

Hampton National Cemetery
Cemetery Road at Marshall Avenue
Hampton, Virginia 23667

Description

The Hampton National Cemetery, established in 1866, is located about two miles northeast of Fort Monroe in the city of Hampton. The site is an irregular shape but is basically rectilinear. The main entrance is at the center of the north end and is protected by 12-foot-wide double wrought iron gates with a four-foot-wide ornamental wrought iron pedestrian gate on each side, supported by granite posts. These gates were constructed around 1941, and are typical of that period when new entries at many national cemeteries replaced original gates that were too narrow to accommodate modern automobiles.



The cemetery is enclosed by a five-foot-high rubble granite stone wall that extends 2,952 lineal feet on the northwest and south. The east border is enclosed by a granite wall surmounted by an iron picket fence that extends about 1,050 lineal feet. A driveway extends from the main entrance to a flagpole near the center of the grounds.

An additional tract of land located approximately one-half mile northeast of the main cemetery was purchased in 1891. This area, known as the Phoebus Section, is L-shaped and contains nine burial sections. The entrance is protected by iron gates, 12 feet, 4 inches wide, supported by sandstone piers. A gate is also located at the opposite end of this section of the cemetery and is now permanently closed by chain link fencing installed between the two rusticated sandstone columns. The enclosing brick wall is approximately 3,969 lineal feet and five feet high. Sections of the enclosures once had wrought iron railings mounted on top of the brick, but they were removed in 1956 and replaced with chain link fencing. There is also a chain link service gate at the side of the maintenance building. A flagpole is located near Sections A and B. Graves in both sections of the cemetery are marked with upright marble headstones.



The lodge was constructed in 1940. In 1994, the interior was renovated for use as the administrative office for the cemetery. It is a one-and-one-half-story Georgian Revival style, brick structure containing a living room, dining room, kitchen, three bedrooms, and a bath. The Flemish-bond brick facade has two entry doors with a porthole window in between. Five concrete steps flanked by black wrought-iron railings lead to the entries. The windows are wood double-hung, six-over-six sash, with ornamental shutters. The slate gable roof has four gable dormers spaced across the front and an interior-end

chimney at either end of the lodge. The living space totals 1,392 square feet. The rear porch was originally enclosed in 1958 and renovated in 1994.

The brick and concrete utility building, 26 feet, 6 inches by 50 feet, contains two garage stalls, a workshop, a storage area, and public toilets. The hip roof has a low pitch and is clad with asbestos shingles. Located behind the lodge, the one-story building has brick quoins and six-over-six sash double hung windows. In 1994, a storage bay was added to the east end, and a staff lunch room was added to the west end.

A brick and concrete gasoline storage building, eight feet, eight inches square, was constructed in 1940. The roof is slate. It is located to the southeast of the utility building.

In the Phoebus section, an L-shaped maintenance building, constructed in 1940, is 26 feet, 6 inches by 50 feet and provides restroom facilities and equipment storage. It is a one-story brick structure with six-over-six sash double-hung windows. Its low-pitched hip roof is clad in asphalt composition shingles. The building is located at the northeast corner of the cemetery at the boundary wall.



Noted Burials

There are eight 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:

Charles Veale - Private, Company D, 4th United States Colored Troops - Civil War - Section F, Grave 5097.

Alfred B. Hilton - Sergeant, Company H, 4th United States Colored Troops - Civil War - Section E, Grave 1231.

Ruppert L. Sargent - First Lieutenant, U.S. Army, Company B, 4th Battalion, 9th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division - Vietnam Conflict - Section F1, Grave 7596.

John Davis - Ordinary Seaman, U.S. Navy - Phoebus Section, Section B, Grave 9534.

David Warren – Coxswain, U.S. Navy – Civil War - Phoebus Section, Section B, Grave 7972.

Harry J. Mandy - First Lieutenant, Company B, 4th New York Cavalry - Civil War - Phoebus Section, Section C, Grave 8709.

James R. Garrison - Coal Heaver, U.S. Navy - Civil War - Phoebus Section, Section B, Grave 9523.

Michael Cassidy - Landsman, U.S. Navy, Civil War - Phoebus Section, Section B, Grave 9503.

