

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>TENNESSEE</b>
COUNTY: <b>LAUDERDALE</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**Fort Pillow**

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**State Highway 87**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Fort Pillow**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: **Tennessee** CODE: COUNTY: **Lauderdale** CODE:

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
**State of Tennessee - Department of Conservation**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Department of Conservation, 2611 West End Avenue**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Nashville**

STATE:  
**Tennessee**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Lauderdale County Register's Office**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**Courthouse**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Ripley**

STATE:  
**Tennessee**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**None known**

DATE OF SURVEY:                     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:                    STATE:                    CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: TENNESSEE  
COUNTY: LAUDERDALE  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The information below was compiled by Peter S. LaPaglia for the Tennessee Historical Commission in their nomination of Fort Pillow to the National Register.

Fort Pillow, an earthen structure, was situated on a high clay bluff at the junction of Cold Creek and the Mississippi River. Three separate lines of defense formed Fort Pillow. The extreme outer work of the fort consisted of a strong line of fortifications about two miles in length. At its greatest convexity, this outer works was about six hundred yards from the river. It extended from the bank of Cold Creek above, to the bluff of the river below. This line was slightly curved outward, to the east. There was a ditch in front with the earth thrown up on the inner edge of the excavation. Approximately halfway between this trench and the river, and immediately in front of the fort, a second line of defense was constructed along the crest of a commanding hill. This area covered about two acres of ground. The final and the strongest of all the fortifications was a small fort built just at the angle of junction of the river bluff with that of Cold Creek, extending in irregular semicircular outline from bluff to bluff.

From one end of this horseshoe to the other, as measured along the edge of the bank, the distance was about seventy yards. Measuring along the fort's parapet, from end to end, the distance was about 120 yards. The parapet was six feet high, six feet thick, and flat on top. Exterior to this was a ditch twelve feet wide and eight feet deep. Along the inner face of the parapet a bench was constructed, upon which the garrison could stand and fire over the wall, with nothing exposed below the head and shoulders. From this they could step down to the ground to load their guns, and be entirely concealed.

At six places there were protected openings or embrasures, through each of which a cannon commanded the approaches from as many directions. Along the face or slope of the bluff, above and below, and about seventy-five yards distant from each end of the embankment, rifle pits had been constructed for defending the approaches from either direction near the water's edge, and to shelter sharpshooters while firing at boats upon the river.

Looking eastward and along the bank of Cold Creek from the edge of the ditch for a distance of about 150 feet, the surface of the earth descended gradually and then sharply down into a crescent-shaped ravine which encircled the fort for nearly one-half of its extent. This hollow opens into Cold Creek Bluff, near the mouth of this stream, and was known as the Cold Creek ravine.

On the south side of the inner fort there was another depression. The deepest portion of this ravine was about 450 feet from the parapet. At the time of the Confederate attack in 1864, along the deeper portions of this depression, there were two rows of log cabins or shanties, extending from the mouth of the ravine on the riverbank almost to a point opposite the center of the fort in front. These structures were used for government and private storehouses, and for bunks for the white soldiers of the Union garrison. With-

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**2. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1864

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal     | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric    | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic       | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | <u>Afro-American</u>                                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture    | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | <u>History</u>                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |   | _____   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Fort Pillow was originally established by the state of Tennessee. Its fortifications were constructed by Confederate engineers. Located on the east bank of the Mississippi, it was a hinderance to Union gunboats that crossed in its line of fire. In May 1862 the Confederates, having to abandon the general Memphis area, left the fort. Fort Pillow was then later held by Federal forces to prevent Confederate interference with Union shipping along the river. The fort was fairly well armed but the effectiveness of its artillery pieces was diminished by the terrain around the fort. Gullies and ravines on the southern and eastern approaches to the fort permitted attacking troops to get within one or two hundred yards of the fort with a relatively good degree of cover and concealment. Once this close, the attacking troops could rush the fort since its guns could not be depressed against them at such close range.

At the time of the Confederate attack against Fort Pillow in April 1864, the fort was garrisoned by approximately 570 Union troops of whom 262 were black. The units stationed at the fort were the first battalion of the 13th Tennessee Cavalry, a white unit of Tennessee Unionists (who were, according to southern sources, Confederate deserters from General Forrest's command), the first battalion of the 6th U.S. Colored Heavy Artillery, and Battery D 2nd U.S. Colored Light Artillery. The two black units were composed of ex-slaves recruited in Alabama. Major L. F. Booth was the commanding officer of the Union forces. The Confederates were led by Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

The Union defenders of the fort, outnumbered and pinned down by Confederate sharpshooters, were unable to stop the attacking Southerners from overrunning the fort. Rebel troops stormed the parapets with cries of, "No quarter!" and "No quarter! Forrest demands it!" Once the Confederates were inside the fort, effective resistance ceased. Some of the Union troops fled to the New Era, a Union gunboat in the river, while others surrendered. Southern troops killed both fleeing and surrendering Union soldiers. The Confederates demonstrated a special hatred for the white Unionists from Tennessee but their hatred for the black men in uniform was far more fierce.

