

Andersonville National Historic Site

Coordinates: 32.1981°N 84.1289°W﻿ / ﻿32.1981°N 84.1289°W﻿ / 32.1981; -84.1289

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The **Andersonville prison**, officially known as **Camp Sumter**, was the largest Confederate military prison during the American Civil War. The site of the prison is now **Andersonville National Historic Site** in Andersonville, Georgia. Most of the site actually lies in extreme southwestern Macon County, adjacent to the east side of Andersonville. It includes the site of the Civil War prison, the Andersonville National Cemetery, and the National Prisoner of War Museum. In all, 12,913 of the approximately 45,000 Union prisoners died there because of starvation, malnutrition, diarrhea, and disease.



Reconstruction of part of the stockade wall.

Contents

- 1 Conditions
- 2 Aftermath
- 3 National Prisoner of War Museum
- 4 Andersonville National Cemetery
- 5 Historic Prison Site
- 6 See also
- 7 Notes
- 8 Bibliography
- 9 External links

Conditions

The prison originally covered about 16.5 acres (67,000 m²) of land enclosed by a 15-foot (4.6 m) high stockade. In June, 1864 it was enlarged to 26.5 acres (107,000 m²). The stockade was in the shape of a parallelogram 1,620 feet (490 m) by 779 feet (237 m). Guard towers, called pigeon roosts, were

Andersonville National Historic Site
 U.S. National Register of Historic Places
 U.S. Registered Historic District
 U.S. National Historic Site



Location: Macon / Sumter counties, Georgia, USA

Nearest city: Andersonville, Georgia, Americus, Georgia

Coordinates: 32°12′23″N 84°7′24″W﻿ / ﻿32.20639°N 84.12333°W﻿ / 32.20639; -84.12333

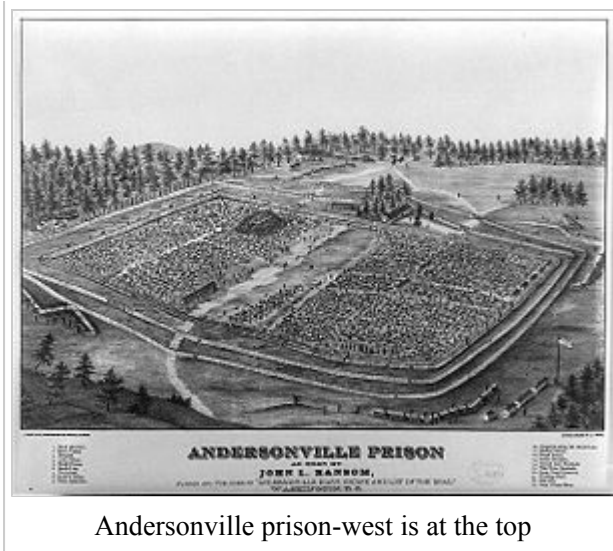
Area: 495 acres (200 ha)

Built/Founded: April 1864

Governing body: National Park Service

Added to NRHP: October 16, 1970

NRHP Reference#: 70000070^[1]



established at 30-yard (27 m) intervals. There were two entrances on the west side of the stockade, known as "north entrance" and "south entrance".^[2]

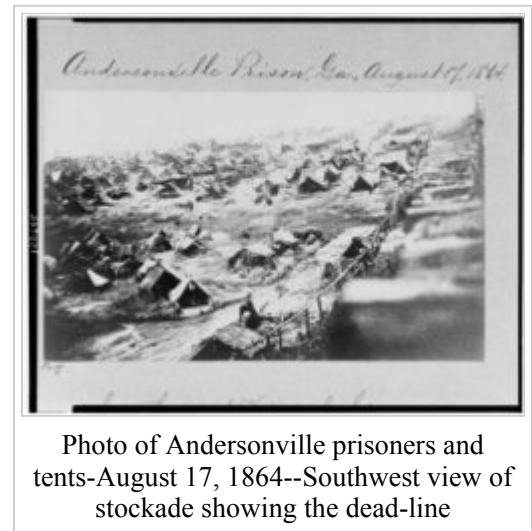
A Union soldier described his entry into the prison camp:

"As we entered the place, a spectacle met our eyes that almost froze our blood with horror, and made our hearts fail within us. Before us were forms that had once been active and erect;—*stalwart men*, now nothing but mere walking skeletons, covered with filth and vermin. Many of our men, in the heat and intensity of their feeling, exclaimed with earnestness. "Can this be hell?" "God protect us!" and all thought that He alone could bring them out alive from so terrible a place. In the center of the whole was a swamp, occupying about three or four

acres of the narrowed limits, and a part of this marshy place had been used by the prisoners as a sink, and excrement covered the ground, the scent arising from which was suffocating. The ground allotted to our ninety was near the edge of this plague-spot, and how we were to live through the warm summer weather in the midst of such fearful surroundings, was more than we cared to think of just then."^[3]

At Andersonville, a light fence known as "The Dead Line" was erected approximately 3 feet (0.9 m) inside the stockade wall to demarcate a no-man's land keeping the prisoners away from the stockade wall, which was made of rough hewn logs about 16 feet (4.9 m) long.^[4] Anyone crossing this line was shot by sentries in the pigeon roosts.

