

MISSOURIAN

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Wright given 30-year prison sentence

Becky Doisy's killer could be up for parole in 12 years.

By ANNE CHRISTNOVICH
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Johnny Wright was expressionless Monday afternoon as he was sentenced to 30 years in prison for the murder of Becky Doisy, a young Columbia woman whose body was never found.

As Wright, 66, stood to be sentenced in a full Boone County courtroom, a crowd gathered for a full docket of other cases turned its attention to him. He looked older and thinner than he had in January, when a jury found

him guilty of the second-degree murder.

His goatee and his hair, which used to be trimmed and jet-black, were longer and mostly white. He wore a white-and-black-striped prison suit instead of the charcoal-gray suit and orange tie he wore the last time he stood before Judge Gary Oxenhandler.

Doisy was last seen on Aug. 5, 1976. She was 23.

A warrant for Wright was issued in 1985, charging him with Doisy's murder, but it wasn't until 2009 that he was arrested because he had assumed a new name, Erroll Edwards.

It was a background check for a job in Georgia that ulti-

mately ended the deception. He used his real name for the check, which revealed that he was a wanted man.

Doisy's younger sister, Kathy, read a statement to the court through tears Monday, explaining how the loss of her sister sent her parents into a spiral of grief and how she herself suffered survivors' guilt for years.

"If you spend the rest of your life in jail, you and your family will not suffer a single percentage of the misery that you inflicted upon my family and many others," she said, looking at Wright.

Boone County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Richard Hicks asked that Wright

be sentenced to life in prison, especially because he lived the last 34 years as a free man.

"He deserves to end his life in prison," Hicks said.

But Oxenhandler denied the request because the sentence was determined by 1976 laws. Hicks then requested the maximum of 30 years.

Wright will be eligible for parole as early as 12 years from now, when he's 78. According to Department of Corrections rules, at age 70 a prisoner is eligible for parole if 40 percent of the sentence has been served.

Wright's attorney, Cleveland Tyson, said he would appeal Wright's conviction.

Prosecution built 'no body' case

By ANNE CHRISTNOVICH
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When Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Richard Hicks began looking into Johnny Wright's arrest almost two years ago, the Boone County Prosecuting Attorney's office didn't even have a file for him anymore.

No one expected to ever hear again from the man wanted for killing Becky Doisy in 1976. Although her body was never found, police, friends and her family all believed she was dead. Many, including Doisy's family,

believed Wright was dead, too.

