

# Fort Barnesville Is on the National Register of Historic Sites

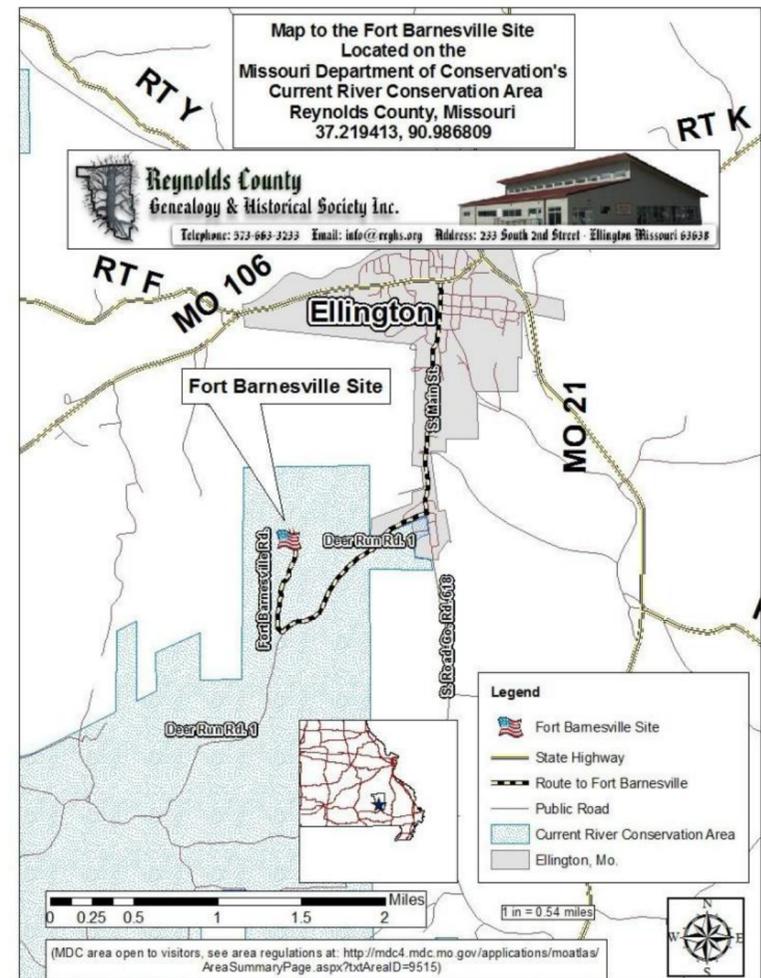
Fort Barnesville is one of two National Historic Sites in Reynolds County. It was placed on the National Register on July 1, 1998, based mainly on the work of Ger-

ald Angel and those who assisted him. The fort lay undiscovered until local farmer Dan Massie came upon it in the 1950s at night on horseback. He told no one but his

immediate family about the site. However, in 1995, after Dan's son had married Gerald Angel's daughter, the story of the unusual earthworks reached Gerald. From research done at Fort Benton at Patterson, Gerald recognized the formation as a fort. With the co-operation of the Missouri Department of Conservation, on whose land the fort is located, Gerald enlisted the help of Civil War historians, John Bradbury, Jerry Ponder and Joe Huett. Their inspection confirmed Gerald's suspicion, but further research was needed to authenticate the fort. Two and one-half years of letter writing and research finally produced enough documentation to qualify the site for the National Register.

Fort ViewFort Barnesville is classified as an earthen type redan fort in a horseshoe shape with two cannon pads and a powder magazine. It was named Barnesville because of its proximity to the town of Barnesville, now Ellington. A military trail through Barnesville, known as the Belleview Trail, Taum Sauk Trail, Poco Trail or Van Buren Trail ran from Pilot Knob, Missouri to Pocohontas, Arkansas. The trail came over Taum Sauk Mt., through Devil's Toll Gate to Lester-

ville, through Centerville, south to Barnesville into Pine Valley and then to Van Buren. Both Union and Confederate troops used the trail. Research showed the 13th Illinois Cavalry, which had helped with the construction of Fort Davidson, Fort Benton and at Bloomfield, camped at Barnesville during January through April, 1863. They are the likely builders of Fort Barnesville, possibly assisted by the 25th Missouri



Gerald Angel



Infantry, known fort builders in the Corinth, Mississippi, area and present at the Barnesville location in early 1863. Searching the fort area with a metal detector located a brass buckle, later identified as a saber plate buckle, and a latch for a buckle. Draining and cleaning out the powder magazine produced no artifacts. Research continues in order to further document the construction of Fort Barnesville.

Access to Fort Barnesville is possible by vehicle, except during hunting seasons. See the map below. Additional information is available at the Museum in Ellington.



