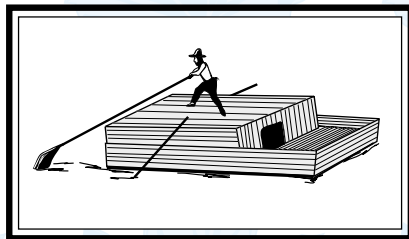


## Black River Trail Brochure

### Introduction

Old Davidsonville State Park was created to preserve the townsite of Davidsonville, one of the first pioneer towns with a post office, courthouse, and Federal land office, in what would become the state of Arkansas. The frontier town was very active culturally and politically from 1815 to 1830. When the town developed in 1815, the land now called Arkansas was part of Missouri territory. Davidsonville was named the first county seat of Lawrence County in 1815 and continued to be until the land became part of the Arkansas Territory in 1819. The town flourished until 1826 or 1827, when its decline began. The transferring of the courthouse northwest to Jackson, Arkansas in 1829 completed the town's desertion.



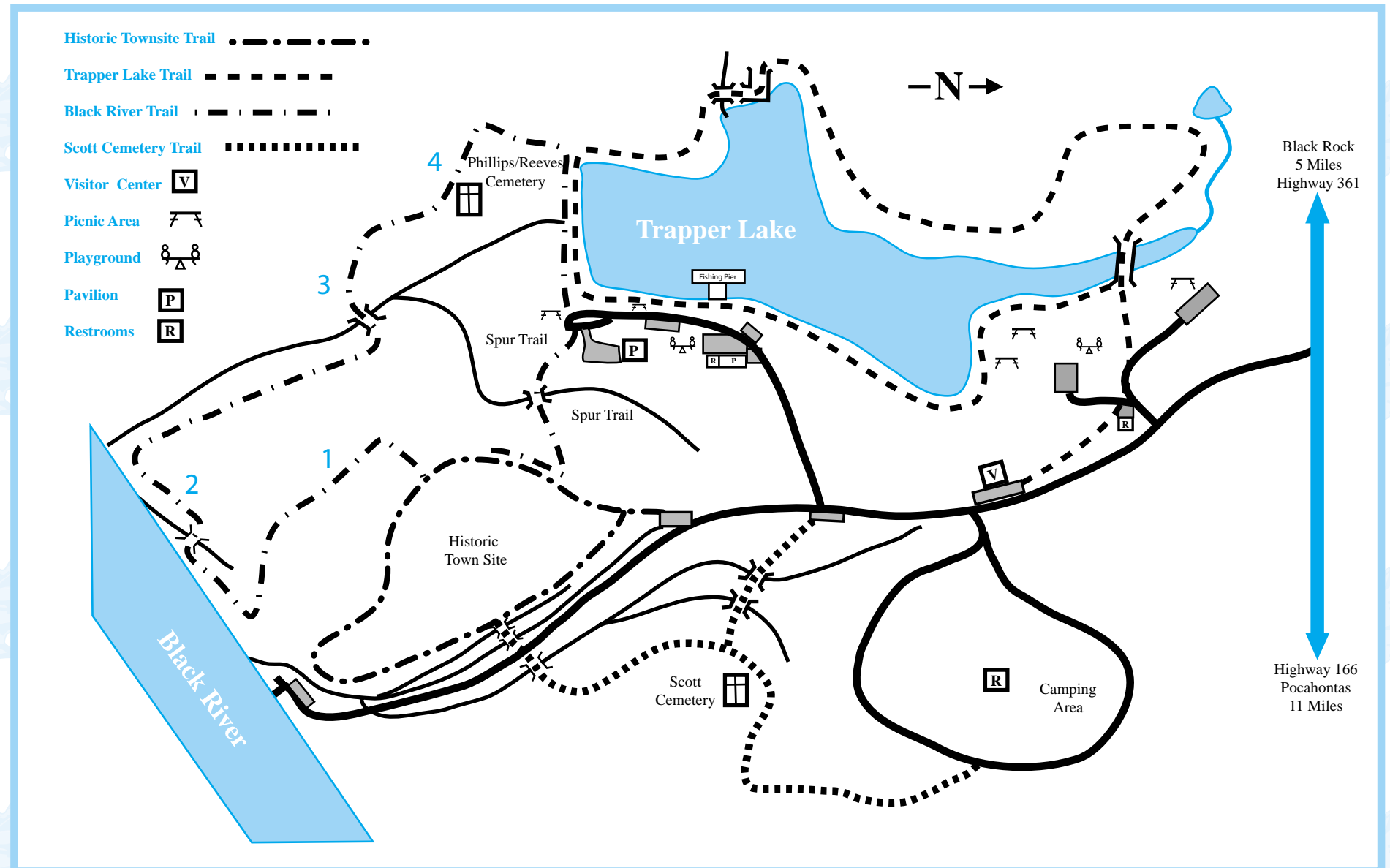
Old Davidsonville State Park contains four trails for visitors to enjoy: **Black River Trail, Trappers Lake Trail, Scott Cemetery Trail, and the Historic Townsite Trail.** As you walk the Historic Townsite Trail, read the **Davidsonville Discovered brochure** and the twelve wayside markers for a more detailed look into the lives and times of Davidsonville, Arkansas.

