

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Mississippi
COUNTY:	Benton
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	OCT 2 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:	Michigan City
AND/OR HISTORIC:	Davis' Mills Battle Site <i>us. 16.1</i>

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:	
Michigan City		Second	
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Mississippi	38647	Benton	009

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:	Mrs. Robert Horton
STREET AND NUMBER:	
CITY OR TOWN:	Mississippi
STATE:	Mississippi
CODE	38647
	28

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:	Chancery Clerk's Office
STREET AND NUMBER:	Benton County Courthouse
CITY OR TOWN:	Ashland
STATE:	Mississippi
CODE	38603
	28

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:	
DATE OF SURVEY:	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:	
STREET AND NUMBER:	
CITY OR TOWN:	
STATE:	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When the Confederate cavalry of Major General Earl Van Dorn attacked the small Federal garrison on December 21, 1862, the settlement of Davis' Mills consisted of a few houses, a saw mill and a flour mill. The mills were located on the north bank of the Wolf River along a millrace which diverted water from the stream bed for its power supply. The Mississippi Central Railroad crossed the river over a three-hundred yard long wooden trestle, which was destined to be the center of action during the fighting that day. The Wolf River was a narrow but deep stream bounded on either side by wide cypress swamps into which the elevated land extended to the main stream, thus affording natural advantages for roads, bridges and mill sites. The wagon road leading to Holly Springs was built upon the mill race dam formed of earth and logs with a gate in the middle. This dam was approximately fifty yards in length and was located about one hundred and sixty yards upstream from the trestle. The area north of the river furnished the garrison excellent campground.

Today, the community is known as Michigan City, named for citizens from that state who settled on the site after the mills were extinct. The economy has continued to revolve largely around agriculture, cattle and lumber.

The Indian mound, which served as one of the Federal fortifications, still retains the depression along the base where the Federal soldiers placed entrenchments. Other evidence of the occupation by soldiers exists on the bark of a beech tree where some of the men carved their names, initials, regiments and dates.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Pre-Columbian
☐ 15th Century

☐ 16th Century
☐ 17th Century

☐ 18th Century
☒ 19th Century

☐ 20th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) December 21, 1862

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

☐ Aboriginal

☐ Prehistoric

☐ Historic

☐ Agriculture

☐ Architecture

☐ Art

☐ Commerce

☐ Communications

☐ Conservation

☐ Education

☐ Engineering

☐ Industry

☐ Invention

☐ Landscape

☐ Architecture

☐ Literature

☒ Military

☐ Music

☐ Political

☐ Religion/Phi-

losophy

☐ Science

☐ Sculpture

☐ Social/Human-

itarian

☐ Theater

☐ Transportation

☐ Urban Planning

☐ Other (Specify)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On December 21, 1862, Davis' Mills was the scene of one of the most animated and gallant struggles of the Civil War. The site, which consisted of a saw mill and a flour mill, was located on the north bank of the Wolf River, six miles south of Grand Junction, Tennessee, and twenty miles north of Holly Springs, Mississippi, at the point where the Mississippi Central Railroad crossed the river. A small Federal garrison, composed of two hundred and fifty men, was charged with guarding this vital railroad trestle.

The decision of garrison commander Colonel William H. Morgan to stand and fight is in striking contrast to the unmilitary actions of Colonel Robert C. Murphy, who surrendered the giant Federal supply base at Holly Springs to Major General Earl Van Dorn on December 20, 1862.

Like Murphy, Morgan had been alerted to the Confederate cavalry's movement to the north from Grenada. Van Dorn's route did not indicate that his objective was Holly Springs and the Federal communications, but on the morning of December 20, he struck the base from two directions, capturing the garrison and destroying over a million and a half dollars in Federal supplies. Colonel Morgan sent Companies B and M, 5th Ohio Cavalry, down the Holly Springs road to give warning should Van Dorn continue north to destroy the railroad crossing at Davis' Mills. He also had taken the precaution of converting the saw mill into a blockhouse with cotton bales, as well as erecting fortifications at the base of an Indian mound nearby. These works afforded a commanding diagonal field of fire on both the railroad trestle and the wagon road which crossed along the top of the millrace dam, approximately one hundred and sixty yards upstream from the trestle. Morgan's men also removed the plank floor on the south end of the trestle to prevent its being used as a bridge.