## Tri-State Tornado Ripped Through Ellington in 1925

Wednesday, March 18, 1925, is a day carved into the long history of Ellington. The original forecast for that day was for showers and cooling temperatures, however, Mother Nature had other plans. Beginning at 7 a.m., a low-pressure system moved into northeastern Oklahoma as a warm front jutted to the north into the circulation where the front extended to the east. A cold front was drooping to the southwest across Texas with a dry line forming due south of the low-pressure system. As these conditions converged, a supercell was formed causing chaos to break loose. Around noon, the large supercell remained in a "sweet spot" just ahead of a triple point between the cold front, warm front, and dryline.

The air became highly unstable and the supercell quickly became much more than a Spring shower. At the time, tornadoes were incredibly difficult to predict. The Weather Bureau, now known as the National Weather Service, even went so far as to ban forecasters from using the word "tornado" because they believed it would only ensue panic amongst listeners. The very first tornado sighting was in the hills of Moore Township in Shannon County. It was described as a relatively small condensation funnel at the time. However, due to such favorable conditions surrounding the supercell, it quickly became a monstrous, F5 tornado. It spun rapidly towards Reynolds County, and with no weather warning systems, the town was blindsided by the storm. At 1:01 PM, the first fatality, a local farmer, occurred Northwest of Ellington, and several homes and stores were destroyed just north of town. Significant damage was inflicted upon the entire area and much of it was irreparable.

The now deadly, twister raced to the northeast. It took only 14 minutes for the twister to reach Annapolis and claim two more lives and 90 percent of the town. Harry Midkiff was on his way to work in the lead mines when the tornado struck. He heard the roar of the funnel and ran to a nearby ditch. He survived by clinging to a nearby bush as the wind whirled around him, and escaped with only a few scrapes and bruises. From there the storm struck Leadanna and caused major damage to mining machinery, destroyed structures, and took two more lives. Moving into Bollinger County, two schools were damaged, injuring 32 children, and many homes and businesses were completely destroyed. The tornado was so strong that the ground was scoured near the town of Sedgewickville. Sheets

of iron were recorded as far as 50 miles from their original location.

It was often reported that the tornado had an unusual shape, possible due to its immense size, estimated to be more than a mile wide, and the low clouds surrounding the thunderstorm. It was so large in fact, that many described it as looking like a boiling fog on the ground. The fact that the tornado was disguised is quite possibly what led to so many deaths. People didn't know that what they were looking at was a deadly tornado. It was often shrouded in rain, debris, and dust as it passed through the many counties, causing it to be less visible to the untrained eye.

After crossing into Perry County, it was reported that a double funnel was produced by the storm as it hit the town of Biehle. There it destroyed numerous homes and killed four people. The path of the tornado then stretched through Illinois and on into Indiana, traveling 219 miles, earning the title of the Tri-State Tornado. After an intense three hours on the ground, the tornado finally lifted and dissipated. However, the amount of damage left in its wake was absolutely devastating.

The total number of casualties from the events of the Tri-State Tornado reached 695 and over 2,000 people were injured. The tornado wreaked havoc on three states, thirteen counties, and over 19 communities. Four of those communities were completely effaced and several of them never did recover. The total damage caused by the storm was an estimated \$16.5 million, which adjusted to today's times would be approximately \$1.4 billion dollars. Over 15,000 homes were ravaged, nine schools were destroyed and 69 students lost their lives. The Tri-State Tornado claimed more lives than the combined total of the next four deadliest tornadoes in United States history. In the aftermath of the Tri-State Tornado, the Weather Bureau gave in to their ways, lifted the ban on the word "tornado", and people began to study the weather patterns that lead to these deadly storms. Meteorology began to make the climb up the career ladder, and weather predicting became a popular practice. It would be another 23 years before modern tornado forecasting would become the way it is today, but the Tri-State Tornado seemed to be the wake up it needed. What started as a storm containing small tornado just north of Ellington would not only change the course of history, but also the future.



**MARCH THROUGH OCTOBER**, bicyclists travel the 4200-mile cross-country route from Virginia to Oregon via the TransAmerica Trail. This trail, also known as U.S. Bicycle Route 76, passes through Ellington via Highway 21 and scenic Highway 106. Brawley Park is a regular stopover/camping spot for bicyclists, however in the spring of 2014, the Chamber of Commerce and the City of Ellington joined together to open the Route 76 Bicycle Hostel to accommodate cyclists. The hostel is located next to the Main Street Pavilion on Main Street. Bicyclists are able to shower, cool off and sleep indoors.

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Ellington has a total area of 1.38 square miles.  
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As of the 2010 census, there were 987 people, 407 households, and 241 families residing in the city.

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