



In Search of Eldorado

Link to the Eldorado Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VczD1olutQ8>



Hello to Family & Friends

Not a good start to the day. When I woke up it was again only 52 degrees in the RV. Flipping on the furnace it ran for about 30 seconds and then stopped. To compound matters, when I got up to get dressed, I stepped in a puddle of water in front of the fridge. First time that has happened and definitely NOT a good sign.

First order of the day was a call to Winnebago Tech Support. Unlike HP or Spectrum, Winnebago actually cares and wants to help. This was rather strange since the furnace ran fine for about 5-6 hours last night during dinner and writing the newsletter. After several suggestions, which I had already tried, he mentioned turning the house (RV) power off and back on. That worked. He told me to have it checked out at a dealer and Winnebago would probably still cover it under warranty (especially since CampingWorld had the RV on their lot for 4 ½ months of my original warranty).

Now, water on the floor. When I washed dishes last night the water did not get very hot, just luke warm. Then water on the floor this morning almost directly adjacent to the water heater. This cannot be happening!! It was suggested that a dealer check that out also and if I didn't want to take it to CampingWorld, I could find other dealers on their website. He said the water heater has a 1 or 2 year warranty, but since it was put in 10 months ago there should be no problem. I hope he's right

I will attempt a shower tonight and see how things work.

Good thing Morgan can put me up for a couple weeks, right Morgan?

Day 3

Tuesday
November 5th

On my way to Houston to
visit Morgan & Matt

Weather

50's and 60's and Sunny

In Search of Eldorado

By Edgar Allan Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'



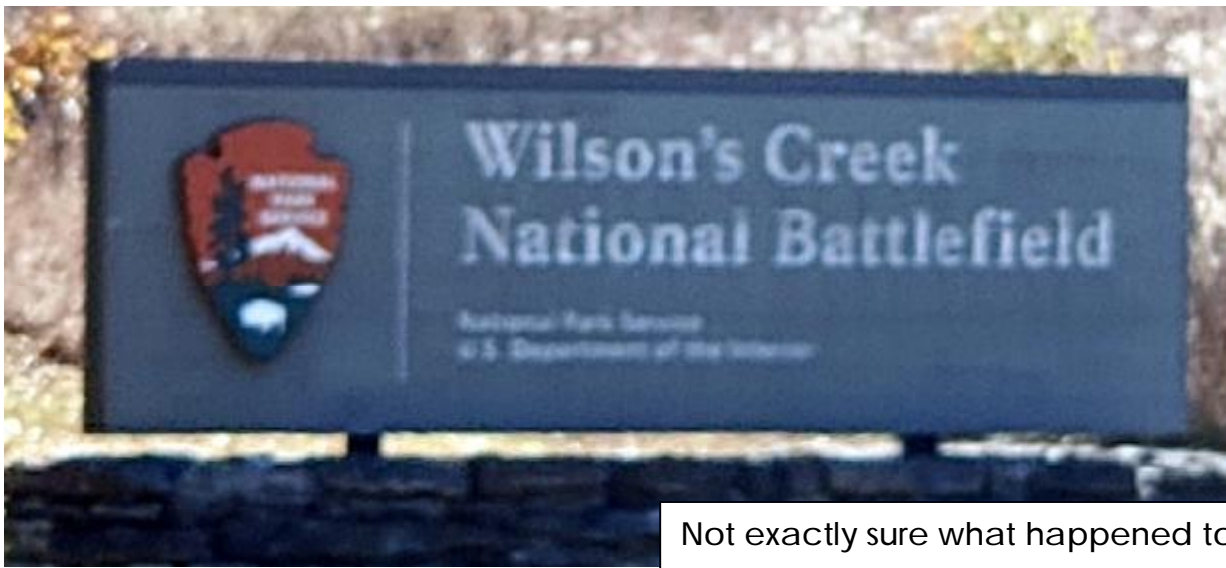
Much of my trip so far has been back along Route 66, only this time I'm sticking to the Interstate, mostly. One exception is my first stop today. That's right, the 'out of this world' fudge. Please enjoy the play on words that I saw at Uranus.





