

Week of June 22, 2009



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[Local Attractions in the 31st District](#)

Though you may be forced to forgo your traditional summer vacation because of a tighter budget this year, many Missourians are not letting the economic situation spoil the opportunity to connect with their families and explore something new right in their own backyard. Fortunately, the 31st Senatorial District is full of attractions for families looking for a fun and relaxing “staycation.”

[Powell Gardens](#) in Johnson County is a renowned destination for anyone interested in botany or who appreciates the natural beauty of Missouri. Powell Gardens is a private, not-for-profit, botanical garden with more than 915 acres of rolling hills and open meadows that offers display gardens, interesting architecture, a nature trail and a year-round calendar of special events and classes for the entire family. The Heartland Harvest Garden, a 12-acre expansion project, recently opened to visitors. I had the honor of cutting the ribbon to open this wonderful addition. This new attraction is the nation's largest edible landscape illustrating food's journey from farm to table where people can learn where their food comes from and celebrate the enjoyment of eating well.

For Civil War buffs, the 31st Senatorial District has a rich history. During that era, many of the residents' southern roots allowed Confederate troops to find refuge in the region; Cass County served as a base for William Quantrill and his Raiders. The [Burnt District Monument](#), located in Harrisonville, was recently dedicated to the area families who suffered the ravages of the Civil War. In particular, the monument was erected to commemorate the stories of those who were affected by Union Brigadier General Thomas Ewing's Order 11, which was an attempt to remove all support for guerrilla activities along the Missouri-Kansas border (the order was in response to Quantrill's raid on Lawrence, KS, in 1863). Under the order, the

residents of Jackson, Cass, Bates and northern Vernon counties who did not establish loyalty to the Union were given 15 days to leave the area. In Cass County alone, less than 10 percent of the population remained behind while their homes were burned. The monument, which is a 22-foot freestanding stone chimney that contains four interpretive panels, is shaped as such because chimneys were the only things left standing after the devastation caused by Order 11.

Bates County was also devastated by Order 11, and according to Butler Missouri Tours, Butler is known as the city where the Civil War began. Also, Bates County is where the well-known “Buffalo Soldiers” first fought in the Civil War during the Battle of Island Mound as part of the 1st Kansas Colored Regiment. The City of Butler dedicated a life-size bronze monument to honor the soldiers in October 2008.

In Vernon County, you will find the [Bushwhacker Museum and Old Jail Historic Site](#), a regional study center that chronicles 150 years of local history. Visitors can experience the circa-1860 stone jail and explore the restored sheriff's home. The Bushwhacker Museum offers exhibits on the history and heritage of the area, including the Missouri-Kansas Border War and local Civil War history. Nevada was called the “Bushwhacker Capital” by federal troops during the Civil War (bushwhacking was a form of guerrilla warfare that was particularly prevalent in areas where there was strong support for both the Union and Confederacy). The museum is open now through October, Tuesday through Saturday, 10:00a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Most states have at least one unique attraction. The [Old Drum Monument](#) in Warrensburg on the County Courthouse lawn was erected to memorialize Old Drum, the beloved hunting dog shot by his owner's neighbor in 1869. George Graham Vest, who later became a U.S. senator, won world-fame for his closing argument in the dispute, from which the phrase “a man's best friend is his dog” is said to have come. Visitors to the monument can read Vest's famous speech.

And finally, [Knob Noster State Park](#) is a great destination for camping, fishing, hiking, biking and other outdoor pursuits. Located south of Highway 50, this nearly 4,000-acre state park offers many activities for the outdoor enthusiast and natural beauty and relaxation for those just wanting to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life.

As always, please feel free to contact me or my staff with any questions or concerns at any time. We look forward to hearing your comments and suggestions and trying to answer any questions you may have. You can reach us by phone at 866-277-0882 (toll-free) or 573-751-2272, or by fax at 573-526-7381.

Senator David Pearce serves Bates, Cass, Johnson and Vernon counties in the 31st State Senate District.

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