

HISTORY

The Three Notch Trail commemorates the Three Notch Road that ran from Ste. Genevieve to Mine La Motte. About 1719, Frenchmen first followed an old Indian trail to the lead district. These early miners worked three- or four-month seasons, digging lead ore near the surface by hand. The French improved the 33-mile trace for horses and wagons, blazing the road by cutting three notches into trees along the way.

The 5,200-acre S bar F Scout Ranch is located in this “Lead Belt,” in the northwest quarter of the original 24,010-acre tract that France granted to Philippe Renaut on June 14, 1723. The grant indicates that mining was already underway, describing “two leagues of ground at the mine called Mine de M. LaMothe.” The lead mines at Mine La Motte, closed in 1958, lie just southeast of the Ranch. The Ranch had no ore deposits, although it provided timber for the mines.

Several homesteads dotted the Ranch, until the last was abandoned during World War II. Settlers made hard livelihoods growing corn in the bottomlands, trapping game, cutting timber, and working the season in the nearby lead mines. Their marks upon the land are many — sharp eyes can detect roads, ruins, and introduced plants.

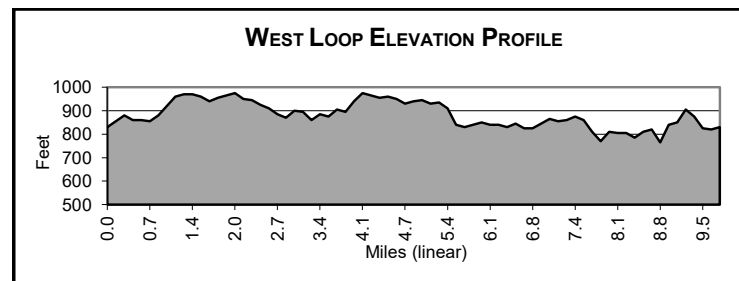
THE WEST LOOP

9.7 MILES, MODERATE

Start at Castle Rock parking lot. Hike NW to Fox Cove, then atop a high ridge to join a pioneer road, deeply cut in places by long use. After intersecting the North Cutoff in a shallow saddle, cross Wills Branch on Nims Lake’s northern end. After a dark cedar forest and a rock glade, cross a power cut and a paved road before intersecting a side trail to the Camporee Area parking lot.

Drop into a creek valley, or “hollow,” and intersect a side trail from Camp Sakima. Roughly follow the boundary, often opposite large pastures. Cross White Oak Springs Branch, which flows in winter and spring allowing the filling of canteens; purify all water. After crossing the branch, climb atop a high bluff along Little St. Francis River; watch out for cliffs.

After a power cut, take a break atop cliffs overlooking Little St. Francis River. Cross a small stream, climb over a hill, and descend to Wills Branch. At the crest of the following knob, take time for a rest stop to enjoy the view and unusual rock formations.



Descend the knob and visit Castle Rock. This eroded sandstone formation is the most unusual physical feature on the Ranch. Be careful; the rocks may be unsafe for climbing if wet or icy. End at Castle Rock parking lot.

WEST LOOP MILEAGE (linear)	
0.0	Castle Rock parking lot
0.7	Fox Cove campsite
1.8	Intersect North Cutoff
2.8	Ford Wills Branch
4.2	Intersect Camp Gamble side trail
4.8	Cross entrance road
5.1	Intersect Camporee Area side trail
6.3	Intersect Camp Sakima side trail
7.8	Ford White Oak Springs Branch
8.8	Ford Wills Branch
9.0	Intersect South Cutoff
9.2	Hart Knob campsite
9.7	Castle Rock parking lot