A normal alien gift shop inside, with a gun shop, archery equipment and fishing paraphernalia. I really like the two wooden signs





Not exactly sure what happened to the focus here

Right - Our tax dollars at work
Not really, the real one below is about to be remodeled



Obviously the battlefield is the main attraction here. There is a 5 mile, one way, loop road to important sites of the battle. Speaking of the battle, I didn't realize until watching the film in the visitor kiosk (9 chairs), how important of a battle this actually was. I mean, you hear of Fort Sumter (seen it), Vicksburg (been there), Gettysburg (fantastic experience), but I had never heard of the Battle of Wilson's Creek. Have you?

Gibson's Mill

The mill and house of John Gibson once stood in the valley in front of you along Wilson Creek. On August 9, 1861, the day before the battle, the Gibson family and their neighbors found themselves surrounded by more than 12,000 Confederate soldiers whose camps extended two miles south along the creek.



Not to be a nudzh, but it took a little spit, a leaf and about 30 seconds to clean that spot on the plaque. Seems a wet rag in a baggie, in the hands of a ranger, would do the trick.

Gibson's House Site

An archaeological study is a lot like a detective story. In 1966 an archaeological investigation uncovered many bits of evidence from the area in front of you - the remains of John and Martha Gibson's home. Bone handled dinner service, pewter utensils, and wood shims indicate the Gibson's relative affluence. Horse and mule shoes, wrought iron hammers, an iron mold for casting lead shot, and numerous farming items point out that this "good life" was well earned. In an age when self sufficiency was a way of life, John Gibson was undoubtedly a farmer, blacksmith, hunter, and carpenter, as well as a miller.

In the years after the War, the Gibson's left their home along Wilson Creek. Later the house would burn to the ground. The items uncovered allow us to gain a better understanding of the family and their lives. But some answers remain hidden, buried in written records and ruins. As a detective, we must hope that further searching will someday provide clues to these unanswered questions.

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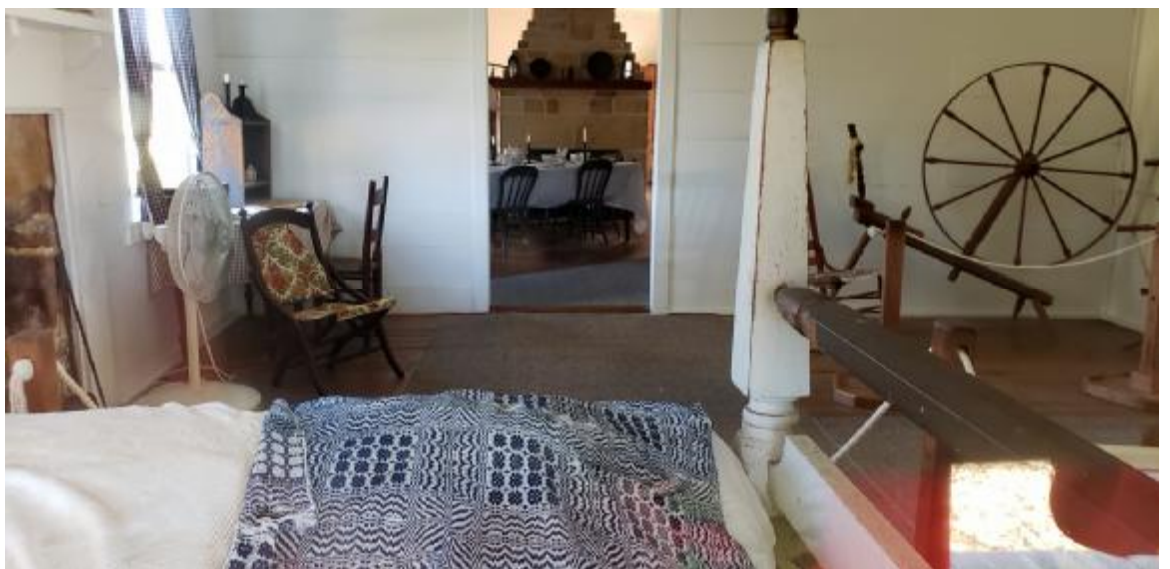
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The Ray Family

The Ray House is the only park structure on its original site that dates back to the Battle of Wilson's Creek. Postmaster and farmer John Ray built it in the 1850s. For ten years it served as the Wilson's Creek Post Office, a stopping place on the old Wire Road that connected Springfield, Missouri, with Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The Gibson Mill above is just a few rocks that look like they might have been a foundation 150 years ago. The Ray house is pretty nice. I took the interior picture below right through the glass. No tours at this time of the year.



