

Alexandria National Cemetery
1450 Wilkes Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

Description

The Alexandria National Cemetery, established in 1862, is located six blocks west of U.S. Highway 1 in the city of Alexandria. The main entrance on Wilkes Street has 12-foot-wide entry gates with a pedestrian gate on the north side, all made of ornamental wrought and cast iron. The main gates are supported by cast-iron piers and the pedestrian gates by stone piers. The cemetery is surrounded by a red sandstone wall approximately 4 feet, 6 inches high and 24 inches thick (1,226 linear feet). Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.



The original superintendent's lodge was constructed in 1862 and was the prototypical design by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs. This structure was destroyed by fire in 1878. In 1887, the present lodge was built over the old walls using the original design and foundation. The L-shaped lodge is of the Second Empire style. The main portion is one and one-half stories high with a mansard roof with dormer windows enclosing the upper story. The exterior walls are 24-inch-thick random red sandstone. The roof was originally made of tin with the mansard sheathed in Virginia slate. The slate has since been replaced with asbestos shingles and in 1992 with fiber reinforced cement shingles. The floor-to-ceiling height on the first floor is approximately ten feet. The second floor has three bedrooms, one of which has a corner partitioned off for a hall bathroom. All original windows and door moldings are in place; however, floors were replaced and fireplaces removed in 1952.

In 1887, a brick Italianate building (utility building) was constructed for a kitchen, storeroom, tool room, and toilet. The 522-square-foot building has a brick foundation with molded brick water table, brick walls, tin roof, and cement floors. In 1927, this building was connected to the lodge by constructing a wing for the dining room. The wing is one story high with eight-inch brick walls and metal roof. In 1952, the original kitchen was converted to storage space, a new garage addition, 12 feet by 16 feet, was constructed, and a new driveway, 10 feet by 60 feet was added to the garage. The dining room was renovated into the kitchen. The main architectural features of the utility building are two arched brick bays each containing a more narrow arch with openings for a window and a door. The original stone steps remain, but the original door and window openings have been replaced.

A fieldstone and slate assembly area with a flagpole was constructed in 1946. The assembly area has a slate pavement enclosed by low fieldstone walls with stone steps leading down from the flag to the plaza, facing away from the entrance gates and lodge.



In 1980, the City of Alexandria designated a tree estimated to be 200 years old, as an Alexandria Bicentennial Tree. It is a Liquidambar styraciflua species and is centrally located in the cemetery.

Noted Burials

Four Quartermaster Corps employees (Peter Carroll, Samuel N. Gosnell, George W. Huntington, and Christopher Farley), who drowned in the Rappahannock River on April 24, 1865, while in pursuit of Abraham Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, are buried in Section A, Graves 3174-3177.

Significant Monuments/Memorials

On July 7, 1922, a special monument was erected by the United States in memory of the men who died while in pursuit of John Wilkes Booth. The monument is a bronze tablet on a granite boulder base and located in the center of the cemetery on a terraced wall.



Civil War Activity in Area

The city of Alexandria, Virginia, was the site of one of the principal camps for northern Virginia troops sent to defend Washington at the outbreak of hostilities between the North and the South. Here, in response to the popular slogan "On to Richmond," the Union Army of the Potomac was assembled from a miscellaneous collection of militia regiments.

By May 1861, a sizable Virginia force had formed in Alexandria. Six infantry companies and an artillery battery were homegrown and they had been joined at various times by the Warrenton Rifles, the Prince William Rifles, the Warren Rifles from Front Royal, the Fairfax Rifles, the Loudoun Guards, Ball's Cavalry, the Fairfax Cavalry, a three-company battalion from the District of Columbia known as the Washington Volunteers, and the Beauregard and the National Rifles also from Washington. Thus, Alexandria, on the eve of the war, had 20 company-size units. The force was approximately 2,000 strong and 722 of these men, six percent of the total population, both black and white of the city, were native Alexandrians in Alexandria units.

Following the first encounter at Bull Run on July 21, 1861, Washington was surrounded by a cordon of field works that included Alexandria. This fortress area became a center of military operations in the eastern theater of hostilities throughout the long conflict. Alexandria served as a hospital and convalescent center for Federal troops wounded in the field.