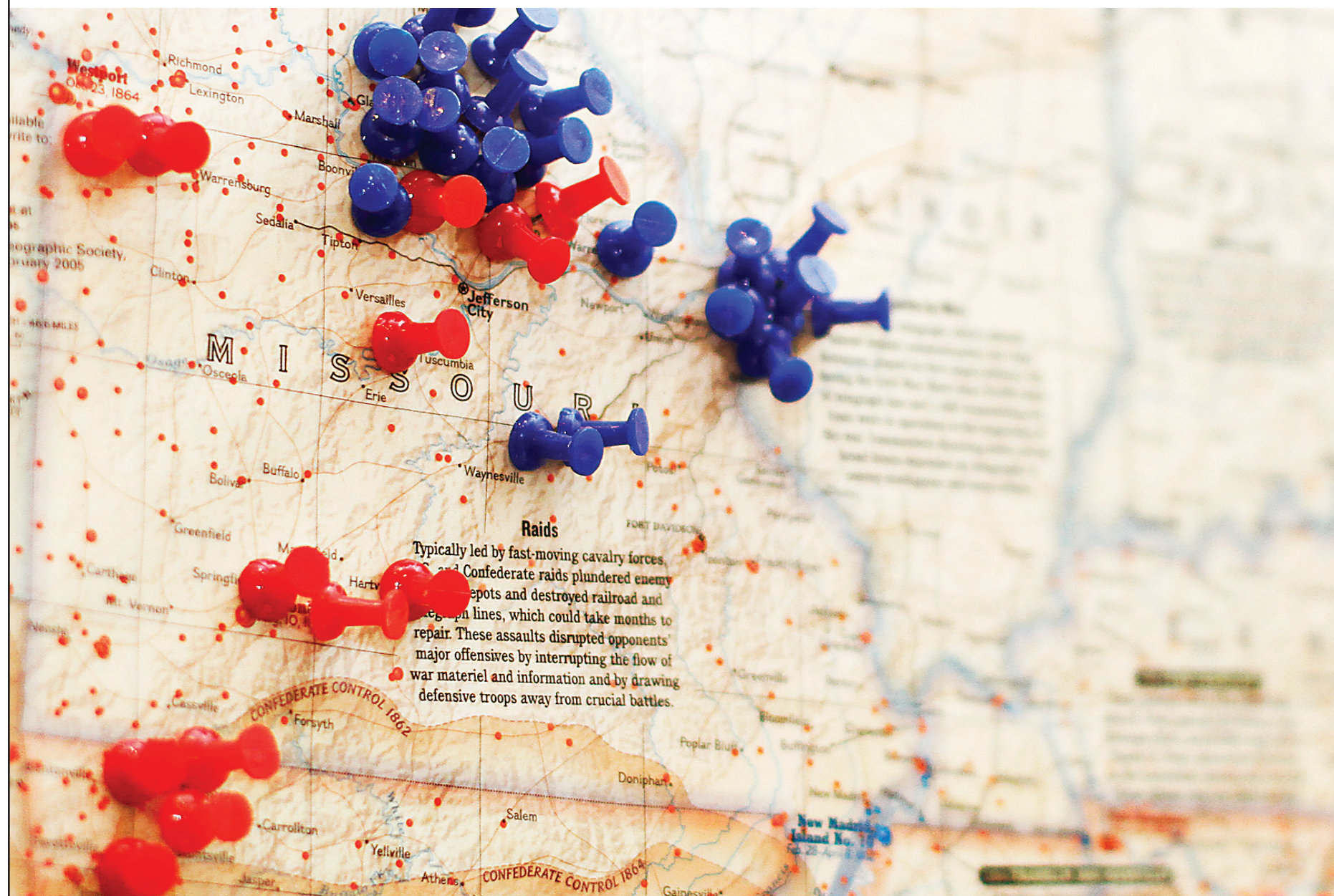
Although it was true that there was an outstanding warrant for him from 1985, he hadn't been seen or heard from since the early '80s.

But in September 2009, Wright was unexpectedly discovered and arrested when a background check for a job in Georgia revealed the warrant.

Hicks soon asked his colleague Cecily Daller to work with him on the case when he realized the difficulty of it.

With no body, no manner Please see **WRIGHT**, page 3A

THE CIVIL WAR: 150 YEARS LATER



ABOVE: A map at the Boone County Historical Society shows where soldiers from Boone County died during the Civil War. The red denotes where Confederate soldiers died while the blue thumbtacks denote where Union soldiers died. 140 total soldiers died from Boone County alone.

NICK SCHNELLE/Missourian

A state divided

By SARAH TUCKER
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A large map of the eastern half of the United States hangs at the Boone County Historical Society's new Civil War exhibit, dotted with red and blue thumbtacks. The blue pins mark where Union soldiers from Boone County died. The red pins mark where Confederate soldiers from Boone County died.

