

MOSES AUSTIN TRAIL

This 14.5 mile circular trail memorializes Moses Austin, founder of Potosi and author of the plan for the settlement of Texas by Americans. Austin was born in 1761 in Durham, Connecticut. From there he moved to Pennsylvania and later to Virginia. In 1797 he journeyed to Missouri and applied to the Spanish governor for a grant of land in the Potosi area. On the return trip to Virginia he met a man known to history as the Baron de Bastrop in a Louisville, Kentucky tavern. This chance encounter was to have momentous consequences twenty-three years later.

Austin received the land grant and moved his family to Missouri in June, 1798. By the next summer he was operating a factory for shot and sheet lead at a settlement which he named Potosi after a Bolivian silver mining town of that name. In 1813 Austin and several other Missouri business men (including Auguste Chouteau and Manual Lisa) opened a bank in St. Louis. The bank failed in the panic of 1819, and Austin was financially ruined. He then decided to move to Texas, where the Spanish government was offering free land to acceptable settlers.

Austin rode his gray horse to San Antonio, Texas, arriving there in December, 1820. He told the Spanish governor that he, a Catholic and former subject of the King of Spain, wanted to bring colonists to Texas from Spanish Louisiana. The governor refused to hear his plan and ordered him out of the territory. The disappointed Austin left the governor's presence, but in the plaza outside again encountered the Baron de Bastrop. The influential de Bastrop arranged another hearing and persuaded the governor to grant Austin's request.

Austin returned to Missouri and died in June, 1821 from pneumonia resulting from hardship and exposure on the Texas trip. However, his colonization plans were carried out by his able son, Stephen. In 1836 the American colonists, upset by the political instability which followed Mexico's successful revolt against the Spanish, declared their independence from Mexico and decisively defeated an invading Mexican army at San Jacinto. When Texas was annexed by the United States in 1846, the Mexican War resulted. After the Americans won this war, Mexico ceded its western territory to the United States. As a direct result of events set in motion by the elder Austin, the United States eventually gained Texas plus all or part of nine other western states.

Moses Austin is buried in Potosi. Many direct descendants of Austin and his daughter Emily live today in Texas counties along the lower Brazos. His name lives on in Texas, where the state capital is named for his son Stephen, who is acclaimed "Father of Texas."

The Trail

The 14.5 mile wilderness trail is in a rugged section of the Clark National Forest in Washington County. (The high point on the trail is west of the power line.)

The low point is in the valley of Scott Branch, 920 feet elevation. Open meadows in the valley of the Scott Branch offer splendid trail camping opportunities. Water may be obtained at the spring shown on the trail map or from Scott Branch. Treatment with water purification tablets is required for all water taken along the trail.

The trail is marked, Appalachian Trail style, with 2" x 6" white rectangular blazes on trees. A double blaze means "stop, look, and listen" for an abrupt change in direction, or an intersection.

Hikers should wear sturdy hiking boots or shoes and wear long pants in any weather. An extra pair of socks should be carried in case feet get wet. Carry a 7.5' Shirley quadrangle map or a forest service map of the area, plus the official trail map and a compass (a must). Hiking groups should hike together; getting lost in the area could be serious, especially in cold weather. In warm weather watch out for poisonous snakes and use insect repellent for chiggers and ticks.

For safety reasons, smoking and hunting by hikers is prohibited. GREAT CARE must be exercised with fire. Campfires must be dead out before you leave them. Do not bury trash; carry all non-burnables out with you. Do not litter. Do not cut down any standing tree, or hack on trees.