Most Southerners chose to believe that blacks in military uniform were not soldiers but rebellious slaves and should be treated as such if captured in battle. Making no distinctions between free blacks from northern states or slaves from southern ones, the Confederate Congress passed legislation

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

PARTIAL LISTING

Cornish, Dudley T. The Sable Arm. New York, 1966.  
 Jordan, Thomas and J. P. Pryor. The Campaigns of Lt. Gen. Nathan Bedford and of Forrest's Cavalry. New Orleans, 1868.  
 Mathes, J. Harvey. General Forrest. New York, 1902.  
 McPherson, James M. The Negro's Civil War. New York, 1965.  
 Moore, Frank, ed. The Rebellion Record: A Diary of American Events. Vol.VIII. New York, 1865.  
 Quarles, Benjamin. The Negro in the Civil War. Boston, 1969.  
 Report of the Joint Committee on the Conduct and Expenditures of the War:Fort

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA Pillow Massacre. Report No. 65.

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	35 ° 38 ' 28 "	89 ° 51 ' 17 "		° ' "	° Minutes Seconds "	
NE	35 ° 39 ' 11 "	89 ° 49 ' 03 "				
SE	35 ° 38 ' 12 "	89 ° 48 ' 36 "				
SW	35 ° 37 ' 31 "	89 ° 50 ' 49 "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1500

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Marcia M. Greenlee, Historical Projects Director

ORGANIZATION: DATE:  
 The Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 1420 N Street, N.W., Suite 101

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:  
 Washington, D.C.

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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COUNTY	
LAUDERDALE	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION - Page Two

in the fort proper were erected a number of tents, with plank floors covered with dry straw, for the use of the Negro troops.

Just below the fort and near the log houses in the south ravine, the bank had been cleared to enable steamboats to land with safety. Beyond the Cold Creek ravine to the north and east, and in front of the fort, the contour of the ground was broken into a series of irregular hillocks or knolls, with intervening depressions or gullies. Many of these elevations were as high as that upon which the fort was erected and varied in distance from one to four hundred yards from the parapet.

The present site is covered with light to heavy undergrowth, saplings, and full grown trees. While physical land features described above have not varied, there has been a definite change in the course of the Mississippi. The main channel of the river has shifted approximately three and one half miles west of the position it followed at the time of the Civil War. The series of trenches and fortification walls are clearly discernible.

The boundary corresponds to a rectangle recorded on the accompanying map, and lies NE to SW approximately 2 1/2 by 1 1/2 miles between State Route 87 and Cold Creek. Other than the breastworks, which are entirely within the boundary, no adequate survey has identified other features of the fortification or battleground.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE TENNESSEE	
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(Number all entries)