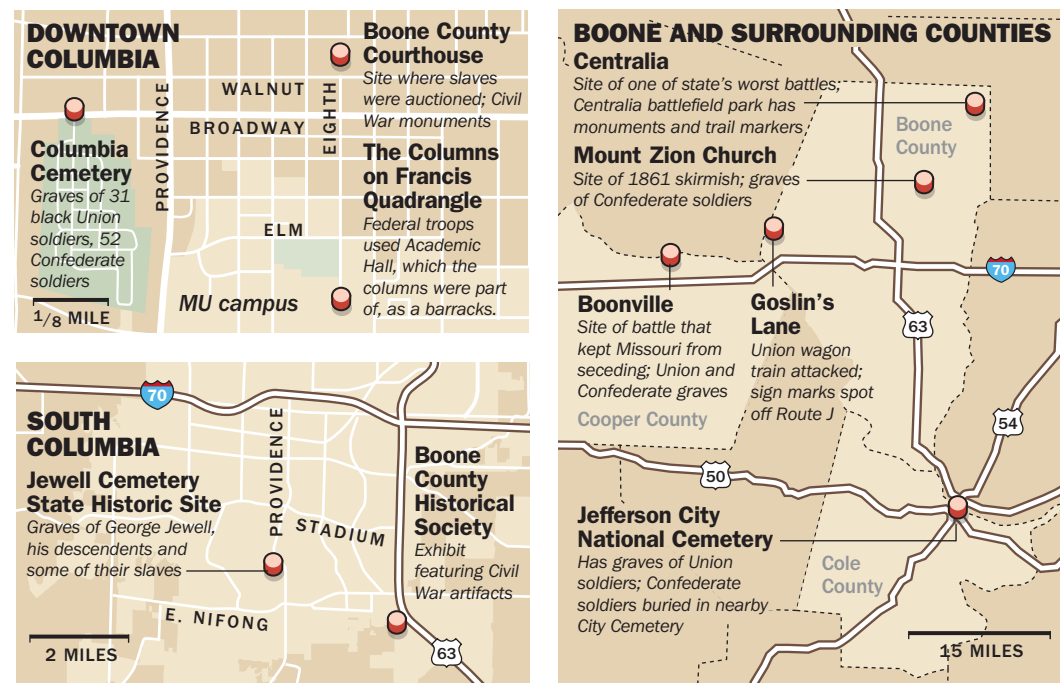
The map is the creation of local Civil War buff William Berry. His fascination with the war traces back to a visit he made to Brown's Station, just north of Columbia, when he was 5. Berry's great-great-grandfather had been a justice of the peace there. While visiting the site with family, the young Berry was shown an old whipping post and told the story of how justices of the peace, his ancestor included, meted out punishments to slaves.

"It just stuck with me," he says.

Berry is 77 now, and his interest in the Civil War grew into a lifelong passion. A former executive director of the Missouri Nursing Home Association, Berry has been studying the Civil War era in earnest for the last 20 years. He gives several speeches each year to groups around Missouri about the Civil War and travels to battle sites and cemeteries across the U.S., track-

THE WAR WITHIN THE STATE

Here are a number of places where you can learn more about the local impact of the Civil War.



STAFF/Missourian

ing down the stories of Boone County soldiers who fought in the war. The pins on his map dot places as close as Wilson's Creek, near Springfield, and as far away as Charleston, S.C., Grand Gulf, Miss., Lexington, Va., and Franklin, Tenn.

"In Franklin, Tennessee, the captain managed to get almost all his troops slaugh-

terred, including the Missouri

brigade," Berry says. America's Civil War began 150 years ago today, on April 12 in Fort Sumter, S.C., when secessionist forces bombarded the U.S. Army stronghold there.

The election of Abraham Lincoln the previous fall proved the last straw for the South, which viewed Lincoln's anti-

Story continued on page 4A

Inside

Read more about Missouri's involvement in the war and sites that you can visit around Columbia today.

Page 4A

MISSOURI SENATE

The Senate Redistricting Committee passed the House's congressional district proposal with a 4-3 vote.

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SHOW ME THE ERRORS

Submissions decreased 50 percent over two months in the contest where readers suggest corrections to the Missourian. Page 5A

SOCCER

The Rock Bridge girls' soccer team defeated Hickman 5-1 on Monday night. Page 1B

EDUCATION

Missouri's 13 public universities received a shared \$250,000 grant to help redesign courses.

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TRACK

MU's Tre Chambers was named male athlete of the Tom Botts Invitational track meet on Saturday.

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TODAY'S WEATHER

Today: Sunny.

Temp: 68°

Tonight:

Mostly clear.

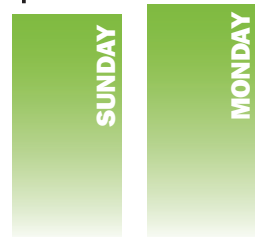
Temp: 46°

Page 2A

DAILY GAS PRICES

Our daily track of gas prices in Missouri. COST OF OIL PER BARREL: \$112.18

\$3.639 \$3.730



Sources: GasBuddy.com, oil-price.net

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Our 103rd year/#151
2 sections
16 pages



Border state Missouri was divided over slavery during the Civil War

CONTINUED from page 1A
slavery and economic initiatives as an attack on states' rights. South Carolina had seceded from the Union by December 1860. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana followed in January 1861, and by May, all the Southern states had seceded from the Union. The Civil War was in full swing.