Shortly after noon, the Federal cavalry was driven in from the Holly Springs road by the advancing Confederate column. As the Confederate horsemen neared the river, they dismounted and advanced as infantry through the woods and along the road,

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

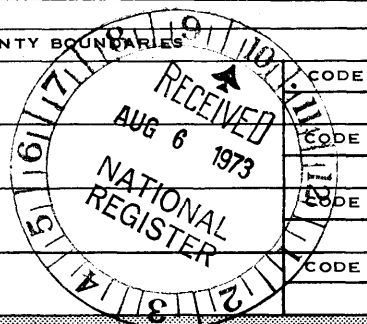
Bearss, Edwin C., Decision in Mississippi (Jackson, Mississippi: Mississippi Commission on the War Between the States, 1962), pp. 114-120.

Morgan, Colonel William H., Report of fight at Davis' Mills, Mississippi, Rebellion Record, Document 81, Volume 6, 1864, pp. 284-287.

Rose, Victor M., Texas Brigade, (Louisville, Ky. 1881), pp. 89-91.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	34° 58' 44"	89° 15' 14"				
NE	34° 58' 44"	89° 15' 00"				
SE	34° 58' 38"	89° 15' 00"				
SW	34° 58' 38"	89° 15' 14"				
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 16 acres						
LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES						
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY				
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:				
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:				
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:				



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: William C. Wright, Historian		
ORGANIZATION Mississippi Department of Archives & History	DATE 7/30/73	
STREET AND NUMBER: Post Office Box 571		
CITY OR TOWN: Jackson	STATE Mississippi 39205	CODE 28

12 STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☒ Local ☒

Name Elbert R. Hilliard
Elbert R. Hilliard

Title Director, Miss. Dept. of Archives and History

Date July 30, 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert M. Utley
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 10/2/73

ATTEST:
Wm. County
Keeper of the National Register

Date 9.28.73

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Mississippi	
COUNTY Benton	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	2 1973

(Number all entries)

8.

forming a line of battle as they approached the bridge, and then charged forward. Suddenly, a leaden hail checked their advance, leaving many casualties on the bridge and in the water. Those that succeeded in crossing were forced to take refuge beneath the river bank. The Confederates tried three times to force a passage on the road bridge. They also made attempts to cross the trestle and to ford the river about a half mile below the trestle. All of these attacks were beaten back by the handful of Union defenders.

Van Dorn realized that it would be impossible to capture the garrison or achieve his goal of destroying the trestle without artillery before the Federal cavalry, pursuing his column, caught up with him. He tried a bluff, therefore, by sending a flag of truce into the Federal lines asking "...if a surrender was in contemplation or had been decided upon." Morgan replied that no such thought had been entertained.

Van Dorn next dispatched a small group of Texans, under a cover of concentrated rifle fire, to attempt burning the trestle by using smoothbore muskets firing cotton balls saturated with turpentine. The entrenched Federals poured such a volley into the Confederates that Van Dorn was forced to withdraw his men. The Texans took shelter beneath the trestle and later surrendered. Van Dorn subsequently continued his northward sweep after leaving Davis' Mills, crossing the Wolf River ten miles west of La Grange, Tennessee; and, after several skirmishes, he returned safely to Grenada, Mississippi.

The failure to destroy the trestle at Davis' Mills was more of a humiliation to Van Dorn than a defeat. The small garrison of Federal troops had withstood approximately three thousand Confederates fresh from the easy victory at Holly Springs. Van Dorn's raid was still a tactical success, however, in that it forced the Federals out of north Mississippi and caused Major General Ulysses S. Grant to forego his plans of an inland attack on Vicksburg.



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(Continuation Sheet)

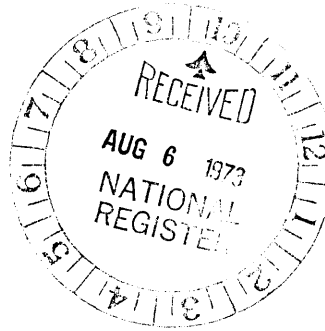
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COUNTY	
Benton	
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(Number all entries)

9.

The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XVII, Part I, pp. 520-523.

Young, John P., The Seventh Tennessee Cavalry (Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, Barbee & Smith, Agents, Nashville, Tenn.), 1890, pp. 58-61.



LAMAR QUADRANGLE
MISSISSIPPI - TENNESSEE
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