Below is a pretty nice view from the front porch



As you read through the battle descriptions below, if you do, try to keep in the back of your mind that it is 5:00 a.m. on a hot and humid August day. Musket fire can be heard from the cornfield on the ridge. Blasts of canon fire reverberate across the hills. Soon the sound of men crashing through the trees and brush give way to the groans and cries for help from dying soldiers, both Union and Confederate. The sounds of battle continue for only 6 hours, but after those 6 hours over 2300 men will have taken their last breath.

Fight in Ray's Cornfield

John Ray watched the first stage of the Union defeat from the porch behind you. At 6:30 in the morning, August 10, 1861, soldiers appeared in his cornfield. The cornfield is the fenced high ground in front of you, just beyond Ray's springhouse.

From the right came Captain Joseph B. Plummer's 300-man regular army battalion. Sent by General Lyon to secure the Federal left flank, Plummer had observed the Pulaski Arkansas artillery mauling the main Union line on Bloody Hill, and was moving to silence the battery. But to the left, about 900 Louisiana infantry and Arkansas dismounted riflemen stood in their way.

The clash was short and decisive. Confederate Colonel James McIntosh inspired a daring charge through the corn that sent the United States Regulars running back to the creek. Only the Union artillery on Bloody Hill kept the Southerners from annihilating Plummer's battalion.

Ray Springhouse

In the valley just below is a stone springhouse, part of the historic property of John Ray, whose house stands on the hill above you. The springhouse provided water, and also a cool place to store milk, eggs, butter, vegetables, and other perishables.

During and after the battle, the Rays' house served as a field hospital for the Confederates. Soldiers, and the Ray children, carried cool water from the springhouse for the wounded to drink. Surgeons also used the water to wash wounds and to cleanse their surgical instruments.





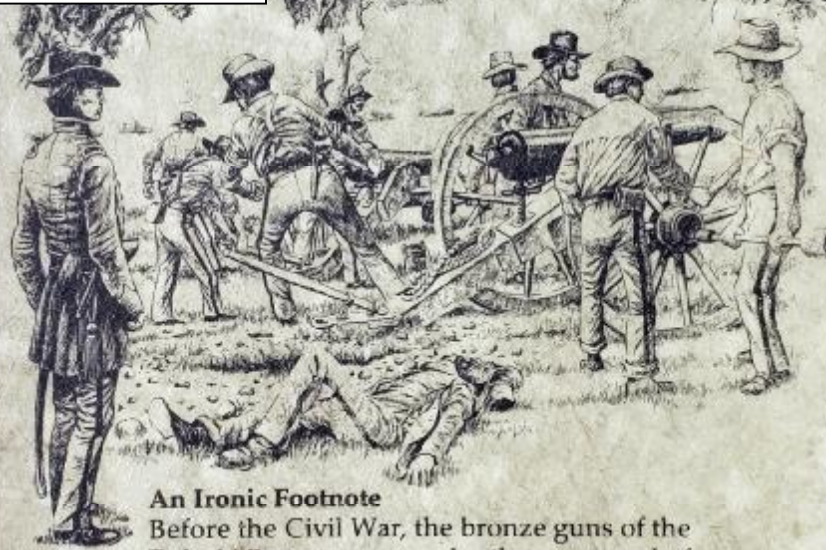
The Wire Road was the path of the telegraph from Fort Smith, Arkansas to Springfield, Missouri, a very important link in the history of the U.S.

A Union Plan

From this spot on August 10, 1861 the compacted fury of the battle of Wilson's Creek would have unfolded before your eyes. The large field in front of you is the south slope of Bloody Hill. Union troops approaching from your right (north) would gain control of the hill early in the fighting.

The open area to the left of Bloody Hill is Sigel's Final Position. Here, Colonel Franz Sigel and his 1,200 Union troops went into position on both sides of the Wire Road. Sigel's objective was to strike the Confederate flank and rear.