Missouri's place in the war was unique. It was a "border state" that was allowed into the Union as a slave-holding state, but it never seceded. Although the big-name battles occurred far to the east and south, Missouri was the site of the third-highest number of battles — many of them bloody guerrilla skirmishes — behind only Virginia and Tennessee. Union Gen. Ulysses S. Grant came out of retirement to join the war and led his first battles in Missouri. Missouri sent 199,111 men to war — more than any other state.

The Civil War divided not just the Union but Missouri as well.

BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Missouri's entanglement in the Civil War began 40 years earlier, before it was even a state. In 1820, Congress passed the Missouri Compromise, which regulated slavery in new lands that were part of America's vast expansion to reach some balance between pro-slavery and anti-slavery interests.

According to the compromise, Maine would be admitted to the Union as a free state and any territories extending north of the 36-30' parallel, commonly known as the Mason-Dixon Line, would remain free. The only exception was Missouri, which was admitted into the Union in 1821 as a slave-holding state.

But tensions over the economics and morality of slavery continued to grow. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act repealed the Missouri Compromise and allowed territories to determine the status of slavery within their borders. People on both sides of the issue began pouring into Kansas, attempting to stuff the ballot box to bring Kansas into the Union according to their views.

The violent clashes between pro- and anti-slavery forces earned Kansas the nickname "Bleeding Kansas." Guerrilla raids back and forth between the border war tradition between Kansas and Missouri.

Missouri was also conflicted within its own borders. Early settlers were farmers from Kentucky, Virginia and

Tennessee. "Relatives only two generations back were in the Revolutionary War," Berry says. But although slavery was legal, many later settlers aligned more with the West than the South.

"Missouri was the edge of civilization," says Jennifer Flink, the Boone County Historical Society's executive director and curator. "The border was the 'wild west.'" Those later settlers were mainly German and Irish immigrants who opposed slavery for religious reasons and because of their own experiences with indentured servitude.

Even some landowners who owned a few slaves would pay their slaves and allow them to keep some of the money, eventually earning enough to purchase their freedom. At the time of the Civil War, Columbia was home to more than 50 freedmen — slaves who had purchased or been given their freedom.

"That was extremely unusual for a town this size," Flink says.

A STATE DIVIDED

That history left Missouri undecided about which side to take when the Civil War broke out. A state convention was called to determine the state's formal allegiance.

"Missouri voted 98-1 not to secede," Flink says.

Its hope, as a border state, was to remain neutral. But an incident in St. Louis set off a chain reaction that quickly drew Missouri into the growing conflict.

In May 1861, Missouri Gov. Claiborne Jackson called up the Missouri State Militia for drills in St. Louis. A Union captain named Nathaniel Lyon thought this was an attempt to take over the large federal arsenal located there, so he captured the state troops. Riots broke out, during which Lyon's Union forces were blamed for killing civilians. In a tense meeting between Lyon and Jackson, Lyon declared war on Missouri.

"The action in St. Louis, followed by the declaration of war, forced a lot of people to take a second look at Union aggression," Flink says. "This was such a provocative action. Many people who had voted against secession were enraged."

Leaders of the state government fled St. Louis to Jefferson City, and then to Boonville where they determined Jefferson City was "not defensible," Flink says. Lyon followed, attacking Boonville on June 17, 1861. His victory placed



William Berry, Civil War Committee chairman of the Boone County Historical Society, stands next to a monument listing all 140 soldiers from Boone County who died in the Civil War. Berry has been studying and speaking about the Civil War for the last 20 years.

Missouri under the control of Union forces, and he appointed a pro-Union governor.

The exiled state government retreated but wasn't finished. It voted to secede, adding to the conflict within the state and making Missouri the only state with two sitting governors and representatives in both the Union and Confederate governments. Meanwhile, in St. Louis, Union Gen. John Charles Fremont declared martial law across the entire state.

"Martial law and securing the Missouri River at Boonville forced Confederate soldiers underground," Flink says.

But underground didn't mean inactive. For the next two years, Missouri was beset by numerous minor skirmishes rather than full-on battles.

"What they were defending was their rights as individuals," Flink says. "Missouri was defending itself as a state, defending itself from what they perceived as a Union attack."

