Staunton National Cemetery
901 Richmond Avenue
Staunton, Virginia 24401

Description

The Staunton National Cemetery, established in 1866, is located about one and one-half miles east of the Augusta County Courthouse. The site is nearly square in shape and is enclosed by a limestone wall, extending approximately 891 lineal feet. The main entrance, at the center of the south side, is protected by ornamental wrought-iron gates that are 14 feet wide and supported by stone piers. A driveway leads to the flagpole at the center of the grounds, where it intersects with another drive extending to the east and west walls. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.

The lodge was constructed circa 1871 from a design by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs, and is Second Empire in style. It is an L-shaped stone and frame structure with a mansard roof clad with aluminum siding. The main portion is one and one-half stories with dormer windows projecting from the mansard roof. The first story is built of stone and contains the living room, dining room, cemetery office, and two additions. The first addition is the brick kitchen, constructed in 1930, and the second addition is a utility room covered with aluminum siding, both containing tin roofs. The upper story, containing two bedrooms and a bath, was originally clad with slate shingles, but has since been replaced with aluminum siding. The lodge also contains a partial basement beneath the kitchen, which was constructed in 1934. In 1936, a frame enclosure was constructed over the area way at the kitchen addition to the lodge. There is a total of approximately 1,384 square feet of living space. The windows on the first story have six-over-six double-hung sash, while those on the upper story have two-over-two double-hung sash. The front porch was screened in 1939, and the kitchen porch was enclosed in 1952.

A brick utility building was constructed circa 1887, containing a kitchen, a storeroom, a tool room, and a toilet. A brick addition and garage were constructed in 1932. Stepped brick parapets obscure the building's tin shed roof.

The brick and concrete gasoline storage building, eight feet, six inches by eight feet, six inches, was constructed in 1940. It has a pyramidal slate roof. An in-ground pumphouse and well are located near the utility building.

Noted Burials

Among those buried in the cemetery is Nicolae Dunca, born in 1837, in Transylvania, Romania, who came to the United States in December 1861. He enlisted in the Union Army in March 1862 and, due to his past military experience, was appointed captain of the 12th Infantry Regiment, U.S. Volunteers from New York. He was assigned as aide-de-camp to Major General John C. Fremont, whose army was operating in the Shenandoah Valley. Dunca was killed in action at the Battle of Cross Keys on June 8, 1862, and was still a Romanian citizen at the time of his death. He was buried at Perkey's Farm, Cross Keys, Virginia, and his remains were later transferred to the Staunton National Cemetery (Section B, Grave 292).

Significant Monuments/Memorials

A monument, seven feet, six inches in height, made of an original cast-iron seacoast artillery tube, and secured by a concrete base is located near the flagpole. The inscription on the cast-bronze plaque affixed to the monument reads as follows:

UNITED STATES
NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY
STAUNTON
ESTABLISHED 1867
INTERMENTS
KNOWN 232
UNKNOWN 521

Civil War Activity in Area

Stonewall Jackson's Valley Campaign has long been regarded as one of the most brilliant in the history of modern warfare. After his outstanding performance at Bull Run, Jackson had been promoted to Major General and assigned command in the Shenandoah Valley. Jackson knew the Valley intimately, had a small and mobile force, and possessed interior lines of communication. The Valley Campaign, as he conducted it, was a military chess game; his objective not so much to defeat the enemy as to distract, confuse, check, and eventually, checkmate them. Altogether, even with the forces of Major Generals Richard S. Ewell and Edward Johnson that were added to his command, Jackson only had some 18,000 men. On May 8, 1862, crossing over at Staunton, he surprised and defeated Major General John Charles Fremont at the Battle of McDowell, less than 40 miles from Staunton. Jackson's 10,000 men were attacked by about 6,000 from Fremont's command under Brigadier General Robert C. Schenck. Jackson buried the dead and rested his army, and then fell back into the Valley. He approached Front Royal from the south and, on May 23, took Major General Nathaniel P. Banks's troops (about 800 men) by surprise and captured them. Banks retreated to Winchester where Jackson struck and scattered his forces. By early June, the two Union armies of Fremont and Brigadier General James A. Shields, with a force of 11,000 and 8,500 respectively, were pursuing Jackson southward, each along one side of the Massanutten Range,