Significant Monuments/Memorials

Union Soldiers Monument - A Quincy granite obelisk monument, base 19 feet, 6 inches by 19 feet, 6 inches, 65 feet in height, was erected under the direction of Colonel A. P. Blunt, U.S.A., Colonel James S. Casey, U.S.A., and Mr. James Marshall. Assistance was provided by Miss Dorothea Lynde Dix of New York, who was superintendent of women nurses for the Union Army during the Civil War. The cost was \$12,000, most of which was obtained by private subscriptions. The monument is located between Sections B and D on axis with the entry. The inscription reads: "In Memory of Union Soldiers Who Died to Maintain the Laws." On May 12, 1868, the ownership of the monument was transferred by Miss Dix to the United States and was accepted by the Secretary of War. The government paid \$4,949 to Miss Dix for transportation, materials, erection, insurance, etc. Miss Dix was authorized by Secretary of War Simon Cameron on May 29, 1861, to organize and establish military hospitals. Her work in the wartime hospitals was but one aspect of a lifelong career devoted to humanitarian causes. Her continuing and strenuous campaigns for better treatment of paupers, prisoners, and the insane, were among the most worthwhile of her accomplishments and resulted in remedial legislation for the relief and treatment of these persons.



Two monuments, plain blocks, built of Quincy granite, 41 inches by 28 inches by 18 inches are located at the beginning of both Sections D and E, where 272 members of the armies of the Confederacy are buried. Both monuments are inscribed: TO OUR CONFEDERATE DEAD.

Civil War Activity in Area

The cemetery is located approximately two miles from Fort Monroe, Virginia, a base of important operations and the scene of stirring events during the Civil War. It was the most powerful enclosed fortification in this country. Situated on the tip of Old Point Comfort, it controlled the entrance to Hampton Roads, making it possible for the fort, with the help of the United States Navy, to cut off from the sea five southern ports; namely, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Petersburg, and Richmond. Immediately after the fall of Fort Sumter on April 14, 1861, the War Department began to rush troops to Fort Monroe by boat, which was the only means of communication open. By its prompt and decisive action in reinforcing Fort Monroe, the United States assured for itself an impregnable base for the organization of military and naval operations in the very heart of the Confederacy.

The first notable land battle of the Civil War, the Battle of Big Bethel, was fought on June 10, 1861, among 2,500 Federals from Fort Monroe and 1,200 Confederates. On June 9, word was received of a Confederate outpost at Little Bethel, about eight miles northwest of Fort Monroe. One column of troops was sent from Camp Hamilton and another column from Newport News with orders to converge near Little Bethel, which they were to attack at daybreak. By some confusion, the men from Newport News fired upon the men from Camp Hamilton, killing and

wounding a number. Alerted by this gunfire, the Confederates at Little Bethel fell back to a strong battery at Big Bethel. When the Union forces pushed on, they were met by a devastating fire, which drove them back in confusion. The Union losses were: 18 killed, 53 wounded, and 5 missing; the Confederate losses were slight: 1 killed, 7 wounded. The lone Confederate killed was Private Henry L. Wyatt, First North Carolina Volunteers. Among those killed on the Union side was Lieutenant John T. Greble of the Second U.S. Artillery, the first West Point graduate to die in battle in the Civil War. Also killed was Major Theodore Winthrop, U.S. Volunteers, a writer whose books continued to be read for some years after his death.

The town of Hampton, which was about three miles from Fort Monroe, had been occupied on July 1, 1861. After the First Battle of Bull Run later that month, the War Department transferred three regiments from Fort Monroe to the Washington area. With the garrison again weakened, Major General Benjamin F. Butler ordered the evacuation of Hampton. The Confederates, led by Brigadier General John B. Magruder, seized this opportunity to set fire to the town on August 7, 1861, to prevent its reoccupation by the Union forces. Magruder said he had learned that Butler intended to use the village as a holding point for "runaway slaves" whom he considered as "contraband of war." The town, which dated from 1610, was almost entirely destroyed.