The desire was to remain neutral, Missouri even went so far as to raise its own defense bonds. But the brutal conflict around and within its borders couldn't be ignored. Many men, including residents of Boone County, joined Confederate or Union forces. In Boone County, 140 men lost their lives serving in the Civil War. By the time it was finally over,

approximately 27,000 Missouri residents, both military and civilian, were killed.

The Civil War at home The story of Missouri's unique entanglement in the Civil War is the one Berry is helping tell in the new exhibit at the Boone County Historical Society. That exhibit will deepen and expand over the next four years as it adds information about Missouri's role.

"Our goal is to move from 1861 through the war," says Flink, the curator. Berry's fascination with Missouri's Civil War history has lately been focused on what happened to former slaves who fought for the Union. During the Civil War, Union forces practiced "compensated emancipation," Berry says; farmers who swore a loyalty oath to the Union were paid \$300 for each slave. Those slaves were then given their freedom and sent off to war.

There are 31 slaves-turned-soldiers buried in the Columbia Cemetery and 52 Confederate soldiers. The black soldiers are buried in no particular order in what used to be the segregated section in the south end of the cemetery. The headstones are small and unremarkable and are carved with the soldiers' names and company, such as

"colored infantry" or "colored horse artillery."

Each Memorial Day, Berry gets students from nearby Grant Elementary School to place flags on the black soldiers' graves. But his research into their fuller stories is hindered by a lack of records. There are some white Union soldiers in the cemetery as well, but not many.

A larger mystery drives Berry's continued search to find where soldiers from Boone County were buried during the Civil War.

"We know there were these fights and people died, but we don't know where they're buried," Berry says. Sometimes, Union soldiers were disinterred and relocated to a federal cemetery. "It's not easy work. You get a lot of stories, but they're just that."

But what intrigues Berry even more are not the stories of local men who died in the war, but those of the men who survived, put the conflict behind them and came back home to Columbia.

"The thing I find most interesting when studying these people is how they persevered," Berry says. "They were tough, and not only did they manage to survive the war, but they managed to rebuild."



TOP: Civil War-era photographs are on display at the Boone County Historical Society. Soldiers carried daguerreotypes, ambrotypes and tintypes of family members with them. ABOVE: Reproduction Confederate cavalry caps are on display at the Boone County Historical Society. They were made of wool, with a leather visor and brass hardware.

LEFT: A slave cabin still stands on the Burwood Plantation near Pilot Grove in Cooper County, Mo. Between six and seven such cabins were on the property in the mid-1800s for house slaves, according to current owner Vicki McCarrell. The plantation was founded and the first house built on the property by Henry Rubey Walker in 1826. His son built the Queen Anne-style home that still survives in the 1880s. Tours of the home are available by appointment by calling Vicki McCarrell at 660-834-3406. CLAYTON STALTER/Missourian

THE CIVIL WAR IN OUR BACKYARD

For those interested in learning more about the Civil War, there are many places to visit in and near Columbia. Here are a few to get you started.

IN COLUMBIA:

The Columns in Francis Quadrangle at MU

Federal soldiers commandeered Academic Hall, MU's first building, and used it as a barracks during the war. According to one story, some Confederate guerrillas were jailed at the Boone County Courthouse, five blocks to the north on what is now Eighth Street. "Supposedly, the federal infantry fired on them from Academic Hall," says William Berry, Civil War Committee chairman of the Boone County Historical Society. But Berry is doubtful that Civil War-era guns could shoot that distance.



Fifty years after the war, reparations were paid for the damage the Union soldiers inflicted on Academic Hall, Berry says. By then, the building was gone, destroyed by a fire in 1892, leaving behind only the columns.

Boone County Historical Society, Walters-Boone County Museum, 3801 Ponderosa St.

The Boone County Historical Society has planned a progressive exhibit that will continue to change and grow over the next four years, spanning the entire length of the Civil War. The museum contains examples of Civil War-era clothing and personal artifacts, weapons and slave schedules, as well as a diorama of a Confederate soldier's campsite. There is also a collection of letters from Henry Martin Cheavins, a Confederate guerrilla soldier.

The museum is free to the public 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. Thursday through Sunday.

Boone County Courthouse

The plaza surrounding the courthouse contains two monuments to Civil War veterans. The "Rebel Pebble" is a reddish-colored stone honoring Confederate soldiers. It was previously located at the intersection of Ninth Street and Conley Avenue before being moved to the courthouse.