### Black River Trail

Take a stroll along the banks of the Black River and walk into history with a look at the Phillips/Reeves Cemetery. The Black River Trail, marked with yellow blazes, is a one-mile dirt path that takes around 45 minutes to complete. The trailhead, found

in the historic townsite, runs along the high bank of the Black River through the surrounding forest. It crosses a spillway stream near the river and continues up the wooded hillside, past the gate of the **Phillips/Reeves Cemetery**, to the dam on the south side of Trapper Lake. Here, the

visitor has a choice of continuing their hike along the Trapper Lake Trail or walking across the dam, and continuing via a small spur-trail starting in the pavilion area, that connects to the historic townsite.



## Points of Interest Along the Trail:

**1** The **Black River** and its surrounding forest is home for many different birds species. On the river, you will have the chance to see **great blue herons, egrets, and belted kingfishers**. The belted kingfisher is unique because it lives in the ground. It digs a burrow in a vertical riverbank with its bill and hunts the river for fish, amphibians, and insects.

As you walk this trail and the others, you may notice that several trees, alive or dead, have tiny holes throughout their trunks. Birds, mainly woodpeckers, cause these. The park plays host to several species of woodpeckers, including the **pileated, hairy, red-headed and downy woodpeckers**. The holes they create in trees help aid in pest control. A tree becomes infected with a mite or other insect, causing surrounding trees to become susceptible to “catching” these infestations. The main staple of a woodpecker’s diet is insects. By drilling the holes into the infected tree and eating those insects, the woodpecker decreases the amount of insects present and the chances of surrounding trees becoming infected.

For a complete list of bird species found at Old Davidsonville State Park, refer to the **bird list for Old Davidsonville State Park brochure** found at the Visitor Center.

**2** The Black River flows south from southern Missouri and touches the southern border of the town of Davidsonville two miles north of where the **Spring and Eleven Point Rivers** converge into the **Black River**. The river then connects to the rest of the world through the **White and Mississippi Rivers**. These river connections created a trading system that allowed Native Americans, and later, American settlers, to contact the rest of the world. The Black River was the “main

artery” of the town, bringing **keelboats, jonboats, flatboats, canoes, and other watercraft** to the town. **Keelboats and flatboats** contained cargoes from New Orleans and St. Louis, of **flour, oil, sugar, clothing, fabric, buttons, fat, vegetables, salt, fruit, ceramics, building materials, ore, glass products, tin products, whiskey, wine, and much more**. They sold these goods with the merchants of Davidsonville and other settlements along the rivers. As a secondary source of income, boatman traded these goods with trappers for furs from **beaver, deer, opossum, raccoon, river otter, and other animals**.

The river wasn’t only an important feature for the residents of Davidsonville, it was the heart of the area’s ecosystem, then and today, supporting animals from bald eagles to crayfish. The river is filled with **catfish, bass, muscels, darters, and other game fish**. Animals found in the river are a good food source for **birds of prey, beaver, otter, coyotes, and other animals**.

**3** When walking through this section of the trail, notice the small ravines, ditches, and number of bridges there are to cross. These are the products of erosion. This section of the trail crosses the head of a stream. The stream’s source is the watershed pond found along the **Trapper Lake Trail**. Hundreds of years of water flowing over the same path of the streambed have caused these land formations. Every water drop carried a small particle of dirt with it from these streambeds out into the Black River, causing the beds to dig deeper into the ground.

These formations are also characteristic of oxbow lakes formed by large rivers. As a river flows, the water erodes one bank and builds up the opposite bank, causing the river to change

positions. Sometimes, a section of the river is “cut off” as soil deposits form new banks. **This cut-off section becomes an oxbow lake**. The lake fills with water during high floods, providing a protected habitat for the eggs and young of many river fish.

**4** The **Phillips/Reeves Cemetery** is believed to intern residents of Davidsonville. The stones used to mark these graves are not the usual engraved stones we see today. Typically, large pieces of stone, not always engraved, were laid at the head of the grave, marking where it was. Today, many of these stones have been removed or have sunk into the ground, leaving nothing to mark the gravesites besides the straight rows of indentations in the ground. Erosion on the southeast side of the cemetery through the years may have altered the size and shape of the original cemetery.

**Notice:** To preserve the scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. *Caution and supervision of your children are required while visiting these areas.*

**Old Davidsonville State Park**  
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### Trail Regulations:

- \* Removal or destruction of plants, rock, or animals is not permitted.
- \* Littering on trails is unlawful.
- \* Camping or campfires are not permitted on trails.
- \* Horses are not permitted on park trails.
- \* Motorized vehicles and bicycles are restricted to marked roads due to the causation of erosion.



# Black River Trail

Old Davidsonville  
State Park