potentially positioned for a pincer if they could join forces at the end of the mountainous divide. Jackson's plan was to keep Fremont and Shields apart, so that each could be dealt with individually by his army, which by this time had shrunk to 12,500. On June 8, Jackson parked most of Ewell's division astride the road to Port Republic near Cross Keys, southeast of Harrisonburg, to hold Fremont in check while he proceeded with his own troops four miles southeast, across the North River bridge to Port Republic. There he intended to meet and defeat Shields, then wheel back on Fremont with his combined force. The plan was well-conceived, even though it did not materialize quite the way Jackson thought it would. Fremont engaged Ewell in the terrifying artillery duel at Cross Keys on June 8. On the Confederate right, Brigadier General Isaac R. Trimble met an inept offensive with a surprise rebuff and countercharge. Fremont fell back, thus failing to join forces with Shields. Upon hearing of the success of Cross Keys, but plagued by an unanticipated incursion from Shields's advance forces as well as logistical problems while fording the rain-swollen South River, Jackson called for Ewell's troops to rejoin him. Trimble's brigade, the last of the Confederates to cross over the North River, destroyed a temporary bridge of wagons placed end to end and planked over, so that by the time Fremont's troops arrived, they were prevented from coming to the aid of Shields's struggling army. Although Trimble downplayed his slow then speeded-up withdrawal, followed by his competent firing of the North River bridge, these actions contributed enormously to Jackson's success. At the last moment, Jackson decided to cancel his option to march back to Cross Keys to re-engage Fremont. As Monday, June 9, dawned at Cross Keys, only Trimble's three forward regiments faced the Union army, the bulk of Ewell's forces having decamped at 4 a.m. To be the last to maintain the check was a consolation prize of sorts, an acknowledgment of gratitude from Jackson and Ewell for the autonomous gains of the day before. Trimble remained until 9 a.m., when he slowly retired to Port Republic.

The casualties resulting from the Battle of Cross Keys were 288 Confederates (41 killed, 232 wounded, 15 missing) and 684 Federals (114 killed, 443 wounded, 127 missing). These figures did not take into account soldiers who later died from their wounds.

The Battle of Port Republic on June 9 was fierce. Heavy casualties were inflicted on both sides as the lines of engagement wavered. The commanding Union artillery position overlooking the plain of battle was lost and retaken two times before it was captured by the Confederates and turned to their advantage. At length, the smaller Union fighting force under the command of Shields's subordinate, Brigadier General Erastus B. Tyler, who was overpowered and pursued in retreat northward toward the town of Conrad's Store (now called Elkton). The Battle of Port Republic had been a hard fight over ground that was repeatedly won and lost. Union casualties numbered more than 800; Confederate casualties were close to 1,000. After a few days' hesitation (fearing a renewed offensive by Fremont that did not materialize), Jackson allowed his victorious soldiers an extended respite until June 18, when General Robert E. Lee's Southern Command ordered him to march toward Richmond.

The Valley Campaign was over. From the date of Jackson's arrival at Staunton until the Battle of Port Republic, 35 days had passed. He marched from Staunton to McDowell, 40 miles; from McDowell to Front Royal, about 110; from Front Royal to Winchester, 20 miles; Winchester to Port Republic, 75 miles; a total of 245 miles, fighting in the meantime, four desperate battles, and winning them all. This campaign, above all others, made Jackson's name legendary.

The Battle of Piedmont took place in Staunton on June 5, 1864. Union Major General David Hunter moved his forces toward Staunton, forcing the Confederate Military Department of

Southwest Virginia to do battle at Piedmont. The Confederate forces, under Brigadier General W. E. "Grumble" Jones, were defeated. Jones was killed and Hunter's troops looted Staunton, which played a vital role in the Civil War as a supply depot for the Confederacy. The Confederates lost about 1,600 men, 1,000 of whom were taken as prisoners.