The columns from the old Boone County Courthouse played an important role in Columbia's Civil War history, too. Through 1864, slaves were still being auctioned on the steps of the courthouse. The Emancipation Proclamation, signed by President Abraham Lincoln on Jan. 1, 1863, specifically excluded border states such as Missouri.

"Lincoln never freed a single slave in Missouri," Berry says. "The Missouri slaves weren't freed until 1865." According to Berry, slaves made up 25 percent of Boone County's population around the time of the Civil War, though few landowners or farmers owned more than four or five slaves.

Columbia Cemetery, 30 E. Broadway

The Columbia Cemetery contains the graves of 31 black Union soldiers and 52 Confederate soldiers. "There are not many (white) federal soldiers from Boone County," Berry says. Black Union soldiers are located at the south end of the cemetery. Each of their headstones is marked with a U.S. shield, the soldier's name, the soldier's company and sometimes the rank.



Jewell Cemetery State Historic Site, South Providence Road



The Jewell Cemetery contains the graves of George Jewell and his descendants, and his brother-in-law, former Missouri Gov. Charles H. Hardin, a secessionist sympathizer. The Jewells were a prominent family in Missouri, and George's son, William Jewell, was a mayor of Columbia before the Civil War. Also buried with the Jewell family are some of their slaves, whose graves are marked by small, unmarked blocks. This was a common practice of slave-owning families.

NEAR COLUMBIA:

Mount Zion Church, Hallsville, corner of East Mount Zion Church Road and Flynt Lane

In late fall of 1861, a skirmish broke out between Union and Confederate soldiers at Mount Zion Church. The soldiers fought in and around the church cemetery until the Confederates retreated, leaving their supplies and their dead behind. The Confederate soldiers were buried in a mass grave, but were individually interred a few days later by Susan Flynt, a prominent member of the church. She had her slaves dig up the soldiers and bury them in individual graves, marking them with footstones. Though there are initials on the footstones, the remains in the graves are unidentified. The church was burned later in the war by Union troops as a punishment for harboring Confederate guerrillas. It has since been rebuilt.

Goslin's Lane, 8536 Route J, Rocheport

Guerrilla fighter "Bloody" Bill Anderson and his men attacked a Union wagon train here on Sept. 23, 1864. The men looted the wagons and killed 12 Union soldiers, along with three black teamsters. A wayside sign marks the spot off Route J, outside Rocheport.

Battle of Boonville, 18000 Rocheport Road

After Union Capt. Lyon declared war on Missouri, pro-secession Gov. Claiborne Jackson and Sterling Price, the commander of the Missouri State Guard, retreated to Boonville, via Jefferson City. Lyon attacked at Boonville and won, securing the Missouri River for the Union and keeping Missouri from officially seceding. A monument outside the Boonville Correctional Facility describes the Battle of Boonville, and both Union and Confederate graves can be found in the Boonville Cemetery. A re-enactment of the Battle of Boonville is scheduled for June 17 to 19 this summer.

Massacre and Battle of Centralia, Rangeline Road

After Goslin's Lane, Anderson and his men headed for Centralia. The resulting Massacre and Battle at Centralia on Sept. 27, 1864, was one of the last and worst battles in Missouri's Civil War history. Once they arrived in Centralia, Anderson's men looted the town and killed 22 Union soldiers who had just arrived by train. More Union troops arrived soon after the massacre and were lured into a trap set by Anderson and other bushwhackers in the area. More than 120 Union soldiers died, and only three of Anderson's men died. Most of the men's bodies were sent home, but many were buried in a mass grave near the battlefield.

Today, the Centralia battlefield is a 23.2-acre park. There are two monuments, honoring both the Confederate and Union soldiers. The park hosts academic events throughout the year and has been the site of several archaeological digs. There are also monuments and trail markers throughout Centralia to document the massacre and battle.

Jefferson City National Cemetery, 1024 E. McCarty St.

The Jefferson City National Cemetery contains the graves of many Union soldiers, several of whose remains are unidentified. There is also a mass grave of some of the Union soldiers from the Massacre of Centralia, who were disinterred from the battle site and relocated to the national cemetery — a common practice after the Civil War. Confederate soldiers were not allowed to be buried in the national cemetery; their graves can be found in the nearby City Cemetery.