In July 1861, the untrained Union Army of the Potomac suffered disaster at Manassas (Bull Run) in the first attempt to invade Virginia and capture Richmond. President Lincoln then appointed Major General George B. McClellan the new commander of the demoralized Union Army of the Potomac. During the long winter months, the raw recruits were marshaled and drilled into an efficient fighting machine of over 100,000 men, the largest army ever commanded by one man in the history of the western hemisphere. By the spring of 1862, this army was ready for the supreme test—the goal was Richmond. Instead of marching overland, McClellan decided to take advantage of Union control of the inland waters and transport his army, with its vast supplies and material, down the Potomac River and across Chesapeake Bay to the tip of the peninsula between the York and James Rivers. Then with his supply ships steaming up the York, he planned to march northwestward up the peninsula, join another force under Major General Irvin McDowell marching overland from Washington, and together, converge on Richmond. To accomplish this, McClellan undertook the largest amphibious operation ever attempted in the western world. Over 400 steam vessels, brigs, schooners, sloops, ferry boats, and barges assembled on the Potomac River. In March 1862, these vessels ferried the Army of the Potomac, with its 3,600 wagons, 700 ambulances, 300 pieces of artillery, 2,500 head of cattle, and over 25,000 horses and mules, to the southeast coast of Virginia.

McClellan arrived at Fort Monroe on April 2, 1862. Information was received that Yorktown was already being reinforced from Norfolk, and it was learned that the main Confederate army would promptly follow the same course. McClellan was determined to move at once with the current force and try to seize a point—near the Halfway House—between Yorktown and Williamsburg, where the Peninsula is reduced to a narrow neck, and thus cut off the retreat of the Yorktown garrison and prevent the arrival of reinforcements. On April 4, he began a snail-like advance up the Peninsula toward Yorktown. Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston withdrew from Yorktown to Williamsburg and there, on May 5, the blue and the gray locked in battle. Although McClellan claimed a victory, his losses were 50 percent higher than Johnston's. Lieutenant General James Longstreet and Lieutenant General Daniel Harvey Hill led their Confederates well in the rearguard action that brought on more casualties than would have been expected for

this type of fighting. Federal troops occupied Williamsburg and Johnston continued his retreat towards Richmond.

On March 8, 1862, the Confederate ironclad Merrimack (Virginia) had steamed out of the Elizabeth River (Norfolk) under command of Flag Officer Franklin Buchanan and created havoc among the Federal fleet. Her opponents were mostly wooden ships that could not withstand a ram from the Merrimack or the weight of her guns. After a time, the ironclad returned to Norfolk the victor. The U.S.S. Monitor had arrived during the night and the next morning the two pounded one another savagely for four hours on the waters of Hampton Roads. Neither won the contest.

On May 6, McClellan sent Brigadier General William B. Franklin's division up the York River by transport to West Point, terminus of the Richmond and York River Railroad. Johnston anticipated the move, however, and on May 7 ordered Brigadier General W. H. C. Whiting's troops to attack Franklin in the Battle of West Point, or Eltham's Landing. Some 20 schooners had been sunk and two gunboats burned by the Confederates above West Point. The Seven Days battles outside Richmond then began on June 25, 1862.

After the siege of Yorktown began on April 5, 1862, Commodore Louis M. Goldsborough, commanding the Union fleet in Hampton Roads, felt that his first duty was to destroy the Merrimack or, at the very least, prevent her from running out into Chesapeake Bay and up to Washington. Weeks dragged by with the Union fleet immobilized in Hampton Roads, watching the Merrimack. The naval deadlock in Hampton Roads was so serious that President Lincoln made a special trip to Fort Monroe, arriving May 6, 1862. In conference with Commodore Goldsborough and Major General John E. Wool, commanding Fort Monroe, it was decided that the only way to eliminate the Merrimack from the situation was to capture the City of Norfolk which was the Merrimack's base. On May 8, the Union fleet, assisted by the rifled guns on Fort Wool, bombarded the Confederate batteries on Sewall's Point to prepare for a landing. However, this projected landing was thwarted when the Merrimack steamed out from behind Sewall's Point and placed herself before the batteries. It was clear that a landing must be made at a place where the Merrimack could not interfere. Ocean View on the Chesapeake Bay shore was selected for the landing. Troops were landed at Ocean View on May 9, 1862, and advanced overland to Norfolk where they were met by the mayor who formally surrendered the city to Major General John E. Wool on May 10, 1862. The Navy Yard in nearby Portsmouth was found in flames, fired by the Confederates just before they evacuated Norfolk. On May 11, the Merrimack was blown up by her crew off Craney Island to prevent capture. The Monitor did not long survive her Confederate antagonist. She sank in a storm off Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, on December 31, 1862. The Battle of the Monitor and Merrimack was the first battle of ironclad warships.

