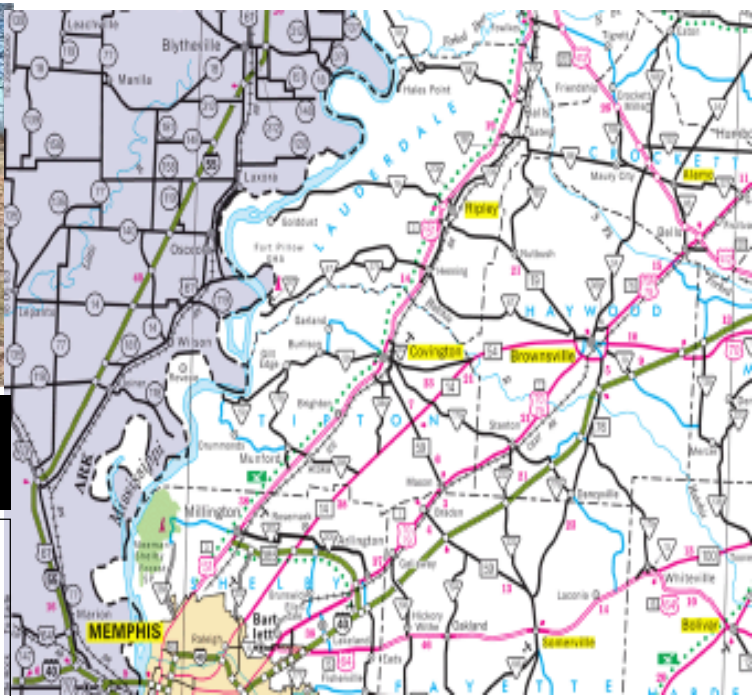


# Fort Pillow



## History

Fort Pillow, located on the Mississippi River, was an earthen fort designed by Confederate forces to protect Memphis and the heart of the Confederacy from an invasion by the Union navy. Union forces deprived the Confederacy of Fort Pillow in 1862. However, in 1864, Major General Nathan Bedford Forrest decided to assault Fort Pillow. On April 12, 1864, Confederate Brigadier General Chalmers forced the Union troops from the earthworks on the perimeter and drove them back inside the main fortifications. After Forrest arrived on the field, he offered terms of surrender to Union Major Bradford, who refused to surrender. Forrest ordered his men to storm the fort. General Forrest gained possession of the fort while his men pursued the fleeing Union troops to the shores of the Mississippi River hoping for protection from nearby Union gunboats; however, artillery fire from Confederate forces had convinced the gunboats to keep their distance. Many of the Union troops drowned and others were cut down by Confederate fire. Confederate casualties amounted to twenty killed and sixty wounded. Union casualties were much higher.

## The Park

Fort Pillow State Park is a designated Wildlife Observation Area operated by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. A small museum is located at Fort Pillow with exhibits on the battle and the controversy surrounding General Forrest's actions after the remaining Union soldiers surrendered. Throughout the year, living history demonstrations are performed for visitors; these demonstrations are usually performed during the summer and on holidays such as Labor Day and Memorial Day. These demonstrations help young people understand what went on during the Civil War and are a great way to complement a study of the Civil War. Tours of the bluffs above the Mississippi River and of the old earth works are available on request.

The campground in the park has thirty-eight campsites and is well suited for tents instead of campers. The campsites have grill/campfire pads and picnic tables. Water may be obtained from water stations throughout the campground, and the campground provides two bathhouses. Campers may use deadfall for firewood. Fort Pillow also has a group campsite that is located in the forest and has its own pavilion, picnic tables, and bathhouse. Groups must make reservations and a fee is required for the use of this site. Backcountry camping is allowed but campers must have a permit. The trail for the backcountry camping is a total of five miles long.



**Fort Pillow State Historic Area**

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