NE 4 HILLS SPRINGS 15' QUADRANGLE

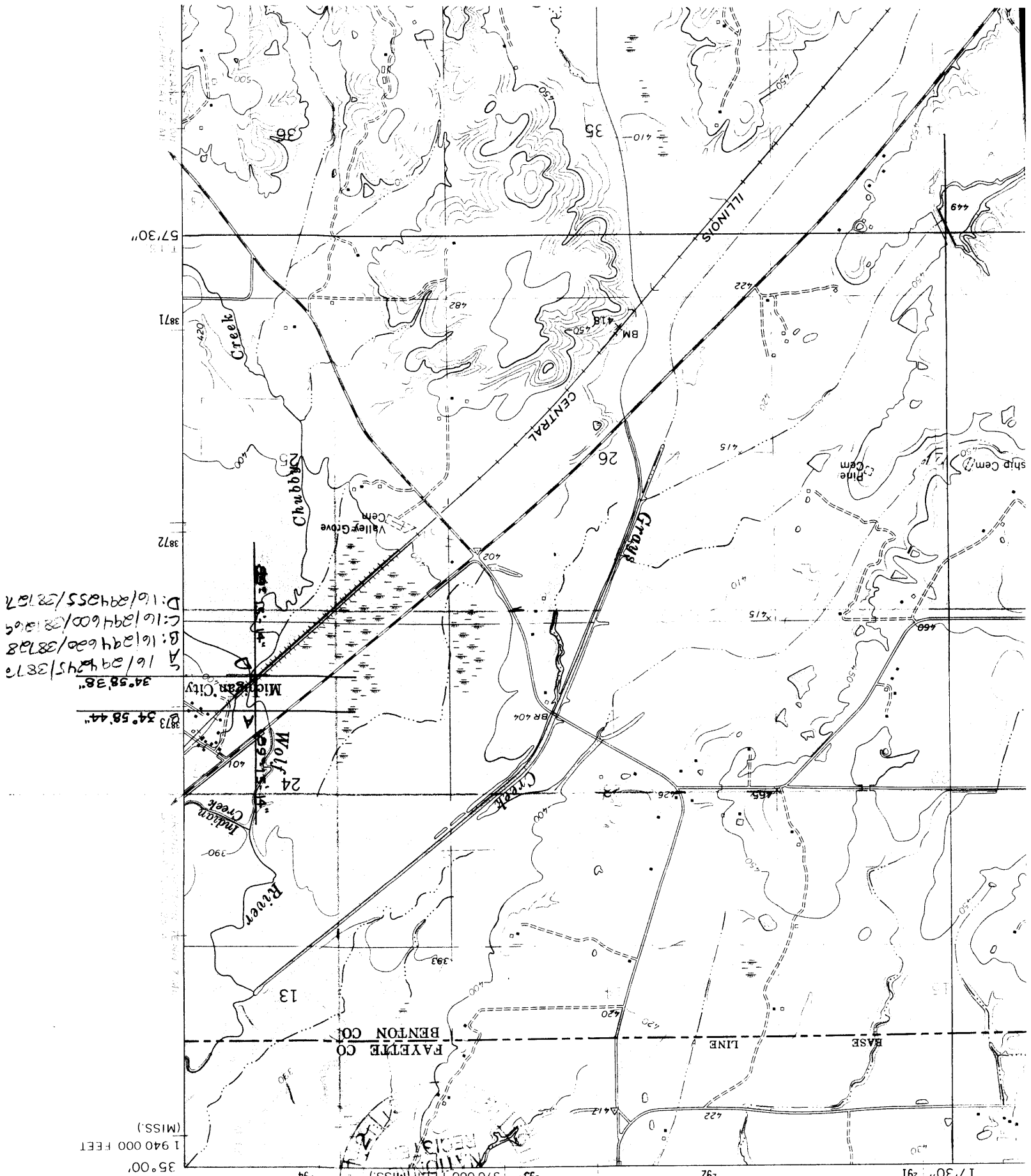
AUG 4 1993

1 370 000 FEET (MISS.)

89° 15' 35° 00' (MISS.)

1 940 000 FEET

3154 II 524
(GRAND JUNCTION)



A 16/294245/3872
B 16/294620/3872.8
C 16/294600/3872.6
D 16/294255/3872.7

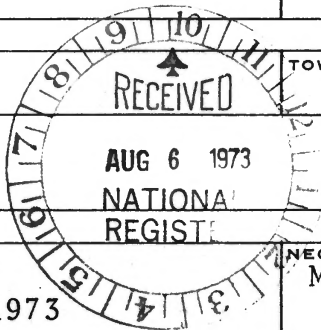


UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME COMMON Michigan City		AND/OR HISTORIC Davis' Mills Battle Site	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS) OCT 2 1973
2. LOCATION STATE Mississippi 38647		COUNTY Benton	TOWN Michigan City
STREET AND NUMBER			
3. PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT Miss. Dept. of Archives & History			
DATE May 21, 1973		NEGATIVE FILED AT Miss. Dept. of Archives & History	
4. IDENTIFICATION DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.			




Looking north along the modern day railroad trestle that is very similar to and in the same location as the trestle in 1862.



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Mississippi 38647	Benton	Michigan City
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

Beech tree with Civil War soldiers' carvings.

