

Barrancas National Cemetery
Naval Air Station
80 Hovey Road
Pensacola, Florida 32508

Description

The Barrancas National Cemetery, established in 1868, is located within the Pensacola Naval Air Station about eight miles southwest of Pensacola, Florida, in Escambia County. The main entrance is located at the center of the south side and is protected by a double wrought-iron gate supported by concrete piers, constructed circa 1868. A second entrance with no gate is located along Duncan Road. A pedestrian gate, constructed in 1936, is located to the east of the main entrance, and an iron service gate supported by concrete piers and constructed in 1949, is situated near the southeastern corner of the cemetery near the service building. A portion of the original brick perimeter wall remains along the west side of the cemetery from Section 7 to Section 25. Wrought-iron fencing supported by concrete posts encloses the south boundary. Chain link fencing surrounds the service building. An administration building is located to the east as you enter the cemetery, and the service building is situated to the east of the administration building. The flagpole is located in front of the administration building. One committal service tent is situated in Section 36 to the north of the main entrance, and a second tent is located within the circle near Sections 40 and 41. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones, except for Section 35, which is marked with flat granite markers.



The brick administration building, containing public restrooms, was constructed in 1976. The roof is asphalt shingles.

The brick and concrete service building with a galvanized tin roof was constructed in 1949. In November 1956, one of the former restrooms was converted into a fireproof paint and oil storage room.

The 1.17-acre area designated as the "Civilian Cemetery" contains burials from the early 1800's until approximately 1934. During the early days of the navy yard, employees and their families were allowed to live on the reservation and a small community developed. Expansion of facilities from 1933-1935 necessitated the removal of those families still living there and the relocation of the graves. Relocation was completed on September 6, 1935, and no additional burials have been made since that time.



Noted Burials

A grave of interest is that of Ga-Ah, an Apache Indian who was the second wife of Apache Chief Geronimo. Geronimo was born in southern Arizona, and his Indian name was Goyathloy, meaning one who yawns. The Mexicans gave him the name Geronimo, which is Spanish for Jerome. Geronimo was perhaps the most cunning Indian fighter in American history, and rose to leadership by his extraordinary courage, determination and skill in successive raids on Mexican troops who had killed his mother, first wife, and children, in 1858. He led devastating raids in Arizona and New Mexico before the U. S. Government intervened and caused him to surrender to General George F. Crook in May 1883. Geronimo escaped and conducted further raids in both the United States and Mexico before his capture by General Nelson A. Miles in 1886. He along with his wife Ga-Ah and his followers were captured. As prisoners of war, they were removed to Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island and subsequently transferred to Mount Vernon Barracks, Alabama, north of the city of Mobile. Ga-Ah died of pneumonia on September 29, 1887, and is buried in Section 18, Grave 1496.



Also buried in the cemetery are the remains of 55 individuals from the Fort Myers area of Florida, who were casualties of the Second Seminole War which occurred in the early 1840's. They were originally buried at a cemetery associated with Forts Harvie and Myers, collectively occupied during the Second and Third Seminole Wars and the Civil War, circa 1841 to 1865. Fort Harvie was the Army's principal depot for operations in southwest Florida and was established on November 1, 1841, during the Second Seminole War, and remained active until March of 1842. Fort Myers was established in 1850 at the same location and continued to function through the Civil War years. During the Civil War, Fort Myers was manned by Union forces and became an important haven for Gulf Coast civilians who were Union sympathizers. In 1888, the 55 bodies (9 known and 46 unknown) were disinterred and reinterred in the national cemetery. All but five of the graves are located in Section 3. A native-American woman and four unknown children are buried in Section 18.

There are three Medal of Honor recipients buried in the cemetery. Their graves are marked with special markers inscribed with an enlarged gold-leafed replica of the medal of the awarding service and the words "MEDAL OF HONOR." The names and grave locations are as follows:

Stephen W. Pless - Major (then Capt.), U. S. Marine Corps, VMD-6, Mag-36, 1st Marine Aircraft Wing - Section 21, Grave 929A.