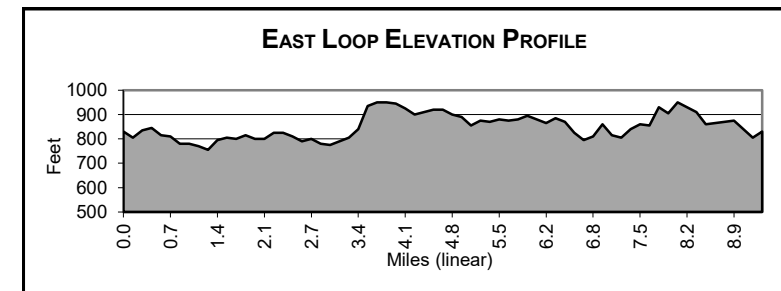
THE EAST LOOP

9.3 MILES, DIFFICULT, 2 WET RIVER CROSSINGS

Start at Castle Rock parking lot. After a small glade about 50 yards south of Castle Rock, hike ESE down old settlers’ roads to Little St. Francis River. Ford the river, parallel the southern boundary, join an old road, and cross a large rock glade where prickly pear cacti bloom in June. Climb out of the glades along the edge of magnificent cliffs overlooking the river; wild azaleas bloom here in May. The view is spectacular, but be careful.

Descend into the river valley to a good rest stop under a rock overhang. Ford Rock Creek, following the river. Watch for beaver sign as the trail ascends a creek valley and climbs a rocky defile to a large, forested plateau.

Cross a large field — once pasture, now overgrowing with red cedar and sumac trees. Descend NW, leaving the field, to follow Little Rock Creek west. Here the sharp-eyed can see vestiges of an old wagon road. Skirt a pond; look for beaver-chewed trees. Hike north up the Pipeline across Beaver Run. Follow a well-forested ridge and descend from it to ford Little St. Francis River.



Climb a ridge to follow a narrow band of rock glades. Descend to a rest stop at remnants of an old settler’s cabin. Note the hand-wrought nails, but leave them for others to admire. Intersect the North Cutoff 70 yards west of the cabin. Hike south along an old road, cross three streams, and climb a high hill before briefly joining the Figure 8 Trail. Return to Castle Rock along old settlers’ roads.

THE NORTH CUTOFF

1.0 MILES, EASY

About 300 yards along the North Cutoff from its intersection with the East Loop is a box canyon called Fern Grotto. Notice the delicate ecology around this waterfall and pool in a cleft in the cliffs, but be careful where you step — don’t destroy it. From the grotto, the North Cutoff ascends a ridge to its intersection with the West Loop.

CAMPING

Cabin, Adirondack, and field camping in the Camporee Area may be available by written permit.

Backpackers may camp along the trail in established backcountry sites or any suitable place at least 200 feet from trails and water sources. Follow the Leave No Trace guidelines on the back cover.

Consider established sites at Fox Cove (wet) and Hart Knob (wet) on the West Loop, and Cedar Grove (wet), Tall Timbers (dry), and Jones Pond (wet) on the East Loop. Established sites feature a camping area and a food preparation area with a food-bag cable.

EAST LOOP MILEAGE (linear)	
0.0	Castle Rock parking lot
0.7	Cedar Grove campsite
1.0	Intersect South Cutoff
1.1	Ford (wet) Little St. Francis River
2.1	High Cliffs
2.7	Ford Rock Creek
3.6	Tall Timbers campsite
5.0	Intersect Hwy OO side trail
5.8	Jones Pond campsite
6.8	Ford (wet) Little St. Francis River
7.2	Ruined Cabin
7.2	Intersect North Cutoff
8.3	Intersect Figure 8 Trail
9.3	Castle Rock parking lot

Revised April 2016

Rated for Boy Scouts and Venturers. Map and compass skills required.
Two 10-mile loops joined by two connectors.



THREE NOTCH TRAIL HIKING TRAIL GUIDE & MAP

REGULATIONS

- Written permit from Greater St. Louis Area Council required. See permit for more regulations.
- BSA members only. No underage children or siblings.
- BSA adult leadership standards apply.
- No pets, firearms, hunting, fireworks, alcohol, non-medically prescribed drugs, or swimming.
- State of Missouri fishing regulations and licenses apply.
- Respect property boundaries.

Review the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and online training programs for safety and planning guidelines, available at scouting.org.