The Siege of Suffolk, Virginia, took place from February to May 1863, about 20 miles southwest of Norfolk. The town was occupied by a Union garrison of 7,000 men, and these Union forces threw up a strong system of fortifications around Suffolk. Numerous expeditions were sent out to harass the Confederates in the region of the Blackwater River. Early in February 1863, the 9th Corps was transferred from the Army of the Potomac to Newport News, as a diversionary maneuver. The Confederates were led to believe that an important movement against Richmond, by way of Suffolk, was in the making. Lieutenant General James Longstreet was detached from General Robert E. Lee's army in Northern Virginia to meet the supposed threat. Advancing from the Blackwater River, Longstreet attacked Suffolk on April 11, 1863, but being

repulsed, he resumed his siege. The fighting was fierce and deeds of daring were performed on both sides. On April 14, batteries erected by the Confederates on the banks of the Nansemond River made a heavy attack on Union gunboats. The Union forces retaliated by making a combined land and water attack on Battery Huger at the mouth of the West Branch, which resulted in its capture on May 14. On May 4, after a siege of 24 days, Longstreet withdrew to join General Lee in Northern Virginia. The heavy fighting resulted in the U.S.S. Mount Washington being disabled and grounded. She was brought off by the U.S.S. Stepping Stones. It is stated that the Confederates suffered 500 killed and wounded and 400 captured. The Union losses are given as 44 killed and 202 wounded.

The Hampton Roads Peace Conference took place aboard the steamer River Queen under the guns of Fort Monroe on February 3, 1865. There were important elements in the North who felt that the war, so costly in blood and treasure, might be shortened by a peace conference. There were also some people in the South who thought that concessions might be obtained before the Confederacy went down in utter defeat. A persistent peace advocate in the North was the elder statesman Francis P. Blair of Missouri. In the last days of 1864, he obtained a pass from President Abraham Lincoln to go to Richmond, Virginia, capital of the Confederate States of America. From the Confederate president, Jefferson Davis, Blair obtained a promise to send peace commissioners. The Confederates were represented by Alexander H. Stephens, their vice president; Robert M. T. Hunter, presiding officer of the Confederate Senate; and John A. Campbell, Assistant Secretary of War; all appointed by Davis. The U.S. Government was represented by President Abraham Lincoln and his Secretary of State, William H. Seward. After four hours of fruitless discussion, the conference was ended and the Confederate commissioners were rowed back to their ship. Lincoln returned to Washington on the River Queen.

The great civil conflict brought about the inevitable toll of wounded, and the sick necessitated the establishment of many military hospitals. One such hospital was the Hampton Military Hospital at Fort Monroe, Virginia, which had a capacity of 1,800 beds. This hospital, though better staffed and organized than some of the Civil War facilities, nonetheless had a high death rate among the wounded and ill who were committed to its care. Land set aside for a cemetery for this hospital became the nucleus of the present day Hampton National Cemetery.

According to a write-up in the files of the Historic Preservation Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs, an article in Harper's New Monthly Magazine for August 1864, describes in some detail the procedure followed for the burial of those who died in the Hampton Military Hospital. The dead were accorded reverent burial in wooden coffins. The name, company, and date of death of each individual were painted on the inside and outside each coffin lid and the grave was identified by a wooden headboard similarly marked. All burials from the hospital were accorded suitable military honors with the firing of a volley over the grave at the conclusion of the burial rites. The care and attention to details incident to burials from the Hampton Military Hospital must account for the relatively small number of burials of unknowns in the Hampton National Cemetery.