In between the two Union forces, in the wooded valley below, stood over 10,000 Confederate soldiers. By early morning, the stage was set, the players in position, and the terrible struggle had begun.



An Ironic Footnote

Before the Civil War, the bronze guns of the Pulaski Battery were under the command of Captain James Totten at the U.S. Arsenal in Little Rock. When war threatened, Arkansas secessionists took control of the arsenal, but Captain Totten remained loyal to the Union. Here at Wilson's Creek, Totten commanded a Union battery across the creek on Bloody Hill, and found himself opposing his old guns manned by his old friends.

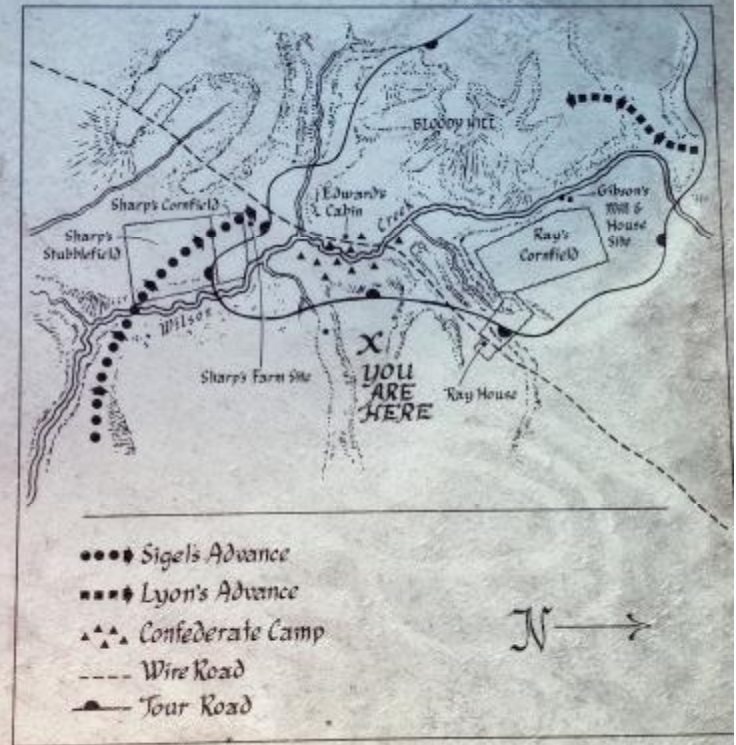


The Broken Pincer

The Union strategy was to trap the Confederates between the giant "pincers" of Sigel and Lyon's armies. The plan had been proposed by Sigel. At first, the idea of splitting an already badly outnumbered army seemed too risky and the plan was rejected. Still determined, Sigel later convinced General Lyon that a coordinated effort by two Union forces was the North's best hope.

At the battle's onset the strategy appeared to be successful. Lyon and Sigel's troops easily brushed aside Confederate resistance and secured high ground. Union artillery bombed the startled Southerners below.

As the morning progressed however, communications between the two commands would falter. The Southern troops were given valuable time to reorganize. Eventually hesitancy and mistaken uniforms would rout Sigel and the "pincer" would be broken.



Rout of Sigel's Column

The plan seemed effective at first, but the Union forces were outnumbered, and poor communications between Lyon and Sigel made it difficult to coordinate the attack. Moving up the hill behind you, a line of advancing Rebels that the Federals mistook for reinforcements (the gray-clad 1st Iowa) charged and overran Sigel's position.

