

Little Rock National Cemetery
2523 Confederate Boulevard
Little Rock, Arkansas 72206

Description

The Little Rock National Cemetery, established in 1868, is located two miles southeast of the State Capitol in Little Rock in Pulaski County. The main entrance is on Confederate Boulevard at the center of the east side and is protected by a double iron gate, with a pedestrian gate on each side. There is an additional double iron gate entrance on the south side at East 26th Street. The cemetery was originally enclosed by a three-foot-high fieldstone wall constructed in 1869. In 1921 and 1929, portions of this wall were replaced by iron fencing. Later, additional sections on the north bound-



ary were replaced by chain link fencing. A 644-foot section of wall on the southeast boundary and the wall along the north boundary are the only portions of the original perimeter wall that remain. The Oakland Cemetery, a city-owned cemetery, is located adjacent to the national cemetery near the northeast corner. The main entry road of the national cemetery extends approximately one-half the length of the cemetery ending at a circle where the flagpole is located. The administration building is located south of the main entrance roadway, and the service building is directly behind the administration building. A committal service shelter is situated to the north of the main entrance. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones, except for Section 15A, which is marked with flat granite markers.

A brick administration building with public restrooms was constructed in 1996.

The brick and concrete utility building was constructed in 1950. The roof is asphalt shingles. There are four service bays and public restrooms in the building. There is a brick wall, approximately four feet in height, along with wooden fencing, shielding the service area from the cemetery proper. The wall was constructed circa 1938.

A stucco committal service shelter, located to the north of the main entrance, was constructed in June 1996.

A brick and cement square rostrum, 14 feet, 6 inches square, with an asphalt shingle roof is located in the Confederate section. New concrete steps were built in 1925. The exact date of construction is unknown, but affixed to the rostrum is a plaque dated 1907, which reads:

STOOP ANGELS HITHER FROM THE SKIES
THERE IS NO HOLIER SPOT OF GROUND
THAN WHERE DEFEATED VALOR LIES,
BY MOURNING BEAUTY CROWDED

A second plaque affixed to the monument reads:

ERECTED BY MEMORIAL CHAPTER
UNITED DAUGHTERS
OF THE
CONFEDERACY

This rostrum is used once a year during ceremonies on Confederate Memorial Day.



Significant Monuments/Memorials



Confederate Monument - Located in the Confederate Section behind the utility building and erected in 1884 by the Trustees of Mount Holly Cemetery, from where the remains of 640 Confederate soldiers were moved and reinterred in the national cemetery.

Minnesota Monument - This monument, located in Section I, was created by John K. Daniels, a sculptor from St. Paul, Minnesota. Daniels, a native of Norway, was a highly acclaimed artist who was noted for the versatility and spirituality of his work. He had won numerous awards and had been decorated by the King of Norway. He was selected by the Minnesota Monument Commission, a commission established by an act of the Minnesota State Legislature in 1913 to organize the construction of memorials honoring Minnesota soldiers of the Civil War who were buried in national cemeteries in several southern states. The monument depicts a Union soldier standing bare-headed with his head slightly bowed. The figure's hands rest atop the butt of his rifle, which is inverted with the barrel resting on the ground before him. His cap is held in his proper right hand and rests against his proper left shoulder. He is dressed in a rain slicker, which billows out behind him. The base, 106 inches by 95 inches by 95 inches, is made of Minnesota granite. The sculpture is made of bronze.

The monument was officially dedicated on September 22, 1916, with a ceremony that featured dignitaries and veterans from both Minnesota and Arkansas. Governor J.A. Burnquist of Minnesota and General Christopher Andrews, commander of the Minnesota troops in Arkansas and chairman of the monument committee, were among the speakers.

Civil War Activity in Area

The Civil War dramatically altered the course of the future of the city of Little Rock. Confederate leaders in Arkansas had long feared that the fall of Vicksburg would have dire consequences for the capital. These fears proved to be well founded. General



Ulysses S. Grant's capture of the Confederate stronghold freed thousands of Union troops for other campaigns, including the re-establishment of Federal control in Arkansas. Before the month of July 1863 was out, Major General Frederick Steele had arrived at Helena to take command of all Federal forces in the state. Steele's superiors recognized that control of the Arkansas River was necessary to secure Missouri and northern Arkansas against future Rebel incursions and to serve as a base for operations against the rest of the state. In Little Rock, Lieutenant General Theophilus Holmes had become ill following the debacle at Helena, and responsibility for the defense of the city had passed to Major General Sterling Price. Price set about devising a plan for the capital's defense.

