



Fort Heiman: The Forgotten Fort



"The View From Fort Heiman"
NPS/ ©Andy Thomas

By early 1862, as the Tennessee River was rising, many Confederates recognized that the high water was threatening Fort Henry, their fortification on the east bank of the river. Knowing that an attack by the Federal Army and Navy was not only inevitable, but likely imminent, General Sidney Albert Johnston decided to erect another fortification on the west side of the river. Named "Fort Heiman" after an architect-turned Confederate soldier, Adolphus Heiman, this new position was strategically placed on a high bluff in Calloway County, Kentucky. General Johnston instructed the Confederates: "...occupy and intrench the heights opposite Fort Henry. Do not lose a moment. Work all night."

February, 1862

However, this new fort remained under construction when Federal Brigadier General Ulysses S. Grant launched his offensive. On February 4, 1862, as Grant was landing his men to the north, 1,100 Confederate troops, with the exception of a small section of cavalry, evacuated from Fort Heiman to Fort Henry, a process completed by 5:00 AM the following morning.

The next day, February 6, Federal forces under the command of Brigadier General Charles F. Smith took possession of an all but abandoned Fort Heiman. Thomas Wise Durham, a Federal soldier, described the easy capture:

"They 'skidaddled' with very little show of resistance. Even though they were swift on foot, we perhaps could have captured many of them had we not stopped to eat their dinner for them before it got cold."

Looking across the Tennessee River, Smith's troops saw the American flag flying at Fort Henry, which had fallen to the Federal gunboats after a brief, yet heated, fight.

Grant then ordered Federal gunboats to proceed up the Tennessee River, destroying anything of Confederate significance. He was also ordered by his superior to hold Fort Henry at all costs. In less than a week, Grant's army proceeded eastward and attacked Fort Donelson.

After a raging, three-day naval and land fight, Grant received the surrender of Fort Donelson on Sunday, February 16, 1862. By the end of that month, Nashville was in Federal hands, and the American flag was flying over three former Confederate forts. The Civil War had now entered into a new dimension.

Federal forces occupied Forts Heiman and Henry for a year, until abandoned in early 1863. Before withdrawal, portions of the fortifications were razed, so they could not be of future use to any returning Confederates.

During this period, a number of African-American refugees sought protection by the Federal forces at Fort Heiman. These formerly enslaved men, women, and children, came to the fort searching for family members, jobs, and protection from slavery.

October, 1864

Confederates continued to wrestle for control of the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers and by October 1864, Confederate Brigadier General Nathan B. Forrest had made tremendous progress toward the Southern goal.

On October 12, 1864, Forrest communicated to his superior, Lieutenant General Richard Taylor, "It is my present design to take possession of Fort Heiman, on the Tennessee River, below

Johnsonville, and thus prevent all communication with Johnsonville by transports."

Shortly after writing this, Forrest positioned his forces at Fort Heiman and Paris Landing, and launched a successful campaign against the Federal Johnsonville supply depot. On November 4 and 5, 1864, a battle occurred that caused significant destruction to vital Union supplies intended for General William T. Sherman's Atlanta campaign.

Today

Along with Fort Donelson, Fort Heiman was added to the National Register of Historic Places on December 12, 1976. Due to the hard work of

many, the site was added as a unit of Fort Donelson National Battlefield on October 30, 2006.

Location

The Fort Heiman Unit of the Fort Donelson National Battlefield is a remote, but impressive unit of the National Park Service.

As a relatively new addition to the park, the Fort Heiman Unit is not largely developed. The National Park Service protects 176 acres, which includes two historic fortifications. Wayside exhibits explain the site for visitors.

Located along the Calloway County thoroughfares of Kline Trace and Fort Heiman Road, the

park grounds are open for visitation from 8:00 AM until dusk. Care should be taken when driving the narrow pavement of Fort Heiman Road - buses, campers, and other larger vehicles are not recommended.

Please remain on designated trails. Be alert for poison ivy, poisonous snakes, ticks, stinging insects, and spider webs. Do not disturb or remove any vegetation. Be prepared for strenuous walking in some areas. Service animals are welcome.

Regulations and Safety

- Fires are not permitted on the national park grounds of the Fort Heiman Unit.
- Pets must always be physically restrained.
- Obey traffic signs.
- Hunting is prohibited.
- For firearm laws and policies visit the park website www.nps.gov/fodo.
- Picnic in designated areas.
- Relic hunting and possession and use of detectors are prohibited.
- For your safety, hikers using public roads should walk facing traffic and bikers should ride in the direction of traffic in single file.
- Drivers should observe speed limits.

- Keep close watch over your children.
- Use caution near the river bluffs and when on trails, which can be slippery.
- Do not walk or stand on earthworks, and be alert to uneven ground surfaces.

In case of emergency, dial 911. The location address for the Fort Heiman Unit is 682 Fort Heiman Road, New Concord, Kentucky.

More Information:

Fort Donelson National Battlefield
PO Box 434
Dover, Tennessee 37058

Driving Directions

For those using GPS or a mapping program, the physical address for the Fort Heiman Unit is 682 Fort Heiman Road, New Concord, KY. Specific directions can be found at www.nps.gov/fodo.