Andersonville Prison was frequently undersupplied with food. Even when sufficient quantities were available, the supplies were of poor quality and poorly prepared. During the summer of 1864, Union prisoners suffered greatly from hunger, exposure, and disease. Within seven months, about a third of them died from dysentery and scurvy and were buried in mass graves, the standard practice by Confederate prison authorities at Andersonville. Dorence Atwater, a soldier in the 2nd New York Cavalry kept a record of deaths at the camp.



The water supply from Stockade Creek became polluted when too many Union prisoners were housed by the Confederate authorities within the prison walls. Part of the creek was used as a sink and the men were forced to wash themselves in the creek. According to National Park Service officials at Andersonville, the Stockade Creek remains contaminated to this day.

The guards, disease, starvation, and exposure were not all that prisoners had to deal with. A group of prisoners, calling themselves the "Andersonville Raiders," attacked their fellow inmates to steal food, jewelry, money, and clothing. They were armed mostly with clubs, and killed to get what they wanted. Another group rose up to stop the larceny, calling themselves "Regulators." They caught nearly all of the "Raiders," who were then tried by a judge (Peter "Big Pete" McCullough) and jury selected from a group of new prisoners. This jury, upon finding the "Raiders" guilty, set punishment that included

running the gauntlet, being sent to the stocks, ball and chain, and, in six cases, hanging.^[5]

In the autumn of 1864, after the capture of Atlanta, all the prisoners who could be moved were sent to Millen, Georgia, and Florence, South Carolina. At Millen, better arrangements prevailed, and when, after General William Tecumseh Sherman began his march to the sea, the prisoners were returned to Andersonville, the conditions there were somewhat improved.



A Union soldier who survived.

During the war, 45,000 prisoners were received at Andersonville prison, and of these 12,913 died.^[6] A continuing controversy among historians is the nature of the deaths and the reasons for them, with some contending that it was deliberate Confederate war crimes toward Union prisoners and others contending that it was merely the result of disease promoted by severe overcrowding, the shortage of food in the Confederate States, the incompetence of the prison officials, and the refusal of the Confederate authorities to parole black soldiers, resulting in the imprisonment of soldiers from both sides, thus overfilling the stockade.

A young Union prisoner named Dorence Atwater had been chosen to record the names and numbers of the dead at Andersonville for the use of the Confederacy and the Federal Government after the war ended. He believed the federal government would never see the list, and was right in this assumption, as it turned out. He sat next to Henry Wirz, who was in charge of the prison pen, and secretly kept his own list among the other papers. When Atwater was released, he put the list in his bag and took it through the lines without being caught. It was published by the *New York Times* when Horace Greeley, the owner, learned that the federal government had refused and given Atwater much grief. It was Dorence Atwater's opinion that Andersonville was indeed trying to make soldiers unfit to fight.^[7]

Aftermath

After the war, Henry Wirz, commandant at Camp Sumter, was court-martialed on charges of conspiracy and murder. The trial was presided over by Union General Lew Wallace and featured chief JAG (Judge Advocate General)'s prosecutor Norton Parker Chipman. A number of former prisoners testified on conditions at Andersonville, many accusing Wirz of specific acts of cruelty. Some of these accounts have subsequently been determined by historians to have been exaggerated or false. The court also considered official correspondence from captured Confederate records, perhaps the most damaging of which was a letter to the Confederate Surgeon General by Dr. James Jones, who in 1864 was sent by Richmond to investigate conditions at Camp Sumter.^[8] Wirz presented evidence that he pleaded to Confederate authorities to try to get more



Some of the monuments at Andersonville.

food and tried to improve the conditions for the prisoners inside.

Unfortunately for Wirz, President Abraham Lincoln had recently been assassinated, so the political environment was not sympathetic. Wirz was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to death. On November 10, 1865 he was hanged. Wirz was the only Confederate official to be tried and convicted of war crimes resulting from the Civil War. The revelation of the sufferings of the prisoners was one of the factors that shaped public opinion in the Northern states regarding the South after the close of the Civil War.



