclose Ft. Davidson on three sides. Cabell's Brigade charged the fort three times from its position behind the creek in the center of the Rebel line. Most of Clark's Brigade on the left of the Rebel line and all of Slemons' and McCray's brigades on the right, took cover in Knob Creek during the first charge and were not factors in the rest of the battle.

Marker #10

Battle of Pilot Knob
Pilot Knob Mountain
September 27, 1864
1 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

Prior to the Confederate attack on Ft. Davidson, a detachment of 3rd M.S.M. Cavalry was forced off Pilot Knob Mt. by Slemons' and McCray's rebel brigades. The 3rd M.S.M.'s commanding officer, Major James Wilson, was taken prisoner. After the battle he was executed by the Rebel. During the assault on Ft. Davidson, Slemons' and McCray's brigades anchored the right wing of the Confederate army at the base of Pilot Knob Mt.

Marker #11

Battle of Pilot Knob
Iron Furnace
September 27, 1864
2 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

The iron furnace is the most visible remains of what was once a thriving iron mining industry in the Arcadia Valley. The first iron furnace was constructed in 1848, but was

destroyed by the Rebel army after the Battle of Pilot Knob. It was rebuilt a year later and mining operations resumed. It was near here, prior to the frontal assaults on Ft. Davidson by the Rebel army, that Major Wilson, Captain Dinger, and five men were taken prisoner.

Marker #12

Battle of Pilot Knob
Railroad Depot

From 1857 to 1871, Pilot Knob was the terminus of the St. Louis & Iron Mt. Railroad.

During the war the supply depot located here supplied Union outposts at Patterson, Centerville, Farmington and Fredericktown. The road to Middlebrook ran alongside the railroad between Cedar and Oak mountains. Slayback's Regiment camped near the road on the night of the 27th to guard against any attempts by the Union army to evacuate the fort and escape by this route.

Marker #13

Battle of Pilot Knob
Immanuel Lutheran Church

The Immanuel Lutheran Church was built in 1861 on land deeded to the congregation by the Pilot Knob Mining Co. The church served as a Union hospital during the Battle of Pilot Knob and telegrams found in the building after the battle indicate that it may have been temporarily used as a Union headquarters.

Marker #14

Battle of Pilot Knob
St. Mary's Catholic Church
September 28, 1864
1 A.M. - 3:30 A.M.

St. Mary's Catholic Church was erected on this site 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 set on fire by a shell during the battle. The church was damaged when a Union detail exploded the fort's powder magazine. The building was destroyed by a tornado in 1957.

Marker #15

Battle of Pilot Knob
Caledonia-Potosi Road
September 28, 1864
2 A.M. - 6 A.M.

The Union Army evacuated Ft. Davidson at about 2 a.m. on September 28. Despite having to pass between the campfires of Dobbin's Brigade, Gen. Ewing marched his men undetected through the Confederate lines and to the Caledonia-Potosi Rd. After learning the next day that the enemy occupied Potosi, Ewing turned westward at Caledonia, and despite pursuit by elements of Price's Army, led his troops to Leasburg, situated on the Pacific Railroad.

Marker #16

Battle of Pilot Knob
The Arcadia Valley

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