Clifford Chester Sims, Staff Sergeant, U. S. Army, Company D, 2d Battalion (Airborne), 501st Infantry, 101st Airborne Division - Section 29, Grave 546.

Clyde E. Lassen, Lieutenant, United States Navy - Section 38, Grave 113.

Significant Monuments/Memorials

U. S. Marine Guard Monument - This monument was erected on March 15, 1884, by the Marine Guard, Navy Yard, Pensacola, Florida, to the memory of comrades who died of yellow fever in 1883, and bears the names of those who were victims. The monument has a square base, pyramiding to a point 12 feet from the base.



There are two monuments, located north of the main entrance, each made of an original cast-iron sea-coast artillery tube and secured by a concrete base. Both are topped by cannonballs painted white. A bronze plaque affixed to one of these monuments is inscribed as follows:

UNITED STATES
NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY
BARRANCAS
ESTABLISHED 1867
INTERMENTS 1396
KNOWN 724
UNKNOWN 672

Civil War Activity in Area

During the period following the election of 1860 and the inauguration of President Abraham Lincoln as President of the United States on March 4, 1861, seven southern states approved ordinances of secession from the Government by the United States of America. On January 10, 1861, Florida became the third state to secede. Pensacola Bay provided the best harbor along the Gulf of Mexico. Its entrance was guarded by three United States Army forts—Fort McRae and Fort Barrancas on the land side and Fort Pickens on the western tip of Santa Rosa Island. On the day of Florida's secession from the Union, Lieutenant Adam J. Slemmer, commanding Company G of the 1st United States Artillery, spiked the guns at Fort Barrancas, blew up the ammunition at Fort McRae, and occupied Fort Pickens.

Pensacola's location on the best natural harbor on the Gulf Coast, along with her naval and civilian shipyards, made the city a valuable prize for the Confederacy. However, the Federal occupation of Fort Pickens at the western tip of Santa Rosa Island at the entrance to Pensacola Bay, nullified these advantages.

The Confederacy had been organized during the month of February 1861 in Montgomery, Alabama, and Brigadier General Braxton Bragg assumed command of the Confederate troops at Pensacola on March 11, 1861. Bragg's plans to attack Fort Pickens were upset by the arrival of Lieutenant John Worden, who was dispatched to Fort Pickens with specific orders for the landing of troops by the Navy. Worden assured Bragg that the dispatches he was carrying were only "of a pacific nature." He was allowed to proceed to Fort Pickens. A storm delayed Worden's

oral communication of orders from Secretary of the Navy Gideon Wells directing the landing of Federal reinforcements the next day, April 12, the day the Civil War actually began at Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Other events contributed to the tense atmosphere here. On April 19, Bragg declared martial law in the Pensacola area in an unsuccessful attempt to stop traffic across the bay. Officials of the Alabama and Florida Railroad expressed fear of sabotage on the wooden trestles near the Escambia River north of Pensacola. On April 20, the impetuous attempt by Lieutenant David Porter, USN, to take the USS Powhatan into Pensacola Bay was stopped when Captain Montgomery Meigs put the USS Wyandotte directly in Porter's path.

A number of actions took place in and around Pensacola Bay before the Confederates evacuated the area. While Confederates were moving a large floating drydock from the Navy Yard to Pensacola in May 1861, the towline broke and the dock drifted close to Fort Pickens near Batteries Lincoln and Cameron. Colonel Brown, commanding officer of Fort Pickens, suspected the dry dock would be used as a floating battery. He prepared to fire upon it. However, before Brown could take any action, the Confederates scuttled the dry dock. Because of Confederate endeavors to refloat the dry dock during the summer, the Federals sent a small detachment from Fort Pickens during the evening of September 2 and destroyed by fire all that remained of the dry dock above the waterline.