On August 10 and 11, Steele sent his 6,000 infantry, backed by 16 pieces of artillery, west from Helena toward Clarendon on the White River. There he would rendezvous with a like number of cavalry moving south from Missouri under Brigadier General John Davidson. Davidson reached Clarendon on August 8. By the time Steele arrived on the 17th, he had already encountered an enemy more troubling than the Rebels—disease. More than a thousand of his troops were sick. He made plans to move the base of his operations up river to the higher and allegedly healthier ground at DeValls Bluff, and he sent Davidson across the river to find the rebels. On August 23, Price ordered John S. Marmaduke to join forces with L. M. Walker at Brownsville, along a major approach to Little Rock. At sunrise on August 25, advance elements of Davidson's cavalry collided with Marmaduke's 1,300 horsemen near Brownsville. Outnumbered four to one in men and eight to one in artillery, Marmaduke could not hope to defeat the Federals, but the Missourian gave ground grudgingly before retiring from the field. He formed a new battle line six miles west of the town, and there he temporarily halted the Union advance. On August 26, Price ordered Walker and Marmaduke to withdraw to Bayou Meto, a sluggish stream running east of the capital, and to "hold it as long as possible." Their combined forces took up positions at Reed's Bridge on Bayou Meto, approximately 12 miles northeast of Little Rock.

They did not have to wait on the Federals for long. Around noon on August 27, Davidson's cavalry drove the Rebel pickets across Bayou Meto and attempted to seize the bridge, but the Confederates had prepared to burn the bridge and, as the northern cavalry advanced, the Rebels set it afire. Union troops came dashing down toward the bridge (which was now burning) and the bayou. Suddenly, artillery and small arms fire opened upon them with deadly effect and they retreated. Soon the enemy formed their line, brought up their artillery, and the fight continued until sunset, when the enemy, failing to occupy the river, retired after a heavy loss, leaving a number of their dead on the ground. That night the Confederates were ordered to withdraw to within five miles of Little Rock.

On September 2, Steele arrived at Brownsville with his infantry to join Davidson's force. Reinforcements had brought his total strength to nearly 14,500 men. He spent the next three days gathering information, then resumed his advance on September 6, moving south along Bayou Meto and crossing it at Shallow Ford. On the 7th, he reached the Arkansas River near Ashley's Mill. Here, Davidson's cavalry, in advance of the main force, skirmished sharply with Confederate cavalry under Robert C. Newton. Steele used the last two days of September 8 and 9 to scout, bring up his supplies, and finalize his plans for the attack.

Price had issued an appeal to the citizens of Little Rock that urged every able-bodied man to arms. Neither the appeal to honor nor the threat of arrest produced results. Steele, meanwhile, was preparing to send Davidson's cavalry across the river at a place called Terry's

Ferry. Construction of a pontoon bridge was begun on September 9th and finished on the morning of the 10th. A Confederate battery of four guns attempted to contest the crossing but was driven off by 20 Federal cannons. By 11 a.m., Davidson had all three brigades across the river and was moving toward Little Rock along the south bank. Steele led his infantry toward the city along the north bank. He had hoped that Davidson's flanking movement would force Price to weaken or abandon his fortified position on the north shore, and he was not disappointed. At 11 a.m., the Confederate commander began to withdraw his men from their entrenchments and to cross them back into Little Rock on pontoon bridges. He then began to evacuate the city, his troops falling back toward Arkadelphia.

South of the river, Confederate forces under Marmaduke fell back toward the capital, skirmishing with the advancing Federals as they went. Along Fourche Bayou, about five miles from the city, they made a stand. The fierce Rebel resistance brought Davidson's advance to a standstill, but fire from Steele's artillery across the river came to the rescue. The engagement at Fourche Bayou cost the Federals seven killed and 64 wounded and gave Price time to evacuate the capital. The last Confederate defenders rode out of town about 5 p.m., with the Federal cavalry entering just behind them. At 7 p.m., Little Rock's civil authorities formally surrendered the city.

The Federal campaign against Little Rock lasted 40 days and cost 137 casualties (18 killed, 118 wounded, 1 missing). Incomplete Confederate reports listed 64 casualties. Price had managed to evacuate his army and a large portion of his supplies to Arkadelphia, but the Little Rock arsenal, with 3,000 pounds of powder and a considerable quantity of cartridges, fell into Union hands.