LEAVE NO TRACE

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable surfaces
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimize campfire impacts
- Respect wildlife
- Be considerate of other visitors
- Stay in the middle of the treadway of wet or muddy trails to concentrate impact. Hike single file. Don’t cut switchbacks.
- Camp at least 200 feet from water sources,
- trails, trailheads, public-use areas, and scenic areas.
- Build no rock fire rings, tables, lean-tos, trenches, etc.
- Camp in groups of 10 or fewer on durable surfaces.
- Absent toilet facilities, bury human waste in “catholes” dug 6 to 8 inches deep, at least 200 feet from water sources; cover and disguise.
- Carry out what you carry in. Pick up litter. Don’t cut on trees.



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TRAIL SAFETY

Wear sturdy hiking boots or shoes and long pants in any weather. Carry plenty of water, a first aid kit, rain gear, compass, and trail map — always know your location on the map. Purify water used for drinking or cooking.

Keep groups together — getting lost in this rugged area could be serious, especially in cold weather. In warm weather, beware of venomous snakes (copperheads and rattlesnakes) and use insect repellent liberally to repel ticks and chiggers.

Exercise great care with fire — and note there is to be no smoking. Campfires must be dead out before you leave them. Don’t bury trash. Carry out all non-burnables. Hunting is not allowed.

The trail passes several areas along Little St. Francis River near the edges of potentially dangerous cliffs, some 100 feet high; be careful — no horseplay. Rock surfaces can be very slippery when wet or icy. In high water, stream crossings may be dangerous and best avoided.

Go to scouting.org for the *Guide to Safe Scouting* and online training in Youth Protection, Weather Hazards, and more.

THREE NOTCH TRAIL SYSTEM

There are four components to the trail system: a 9.7-mile “West Loop” around Nims Lake, a 9.3-mile “East Loop” fording Little St. Francis River twice, and two loop connectors, a 1.0-mile “North Cutoff” and a 530-foot “South Cutoff.”

Both loops and the North Cutoff may be hiked in their entirety for a total of 21.0 miles, satisfying a Hiking merit badge requirement. The North Cutoff and parts of the two loops make a 16.1-mile hike, satisfying a requirement for the Backpacking merit badge. The northern half of the West Loop, from Castle Rock parking lot through the Camporee Area access trail, makes an easy 5.3-mile hike, satisfying a requirement for Second Class Scout.

The trails are primitive and rugged, suitable for Boy Scouts or Venturers — but not for beginners. Map and compass skills are required.

TRAILHEADS

The primary trailhead for both loops is the Castle Rock parking lot. Both trail descriptions are written counterclockwise from this starting point. The East Loop also can be accessed from a trail (400 yards long) off Highway OO and Old Fredericktown Road (rough parking). The West Loop also can be accessed from a trail (260 yards long) at the Camporee Area (parking) between the Ranch headquarters and Camp Famous Eagle’s entrance, from a trail (90 feet long) across the road from Camp Gamble’s entrance sign, and from a trail (½ mile long) across the road from Camp Sakima’s entrance sign.

Potable water (summer only) and vault latrines are available in the Camporee Area and Nims Overlook.

TRAIL MARKERS

The trails are blazed with 5" × 7" white plastic markers nailed to trees. Double blazes indicate intersections with other trails. Tilted markers placed one above the other warn of an abrupt turn in the direction of the tilt. Blue markers blaze secondary trails. The loops are blazed counterclockwise only.

Trail markers are reassurance markers — one is not visible from another. Hikers must use the trail map and remain constantly aware of the treadway and their location on the map.

ORDERING PATCHES

Full-color embroidered patches are available at the St. Louis service centers. Three segments go on the curved edge of the patch. Earn the first two by hiking the loops and the third by hiking the 16-mile route using the North Cutoff.

S bar F SCOUT RANCH

LEGEND

ROADS

- Heavy Duty.....
- Light Duty.....
- Improved Dirt.....
- Unimproved Dirt.....
- Trails.....

BOUNDARIES (APPROXIMATE)

- County.....
- Camp.....

LOCATED OBJECTS

- Buildings.....
- Parking.....
- Powerlines.....
- Chapel.....
- Rock Formation.....
- Cliff.....
- Backcountry Campsite.....