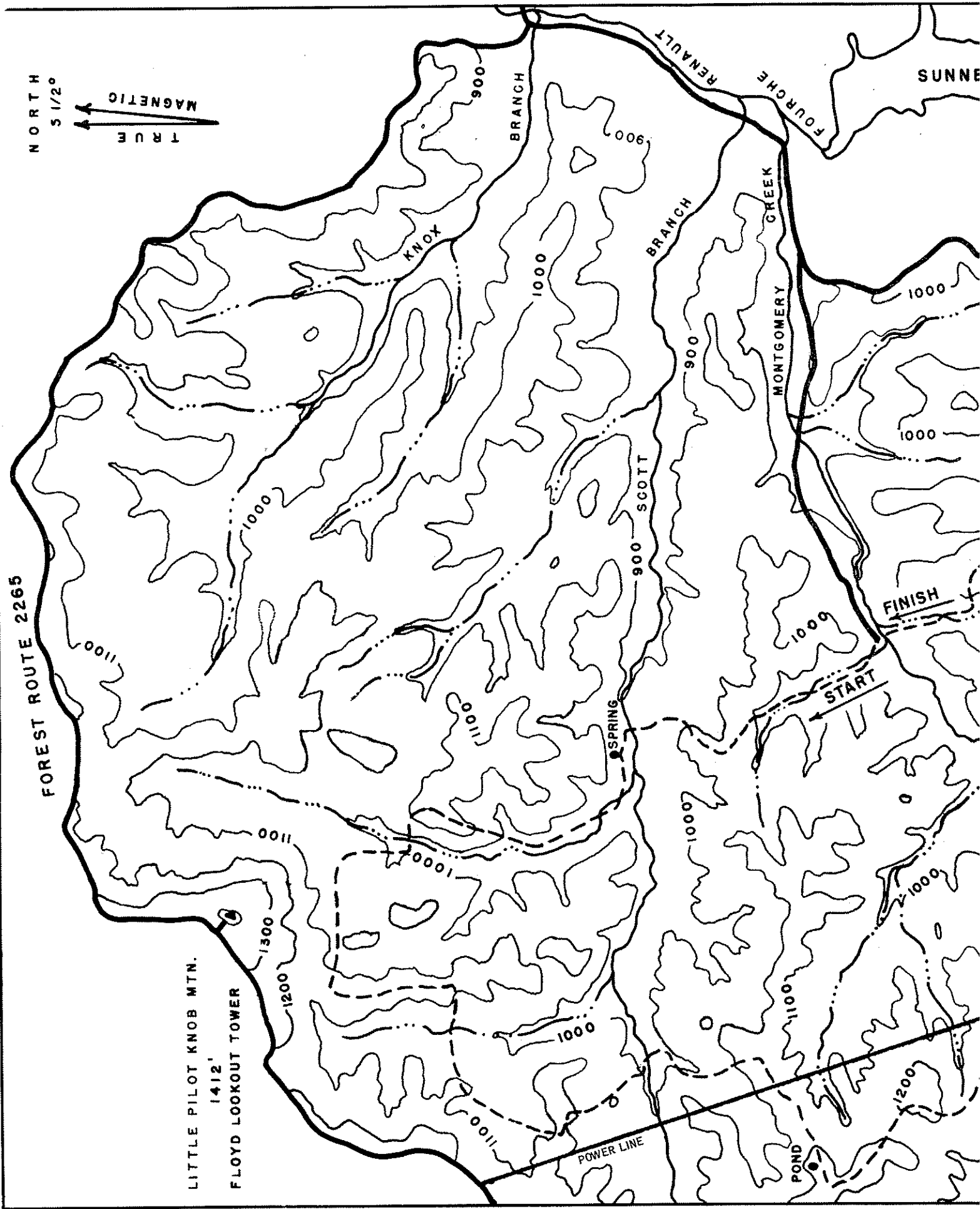
You will see other roads on the Forest Service or topo map of the area which appear to provide access to the trail. None of these is usable except as an emergency exit to a main road. All are either impassable to passenger cars or cross private land.

Travel Directions

The trail is easily reached from the St. Louis metropolitan area via Interstate 55, US 67, and State routes 110, 21, and 8. From US 67, turn right onto St. 110, 6 miles to St. 21, left on 21 for 25 miles to Potosi and St. 8. At the junction of 21 with 8, follow 8 west 11.0 miles to the junction of 8 with county road AA. Turn right (north) on AA and follow AA for 3.3 miles, turning left at this point on Washington County road #208. Follow this gravel road generally west for 1.5 miles to the junction with a fire trail which crosses the gravel road. Turn right or left and park in the open areas of the fire trail. The trail starts and finishes at this road junction.

Groups wishing to camp in the area either before or after hiking the trail may make a reservation at the Sunnen Boy Scout Camp. This camp, at the south end of Sunnen Lake, is reached by a road which turns north off highway 8 at a point 9.3 miles west of the intersection of 8 and 21 and 1.7 miles east of the intersection of 8 and AA. There is a sign at the intersection. Reservations for overnight camping may be obtained by writing the Trails West Council, BSA, 1055 Harrison, Wood River, Illinois, 62095. Phone 618/259-2145.

A map of the Clark National Forest can be obtained by writing the District Ranger, Clark National Forest, Potosi, Missouri 63664. The 7.5' Shirley quadrangle topo map can be obtained by mail from the USGS Map Sales, Box 25286, Denver, CO 80225. The current price is \$2.50, postpaid. Allow a week for delivery.