Andersonville National Cemetery

In 1891 the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Georgia bought the site of Andersonville Prison from membership and subscriptions.^[9] The site was purchased by the federal government in 1910.^[10]

National Prisoner of War Museum

The National Prisoner of War Museum opened in 1998 as a memorial to all American prisoners of war. Exhibits use art, photographs, displays and video presentations to focus on the capture, living conditions, hardships, and experiences of American prisoners of war in all periods. The museum also serves as the park's visitor center.

Andersonville National Cemetery

The prisoners' burial ground at Camp Sumter has been made a national cemetery. It contains 13,714 graves, of which 921 are marked "unknown."

The cemetery is currently active as an honored burial place for present-day veterans and their dependents.

Historic Prison Site

Visitors can walk the 26.5 acre site of Camp Sumter, which has been outlined with double rows of white posts. Two sections of the stockade wall have been reconstructed, the north gate and the northeast corner.

See also

- Prisoner-of-war camp
- Camp Douglas (Chicago)
- Camp Morton
- Dix-Hill Cartel: The agreement reached in July 1862 to regulate prisoner of war exchanges.

- Elmira Prison
- Johnson's Island
- Libby Prison
- Camp Chase

Notes

1. ^ "National Register Information System". *National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service. 2008-04-15. <http://www.nr.nps.gov/>.
2. ^ Pamphlet "Andersonville", National Park Service
3. ^ Kellogg, Robert H. *Life and Death in Rebel Prisons*. Hartford, CT: L. Stebbins, 1865.
4. ^ Andersonville, *Giving Up the Ghost, A Collection of Prisoners' Diaries, Letters and Memoirs* by William Stryple
5. ^ Andersonville:Prisoner of War Camp--Reading 2
6. ^ Marvel, William, *Andersonville: The Last Depot*, University of North Carolina Press, 1994.
7. ^ Safranski, Debby Burnett, "Angel of Andersonville, Prince of Tahiti: The Extraordinary Life of Dorence Atwater," Alling-Porterfield Publishing House, 2008
8. ^ A Perfect Picture of Hell: Eyewitness Accounts by Civil War Prisoners from the 12th Iowa, copyright 2001, University of Iowa Press
9. ^ *Roster and History of the Department of Georgia (States of Georgia and South Carolina) Grand Army of the Republic*, Atlanta, Georgia: Syl. Lester & Co. Printers, 1894, 5.
10. ^ Did You Know?

Bibliography

- Chipman, Norton P. *The Horrors of Andersonville Rebel Prison* (San Francisco, 1891).
- Genoways, Ted & Hugh H. Genoways (eds.), *A Perfect Picture of Hell: Eyewitness Accounts by Civil War Prisoners from the 12th Iowa*, (Iowa City, 2001).
- Marvel, William, *Andersonville: The Last Depot*, (Chapel Hill, 1994).
- McElroy, John, *Andersonville: A Story of Rebel Military Prisons* (Toledo, 1879).
- Rhodes, James, *History of the United States*, volume v (New York, 1904), for an impartial account.
- Safranski, Debby Burnett, *Angel of Andersonville, Prince of Tahiti: The Extraordinary Life of Dorence Atwater*, (2008).
- Spencer, Ambrose, *A Narrative of Andersonville* (New York, 1866).
- Stevenson, R. Randolph, *The Southern Side, or Andersonville Prison* (Baltimore, 1876).

External links

- Andersonville National Historic Site at NPS.gov - official site
- Andersonville Civil War Prison Historical Background
- "Andersonville: Prisoner of War Camp", a National Park Service Teaching with Historic Places (TwHP) lesson plan
- Andersonville Civil War Prison

Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Andersonville_National_Historic_Site"

Categories: Historic districts in the United States | American Civil War prison camps | United States military memorials and cemeteries | National Historic Sites in Georgia (U.S. state) | Cemeteries on the National Register of Historic Places | Macon County, Georgia | Sumter County, Georgia | Georgia (U.S. state) in the American Civil War | War crimes in the United States | Defunct prisons in Georgia (U.S. state) | Museums in Georgia (U.S. state) | Military and war museums in the United States | American

Civil War museums

Hidden categories: NRHP temporary tracking category | All articles with unsourced statements | Articles with unsourced statements from July 2008

- This page was last modified on 6 June 2009 at 21:54.
- All text is available under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License. (See **Copyrights** for details.)
Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a U.S. registered 501(c)(3) tax-deductible nonprofit charity.