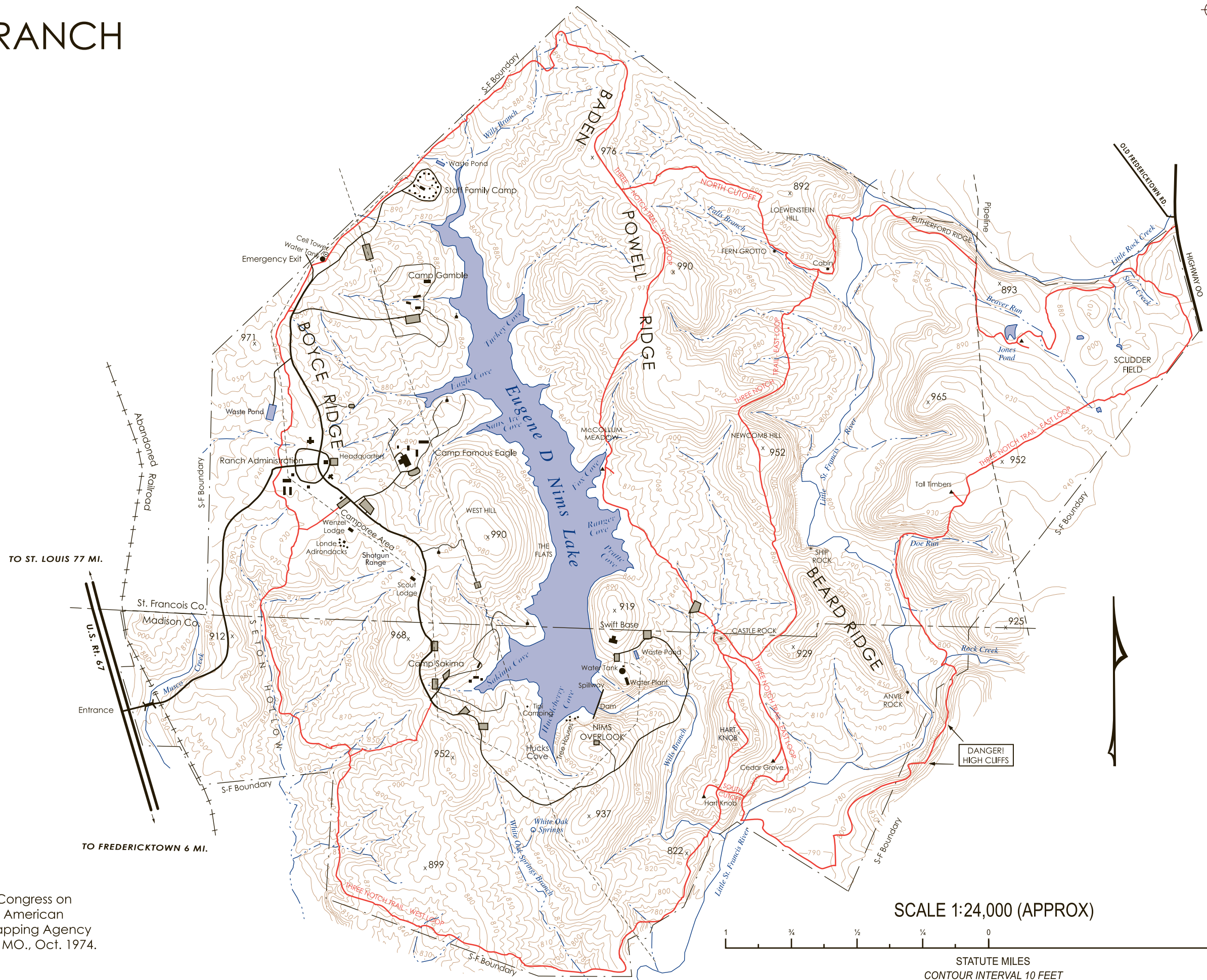


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**GREATER ST. LOUIS AREA
COUNCIL**

Written permit from Greater St. Louis Area Council required to access this property.

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