

# Mine Creek Battlefield

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By Dana Sease

Many people aren't aware of Civil War battles that occurred west of the Mississippi River.

However, one of the largest cavalry engagements of the Civil War took place along the banks of Mine Creek near present day Pleasanton, Kan. The battlefield is now a historical site that attracts visitors year-round.

According to Monica Chapman, a staff member at the Mine Creek Battlefield State Historic Site, the battlefield is in a very rural area.

"We're proud of the area because so many of the battlefields, especially in the east, have cities and subdivisions moving in around them," Chapman said. "But the Mine Creek Battlefield looks like it did 140 years ago, which is very unusual."

Chapman also is proud of the condition of the historical site.

"The battlefield is in very pristine condition, and there's over 600 acres of land," Chapman said.

At the battlefield is a 3,000-square foot visitor center where the story of the Battle of Mine Creek comes to life for visitors. The visitor center features hands-on exhibits and living history programs throughout the year. Some of the exhibits include Civil War era uniforms, photographs and weapons. There is also a 2.6-mile walking trail that gives visitors an up-close look at the battlefield.

The Mine Creek Battle occurred on October 25, 1864, when federal forces attacked the Confederate army, which was retreating from the Battle of Westport that had taken place two days earlier.

Late in the morning of the 25th, 7,000 Confederates protecting a supply train were caught north of Mine Creek. Several cannons and about 700 Confederate soldiers were captured, and a smaller number were killed.

Union soldiers defeated the Confederates in less than an hour at Mine Creek, which was the only major battle fought in Kansas.

According to Chapman, many visitors to the Mine Creek Battlefield State Historic Site choose to divide their day between the battlefield and Fort Scott National Historic Site, which is only 25 miles away from Mine Creek.

In 1842, the U.S. Army established Fort Scott to protect the Permanent Indian Frontier. Native Americans and non-Indians had a relatively peaceful relationship during the 1840s.

As the frontier moved west, the U.S. Army abandoned Fort Scott. Although the buildings were sold at a public auction in 1855 and the area became the town of Fort Scott, a military presence still existed.

Today Fort Scott contains 20 major historic structures, 33 historically furnished rooms, museum exhibits, and a bookstore. Interpretive programs, guided tours, and special events are offered throughout the year for visitors. Also in the same area as Mine Creek and Fort Scott is Marais des Cygnes Historical Landmark, the site of a shooting that took place during the Bleeding Kansas era. In May of 1858, 11 men were shot by proslavery men. Abolitionist John Brown came to the site a few months later to build a fort. Today visitors can experience the site through outdoor exhibits and can drive through the beautiful, natural setting.

Mine Creek Battlefield is located two miles south on U.S. 69, one-half mile west on K-52 in Pleasanton, Kan. From March to November, the visiting hours are 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Wednesday – Saturday and 1 – 5 p.m. on Sunday. During the winter months, from January 5 – February, visiting hours are on the weekends: from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. Friday – Saturday and 1 – 4 p.m. on Sundays. Group tours and special events are by appointment only.

Admission to Mine Creek is \$2 for adults, \$1 for seniors and students (K-12, college). Annual passes are available. Current military and children five and under are admitted free. Contact Mine Creek Battlefield by calling (913) 352-8890 or by e-mailing [minecreek@kshs.org](mailto:minecreek@kshs.org).

Fort Scott is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. daily and is closed Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Contact the fort by calling (316) 223-0310.

Marais des Cygnes Historical Landmark is six miles north of Pleasanton. It's open to visitors from dawn to dusk and can be contacted at (913) 352-8890.