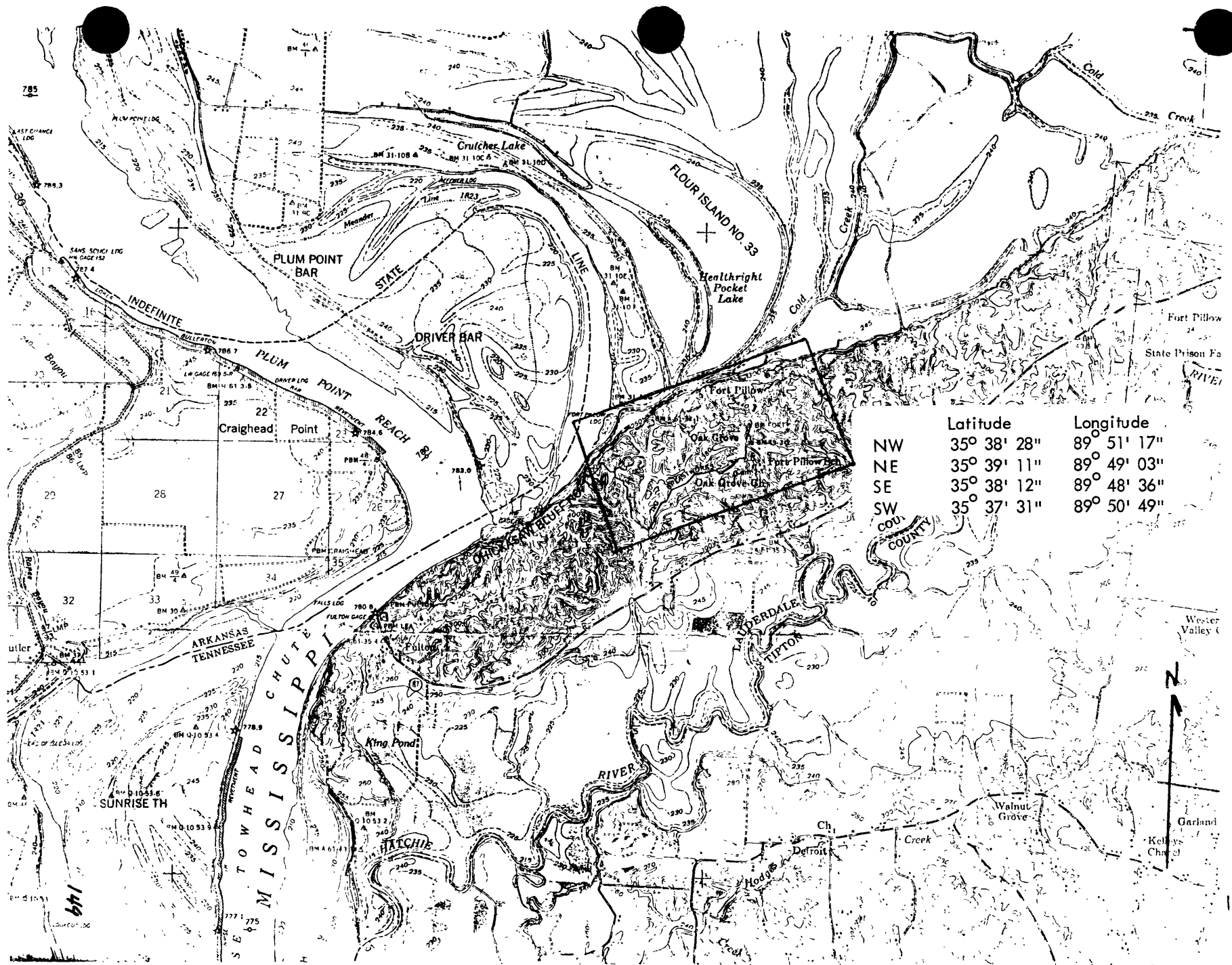
8. SIGNIFICANCE - Page Two

calling for the treatment of black soldiers as slave rebels, subject to the laws of the states they were in. This meant that Southern commanders felt no obligations to treat captured black troops as prisoners of war, with the protection that such status afforded. Captured black soldiers were generally killed or sold into slavery. Perhaps the most extreme example of this Southern attitude was the massacre at Fort Pillow.

The Confederates under Major General Forrest refused to accept the surrender of black soldiers at Fort Pillow preferring to slaughter them instead. Every sort of atrocity occurred. Of the 262 blacks at the fort, 229 were killed. Only thirty-three black soldiers survived. Those that were killed, with few exceptions, died after the fall of the fort, i.e. they were killed while they were unarmed prisoners rather than armed soldiers. Their survival rate was 12% as opposed to the 55% survival rate for the garrison as a whole. A Congressional Committee called to investigate this "battle", heard testimony from both sides, and concluded that the Confederates were indeed guilty of atrocities including the murder of most of the garrison after it had surrendered.

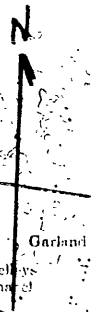
News of the massacre had a profound effect on black soldiers in other units. Black troops in Memphis took an oath on their knees to avenge the massacre of their people and to give no quarter to Confederate prisoners. "Remember Fort Pillow!" became a battle cry for black soldiers. Anticipating that no quarter would be given to them in battle, black troops, keeping the fate of the Fort Pillow garrison in mind, had still another reason to become fierce fighters in the Union cause.

The events that occurred at Fort Pillow are of national historical significance because they clearly establish the refusal of the Confederates to treat black men as soldiers; they symbolize the Southern view of the future for blacks in the South; they hardened the resolve of black soldiers to fight so as to give every possible support to the Union cause in future engagements of the war; and they prompted President Lincoln to promise reprisals against the South should they prove true.



	Latitude	Longitude
NW	35° 38' 28"	89° 51' 17"
NE	35° 39' 11"	89° 49' 03"
SE	35° 38' 12"	89° 48' 36"
SW	35° 37' 31"	89° 50' 49"

COU  
COUNTY



Fort Pillow  
State Prison Fa

Wester Valley C

Walnut Grove

Ch  
-Detroit

Mod

BERDALE

TIPTON

RIVER

HATCHE

King Pond

ARKANSAS  
TENNESSEE

SUNRISE TH

MISSISSIPPI

INDEFINITE

PLUM POINT  
BAR

DRIVER BAR

Craighead Point

FLOUR ISLAND NO. 33

Healthright  
Pocket  
Lake

Crutcher Lake

Cold  
Creek

Cold  
Creek

Cold  
Creek

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