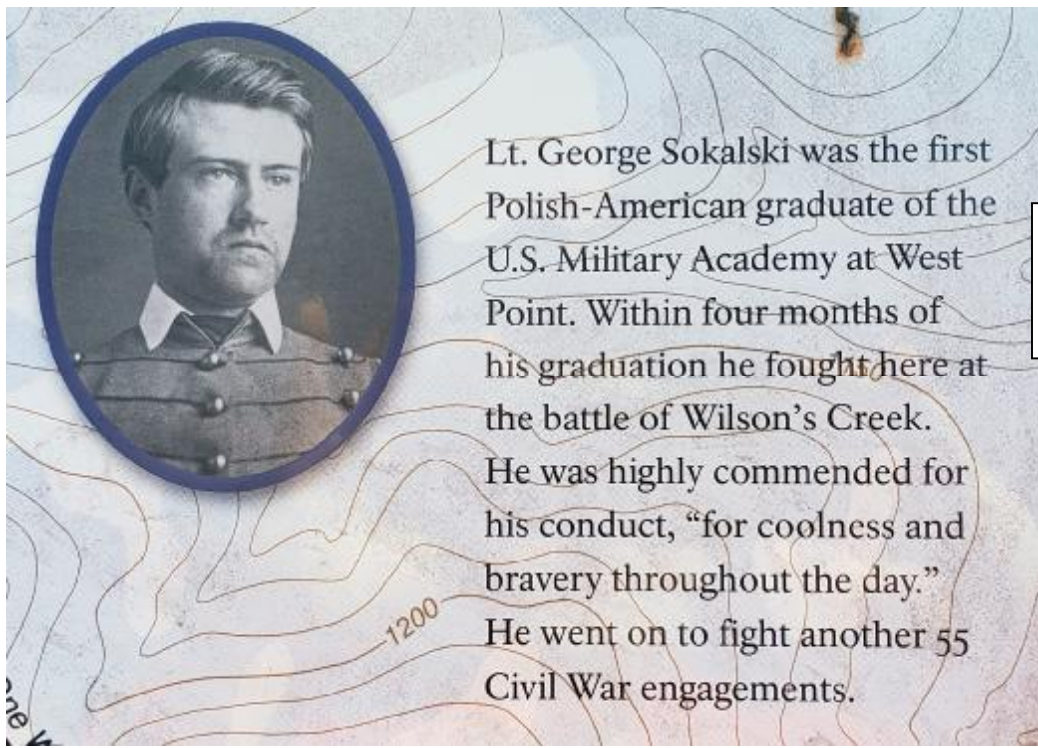
That's right, at the beginning of the Civil War the North was not strictly Blue and the South was not strictly Gray. Sigel's men (Union and dressed in gray) thought it was their own men bringing reinforcements. Imagine their surprise when the greeting they received was bullets.

Guibor's Battery

From this spot one can imagine the challenge which faced the Confederate army. Further up the hill in front of you, over 4,000 Union soldiers and 10 pieces of artillery were positioned to repulse any Southern effort to regain the high ground. On a hot and humid summer day, the undaunted Confederates mounted charge after charge up the hill.

To support the Southern infantry, the battery of Captain Henry Guibor (Sixth Division, Missouri State Guard) was assigned to this location. "Within musket range of the enemy's cavalry and infantry" this 4 gun battery pounded shell and canister into the Federal's line during the Confederate's third and final charge. This assault, with a Southern line of battle 1,000 yards long involving some 6,000 soldiers, was characterized by Union commander Maj. Samuel Sturgis as the "fiercest and most bloody engagement of the day."





Lt. George Sokalski was the first Polish-American graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Within four months of his graduation he fought here at the battle of Wilson's Creek. He was highly commended for his conduct, "for coolness and bravery throughout the day." He went on to fight another 55 Civil War engagements.

Three cheers for the Polish!!

Hip Hip Hooray!!



Why was the Battle of Wilson's Creek so important? It was the second battle of the Civil War. I always picture the Civil War as more of an eastern United States event, but remember I wrote about a Civil War battle in Arizona earlier this year. General Lyon was the first General to die in the Civil War. Wilson's Creek kind of turned the sentiments of Missouri to the Union rather than the Confederacy.

It was a beautiful day weather wise today. Wilson's Creek was interesting and I did a few short hikes to some of the sights. The time I picked up yesterday because of no sunset was spent on the battlefield, so I'm back on schedule.

Tonight I'm at another Cracker Barrel, this time in Joplin, Missouri. About 10 miles from the George Washington Carver National Monument, which is my first stop tomorrow, then off to Arkansas.

I ran into a guy from Racine today on one of the hikes. He saw my badgers sweatshirt and we exchanged "where ya from's".

Weather is getting warmer. Bob, I won't be at golf today. LOL

Just checked the weather and there is a chance of rain tomorrow.

As the sign says....."Always take the scenic route"

Until next time.....