Upon learning that Confederate naval authorities at Pensacola were attempting to outfit the Judah as a privateer, Federal naval officers readied a plan to destroy the Judah before she could be put to sea. During the night of September 14, 1861, a Federal raiding party of about 100 sailors and marines in four small boats cast off from the USS Colorado and approached the Judah about 3:30 a.m. A small but alert Confederate force greeted the raiders with a burst of musketry. After a brief encounter, the Federals boarded the ship and set her afire. Another Federal contingent spiked a ten-inch columbiad in a nearby battery. As the sun rose, the victorious naval force returned to the Colorado, having sustained three dead and 13 wounded. The Confederate forces lost three soldiers and suffered many injuries. In retaliation for the burning of the Judah, General Bragg ordered an attack upon the Federal fortifications on Santa Rosa Island.

General Dick Anderson, under orders from General Bragg, organized an expeditionary force of just over 1,000 men to attack Fort Pickens. The operation started during the night of October 8 but, because of transportation problems, the attacking force did not leave Pensacola until nearly midnight. The steamers Ewing, Time and Neaffie, with their flotilla of barges and flats, arrived on the island at a point four miles east of Fort Pickens. After a march of some three miles through soft sand, the Confederate forces were spotted by a Federal picket just east of Brown's Camp occupied by the 6th Regiment of New York Volunteers. The quiet of the early morning was broken by a musket blast from the picket. He was quickly overrun and shot by the charging Confederate troops. The 6th New York withdrew, running westward to the batteries on the north side of the island near Fort Pickens. Many of the Southern militia got caught up in the excitement of burning and looting Brown's Camp. General Anderson reassembled his troops. He abandoned his plans for any further attack and ordered his troops to march back to their original point of debarkation. As they were boarding the steamers, flats, and barges, the well-trained Union infantry showered the Confederates with large quantities of effective musketry that caused considerable death and injury. Florida's first major land battle ended when the steamers left the island for Pensacola. The Confederates reported a loss of 18 dead, 39 wounded, and

300 missing or presumed prisoners of war. Colonel Brown stated his losses as 14 dead, 29 wounded, and 24 prisoners.

A great artillery exchange occurred during November 22 and 23, 1861, causing extensive damage to Fort McRee and the water battery close to it, as well as destruction of two thirds of the village of Warrington and many buildings about the Navy Yard, including the hospital. During the two-day bombardment, the Federals suffered very little damage to Fort Pickens or their adjacent gun batteries, but lost two men and sustained 13 wounded.

In a second brutal exchange of artillery on January 1 and 2, 1862, Federal artillery caused extensive damage to the Navy Yard and other buildings where Confederates were quartered. The powder magazine at Fort McRee exploded, making the fort totally useless.

In early 1862, Federal invasion of central and western Tennessee caused the withdrawal of about 8,000 Confederates in and near Pensacola by March 19, 1862. Colonel Thomas M. Jones protested to Richmond about abandonment of Pensacola. He was authorized by Adjutant General Samuel Cooper to use his own discretion concerning the evacuation of the city. Colonel Jones was also advised by Major General Robert E. Lee to prepare immediately to send any remaining troops to Mobile. Pensacola was not vacated at this time but, on May 7, 1862, Commander David Farragut's Federal fleet was anchored off the mouth of Mobile Bay. Colonel Jones hurriedly removed most of the artillery and military supplies. The last Confederates to leave, late on May 9, ignited fires intended to destroy the remains of the Navy Yard and other military installations. The troops at Fort Pickens, alerted by many fires on the mainland, began a heavy bombardment lasting until the dawn of May 10.

Early on May 10, 1862, acting Mayor Dr. John Brosnaham surrendered Pensacola to Lieutenant Richard Jackson, U. S. Army. During that evening, a flag-raising ceremony was held by Federal troops in Plaza Ferdinand. Pensacola played a relatively minor role during the remainder of the Civil War. The Western Gulf Squadron used the Navy Yard as an operational base. Fort Barrancas was the starting point for a number of raids into Alabama and western Florida.