NORTH
5 1/2°



FOREST ROUTE 2265

LITTLE PILOT KNOB MTN.
1412'

FLOYD LOOKOUT TOWER

KNOX

BRANCH

BRANCH

RENAULT

FOURCHE

MONTGOMERY CREEK

SUNNE

SCOTT

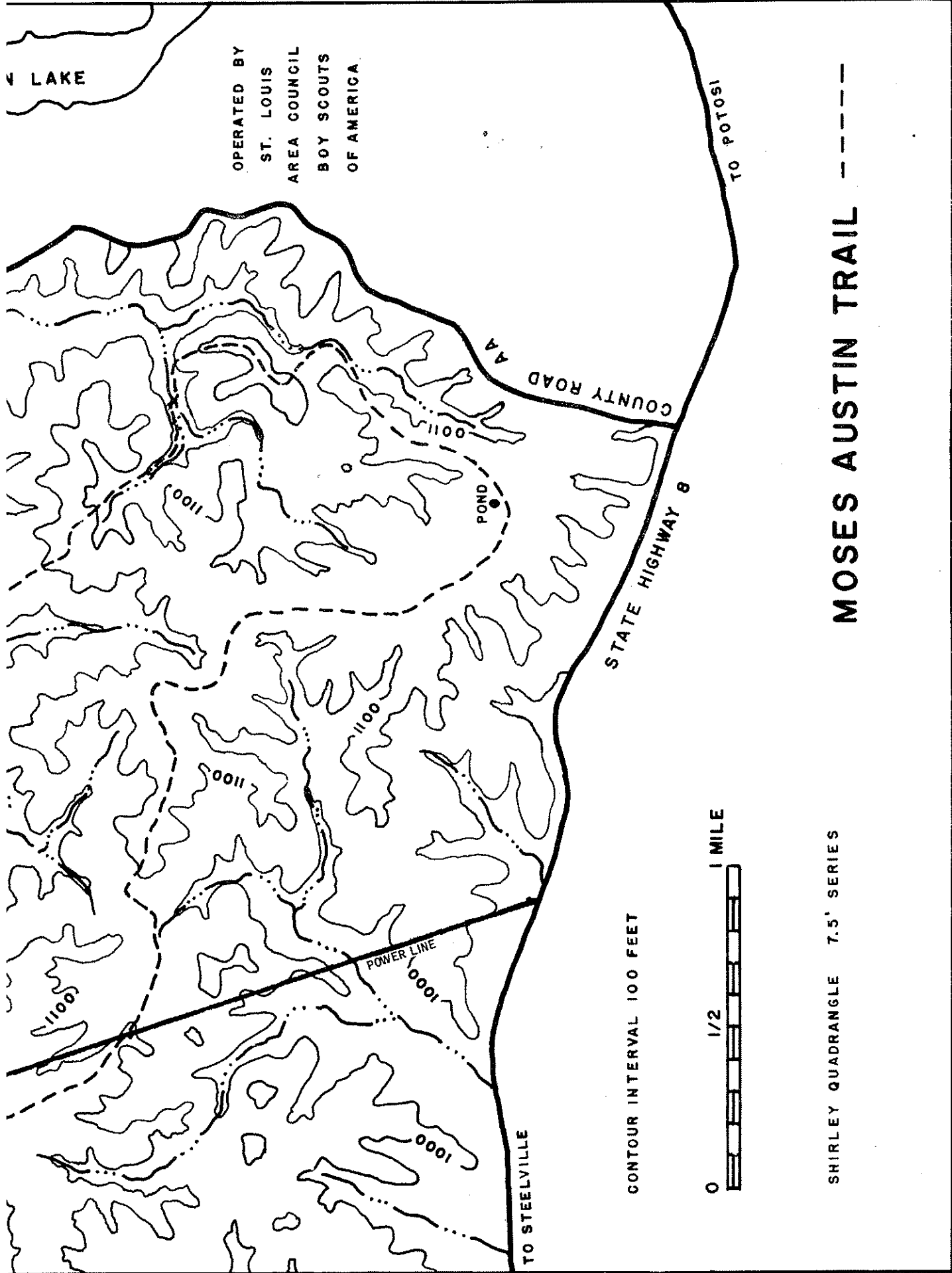
SPRING

START

FINISH

POWER LINE

POND



OPERATED BY
ST. LOUIS
AREA COUNCIL
BOY SCOUTS
OF AMERICA

MOSES AUSTIN TRAIL - - - -

SHIRLEY QUADRANGLE 7.5' SERIES

CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET

