

New Bern National Cemetery
1711 National Avenue
New Bern, North Carolina 28560

Description

The New Bern National Cemetery, established in 1867, is located in Craven County. Situated in a residential neighborhood, the rectangular-shaped cemetery is on nearly eight acres of largely flat grassy land, situated on a northeast/southwest axis. The main entrance is off of the east boundary as defined by National Avenue and is centered on that boundary. The acreage is defined by a three-foot-high brick wall, constructed in 1874. Behind the wrought iron gates, installed in 1939, a paved drive carries westward to a cul-de-sac at the west boundary. The site is divided into rectangular burial sections running on a northwest-southeast alignment. The cemetery is shaded by numerous mature deciduous trees. The cemetery lodge and support buildings are located adjacent to the main entrance on the south side of the drive. An iron, brick, and oyster shell stone rostrum is located in the northeast corner of the cemetery. There are several large stone monuments scattered throughout the cemetery which have been erected by state societies to honor Civil War veterans. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.



The lodge, constructed in June 1916 of wood frame and stone, is two stories and contains six rooms. The roof is asphalt shingles. Aluminum siding was installed on September 3, 1960. There is a partial basement, and an office is maintained on the first floor. The entire second story was remodeled in 1932 to add a bedroom, alcove, and bath. There is a roof over the entry on the northeast side of the lodge. The dormer has a sheet copper roof. The windows are double-hung.

The brick and concrete utility building, 48 feet, 4 inches by 20 feet, 4 inches, containing public rest rooms, was constructed in 1932. The roof is asphalt shingles. An addition to the building containing a garage was completed in 1949 and is now used for equipment storage. The windows are single frame, three-over-three on one side (six-over-six on the opposite side).

The iron, brick and shell stone octagonal rostrum, from which memorial and other patriotic ceremonies are conducted, was constructed sometime before 1893, and resembles a bandstand. The rostrum was originally embellished with an ornamental pagoda-style roof supported by cast-iron arches. The roof and arches were removed in 1946.



Noted Burials

The first woman to be buried in the cemetery was Miss Carrie E. Cutter, a sweetheart of Charles E. Coledge, a private of the 25th Massachusetts Regiment, who was very ill with yellow fever. Despite her efforts to care for Coledge, he died. So brokenhearted and exhausted, she too became an easy victim of yellow fever. Her only wish was that she could be buried next to her lover. Special permission was granted by Congress and their graves are located side by side in Section 10. His remains are buried in Grave 1697 and hers in Grave 1698.

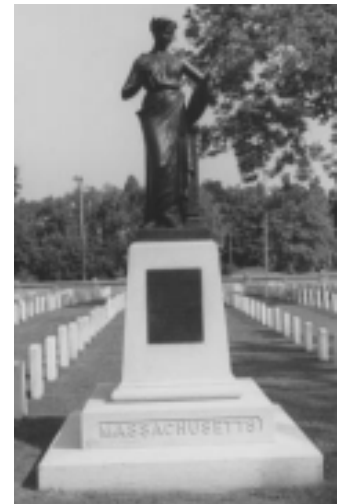
Significant Monuments/Memorials

Connecticut Monument - Erected in 1908 by the state of Connecticut, constructed of gray granite stone. Part of the sculpture includes a flag draping the monument.



Rhode Island Monument - Erected in 1906 by the state of Rhode Island, constructed of red granite stone with a bronze statue of a woman, 5 feet, 3 inches in height, with one hand extended as if blessing or bearing no arms, and holding a wreath in her other hand.

Massachusetts Monument - Erected in 1908 by the commonwealth of Massachusetts, constructed of gray granite with a copper statue, 5 feet, 3 inches in height, (a woman writing on a shield).



New Jersey Monument - Erected in 1905 by the state of New Jersey, constructed of gray granite, depicting an enlisted man at parade rest. He sports a mustache, and he wears his field hat at just the slightest tilt. In 1905, Governor E. C. Stokes of New Jersey, his staff, and approximately 100 Union veterans came by train to dedicate this monument. The Governor of North Carolina, Governor Robert B. Glenn, his staff, Confederate veterans, citizens of New Bern, and members of the Daughters of the Confederacy attended the dedication ceremony. After an informal reception, a massive parade formed on Broad Street and a procession began to the national cemetery. Upon arrival, 5,000 people

were assembled to witness the ceremony. On signal, four women (two from New Jersey and two from New Bern) unveiled the monument.

Civil War Activity in Area

New Bern served as one of the major outposts for the Union Army and as a fortified garrison in the midst of enemy territory. The town was occupied by the Union troops from 1862-1865 when the Civil War ended. Several large camps for Union regiments had developed around

the communities of New Bern that housed many of the Union soldiers. These camps also provided protection in the perimeter of New Bern, where some of the ranking commanders had established their living quarters.

There were two events in the New Bern area during the Civil War. The Battle of New Bern took place in early 1862, and a demonstration on New Bern occurred in 1863. An attack on the city was planned in early 1864, but never materialized.

Battle of New Bern

Federal plans for a strike at the North Carolina coast were made in the fall of 1861. Brigadier General Ambrose E. Burnside was chosen to command an amphibious army division to be composed of New England men "adapted to coast service." He was authorized to raise 15 regiments and was given unlimited funds for equipment; thereby, the first major amphibious force in United States history was born. While his troops were being assembled at Annapolis, Maryland, Burnside labored in New York to secure transports. He had to settle for a "motley fleet." The vessels were ordered to rendezvous at Fortress Monroe in Virginia. The transports on their way down were to stop at Annapolis and take on board the troops assembled there. The ships finally arrived at Annapolis on January 4, 1862. Burnside started embarking his troops on that date. On January 7, General George B. McClellan, general-in-chief of the Federal armies, sent from Washington the official orders for the campaign. Burnside organized his forces into three brigades and placed Brigadier Generals John G. Foster, Jesse L. Reno, and John G. Parke in command. On the morning of January 9, aware of the role he was playing, Burnside gave the order for his transports to get underway. The soldiers did not know their destination. Ship captains were even given sealed orders to be opened at sea. They went to sea on the night of January 11, Rear Admiral Louis M. Goldsborough commanding the naval vessels in the expedition. Most of the vessels had little difficulty getting over the outer bar at Hatteras Inlet but getting across the shallow shoals and into Pamlico Sound was difficult. For almost two weeks, Hatteras was lashed by one storm after another. The violent storms of mid-January cost Burnside several of his ships. Losses included the Louisiana, City of New York, Grapeshot, Zouave, and Pocahontas, the latter with one hundred horses aboard. From aboard the Picket, Burnside superintended his fleet of transports, performing all of the duties of a harbor master. To the relief of both Goldsborough and Burnside, the weather cleared on the 26th, and by February 4, the entire fleet was safely anchored in the sound. In a matter of seven days, the Burnside-Goldsborough command had captured Roanoke Island, occupied two coastal towns, blocked up a vital canal, and destroyed the Confederate navy in the sounds.



Part 2 of the Burnside expedition was the Battle of New Bern. Confederate General L. O. Branch had approximately 4,000 untried troops, not nearly enough to man the elaborate set of defenses below the city. Branch had arrived at New Bern in November 1861. Since most fortifications had been constructed before his arrival, it took him six weeks to make the necessary changes to contract them. He was greatly hampered in this work by a scarcity of implements, tools, and Negro labor. He was still able to strengthen the fortification he intended to hold. The

line over which the battle was to be fought began with Fort Thompson, a 13-gun sod installation anchored on the Neuse, about six miles below New Bern. From Fort Thompson, the Confederate line stretched westward for approximately one mile to the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad. General Branch found it necessary to shorten his lines because of his small force. This readjustment left an unprotected gap of 150 yards in the defenses at Wood's brickyard along the railroad. In early March, the New Bern defenses were inspected by General Richard C. Gatlin and a board of officers who concurred in General Branch's decision to defend only the Fort Thompson line, provided the brickyard was protected. On March 11, General Burnside completed the embarkation of his approximately 11,000 troops at Roanoke Island and set sail for Hatteras. Admiral Goldsborough received orders to proceed at once to Hampton Roads and turned over command of the North Carolina sounds to Commander Stephen C. Rowan. Under its new commander, the Federal fleet continued a course toward the North Carolina mainland. By 9 p.m., the fleet had come to anchor off the mouth of Slocum Creek, about 12 miles below New Bern by water and 17 by land. The arrival of the Federal fleet was signaled to the Confederate outposts up and down the river by means of large bonfires. At daybreak on March 13, Federal gunboats commenced a bombardment of the shore at Slocum's Creek in preparation for the disembarkation of troops. The shelling was unnecessary, as no Confederates were in the immediate area. General Burnside then landed his troops.

Once on the mainland, they started a miry journey towards New Bern. General Burnside was ready to take the offensive on the morning of March 14. For the advance, Burnside divided his force into three columns. General Foster commanded on the right between the river and the railroad, General Reno on the left of the railroad, and General Parke in reserve along the railroad, ready to aid either column. Without waiting for General Reno to get into position, Foster made contact with the Confederate left and was greeted with a shell from Latham's Battery. The fight then began "in earnest" at about 8 a.m. From their breastworks Confederate infantrymen opened an "incessant" and "severe" fire. Commander Rowan knew that he was endangering the lives of men in his own army; yet he kept up heavy fire. His offense stymied, Foster called up reserves. Withering fire could not break the Confederate line. As a consequence, the Federal offensive on the right came to a standstill. On the left General Reno also encountered great difficulties but his lead regiment, the 21st Massachusetts, discovered the break in the Confederate line at the brick kiln. General Branch had ordered two heavy guns into position to cover this fatal exposure, but the pieces were not in place when the fight started. No Confederates were on Reno's immediate front for Colonel Zebulon B. Vance's line did not extend to the railroad. Seizing the opportunity to flank the Confederate line, Reno formed the 21st Massachusetts at right angles to his line of march and personally led four of its companies in a charge across the railroad against the militia. Upon seeing the enemy on their flank, the militiamen were seized with panic and part of them broke ranks. Colonel H. J. B. Clark of the militia ordered a retreat.

The flight of the militiamen exposed the right flank of Colonel J. Sinclair's 35th North Carolina. Colonel R. D. Campbell ordered the 35th out of the breastworks but, according to Campbell, Sinclair failed to form his men and left the field in confusion. Before General Reno could lead the rest of his regiment across the railroad, Major A. B. Carmichael commanding Vance's left, opened up a deliberate fire. General Branch, meanwhile, ordered Colonel C. M. Avery's regiment of reserves to the support of Vance's 26th North Carolina and to seal up the break in the line. Four of Avery's companies under Major Gaston Lewis repulsed the enemy time and again, and twice charged them with detachments of companies and each time made them flee. The destructive fire of Lewis and Avery prevented General Reno from throwing more troops

across the railroad and forced him to hurry his other regiments into line on Vance's front. This left the four companies of the 21st Massachusetts under Lieutenant Colonel W. S. Clark alone behind the Confederate line. Facing his 200 men toward Fort Thompson, he gave the command "charge bayonets" and in a matter of minutes two guns of Brem's Battery were in Federal hands. By this time, Colonel Campbell had taken the 7th North Carolina out of the breastworks and ordered it to charge Clark's advancing column. The order was successfully carried out, with the New Englanders beating a hasty retreat to the railroad.

The Confederate front was later restored. It was after 11 a.m. and the battle had been raging since eight. The right and left of the Confederate line were still intact, but the unfortified center was seriously menaced by the flight of the militia and the 35th. General Branch decided his next priority was to secure the retreat. Orders to retire across the Trent River bridge were dispatched to Colonels Avery and Vance. Unfortunately, the couriers never delivered the messages and Colonel Avery and 200 of his men were captured. The remainder of Avery's command under Colonel Robert F. Hoke made it safely to the west bank of Brice's Creek. Colonel Vance, with the 26th North Carolina fled across the swamp to his right to escape capture. The remaining North Carolina regiments withdrew across the Trent River bridge into New Bern. Every man struck out for the bridge. Once across, some soldiers did not stop running until they had climbed aboard a west bound train just pulling out of the New Bern depot. The bridge over the Trent, already prepared for destruction, was set on fire as the last of Branch's command passed over. Realizing that it would be impossible to hold New Bern, General Branch directed all the officers he could find to conduct the remnants of the army to the rail depot at Tuscarora. There arrangements could be made for their transportation to Kinston. By this time parts of New Bern were aflame. There is little reason to think that General Branch ordered the town fired. In his official report he stated that New Bern was "in flames in many places" when he arrived from the battlefield. Adjutant James A. Graham of the 27th North Carolina wrote his mother soon after the battle, "We saw we could not hold it and therefore set the town on fire and retreated to this place (Kinston)." From the statements of Branch and Graham, it can be assumed that New Bern was burned by the retreating Confederate soldiers who acted on their own initiative, not on orders from their commanding general. The fires fortunately did comparatively little damage.

New Bern, in the meantime, had been occupied by the victorious Federal army. During the afternoon of the fourteenth, the soldiers were ferried across the Trent River to take possession of their prize. General Burnside selected a stately home in New Bern for his headquarters, but when an aide went to get the home in order, he found it in the process of being plundered by soldiers, sailors, and Negroes. To halt the pillaging in New Bern, General Burnside brought a strong garrison into town and made guards available for those who wanted protection.

The loss of New Bern, regardless of the cause, was a great blow to North Carolina. It did result, however, in the Confederate officials' reevaluating the state scene. To prevent a Federal push into the interior, Confederate troops were rushed into North Carolina from Virginia. North Carolina's defenses were strengthened further by a change in high command. General Richard C. Gatlin was relieved from duty and President Jefferson Davis gave the post to Major General Theophilus H. Holmes, North Carolina's ranking general in the Confederacy.

Demonstration of New Bern

On February 25, 1863, Lieutenant General James Longstreet replaced Major General Gustavus Smith as commander of the Departments of Virginia and North Carolina. It was his intention to protect the supply lines in eastern North Carolina and at the same time gather provisions from that fertile region. In pursuit of this plan, General D. H. Hill, Longstreet's subordinate in North Carolina, planned demonstrations on New Bern and Wilmington. General Hill assumed command of the troops in North Carolina on February 25. In compliance with his request for more troops, Longstreet instructed General W. H. C. Whiting at Wilmington to reinforce Hill with 4,000 men.

The opening round in the Confederate attack on New Bern occurred on March 13 when Brigadier General Junius Daniel's scouts, moving along the "lower Trent road" encountered enemy pickets about ten miles from the city. The Federals were easily pushed back two miles to a line of works at Deep Gully. Following a bombardment of the Federal position, General Daniel led four companies in a successful charge on the enemy works. The Federals made no attempt at a recapture of Deep Gully until daybreak the next morning. Repulsed in this attempt, the Federal troops retired under orders to the main defenses at New Bern. Difficulties encountered at Fort Anderson were to doom the Confederate chances of taking New Bern. Fort Anderson, garrisoned by the 92nd New York, Lieutenant Colonel Hiram Anderson, Jr., commanding, was an earthwork on the north bank of the Neuse directly opposite New Bern. It was flanked on both sides by swamps and was approachable only in front along a narrow causeway. At dawn on the morning of the 14th, Brigadier General James Johnston Pettigrew rushed his command across this causeway and, with light batteries, opened fire on the fort. Fearful that a charge on the Federal works would cost him between 50 and 100 men, he decided to deploy his force, demoralize the enemy by a heavy fire, and then demand a surrender. The surrender demand proved a serious mistake. General B. H. Robertson, under orders to cut the railroad, fared little better than Pettigrew. The failure of Robertson and Pettigrew caused General Hill to withdraw his forces from New Bern. Many of Hill's men had serious doubts as to whether their Commanding General had any "real object" in mind when he started the expedition.

Attack on New Bern

On January 2, 1864, General Robert E. Lee, aware of the critical state of affairs in North Carolina, wrote President Jefferson Davis that if an attempt could be made to capture the enemy's forces at New Bern, it should be done. A large amount of provisions and other supplies were said to be at New Bern, which were much wanted for his army. Davis willingly approved of Lee's plan. Major General George E. Pickett was selected to command the operation. President Davis selected his own aide, Commander John Taylor Wood, to command the cooperating naval force.

A force of about 13,000 men and 14 navy cutters were soon concentrated at Kinston, North Carolina. Pickett divided his troops into three columns and, on the morning of January 30, moved off in the direction of New Bern. His plan of operation called for Brigadier General Seth M. Barton with his own brigade, that of Brigadier General J. L. Kemper, and three regiments of Matt Ransom's, eight rifled pieces, six napoleons, and 600 cavalry to cross the Trent River near Trenton and proceed on the south side of the river to Brice's Creek below New Bern. A simultaneous assault by these three columns on the defenses of New Bern was planned for February 1.

The night before, Commander Wood was to descend the Neuse, endeavor to surprise and capture the gun-boats in that river and then cooperate with the land forces in their attack on New Bern.

General R. F. Hoke went into camp on the night of the 31st at Steven's Fork, a point approximately two miles from New Bern and two from a Federal outpost. Hoke moved forward quickly in order to reach Batchelder's Creek before the bridge could be taken up, but he arrived too late. Finding the bridge destroyed and the enemy strongly entrenched, the General decided to wait until dawn before continuing his advance. He expected the enemy to throw troops by cars across the creek on the railroad. If this happened, he planned to rush forward toward New Bern, cut the track, capture the train, and enter the city by rail. The Federals did as Hoke anticipated, but the General missed his prize by five minutes. Warned by telegraph of Hoke's moves, the enemy rushed the train back to New Bern. With the break of day, Hoke threw some trees across the creek and crossed two regiments over. He hoped to avoid the loss of men by storming. In the meantime, the enemy had received reinforcements from New Bern and was in a position to offer stout resistance. Still Hoke "routed them" once he got his troops across the creek. Following this engagement, the Confederates moved on to within a mile of New Bern, where a halt was called to await the sound of Barton's guns from the opposite side of the Trent River. Before leaving Kinston, Barton strengthened the picket line between the Neuse and the Trent and had cavalry detachments out covering all the roads and paths south and east of Kinston. When the enemy works came into view around 8 a.m. on the 1st, Barton immediately advanced a line of skirmishers close to Brice's Creek. In company with General Ransom and Colonel William R. Aylett, Barton made a reconnaissance, finding many obstacles. General Barton concluded that he was unprepared to encounter obstacles so serious. He immediately dispatched messengers, scouts and couriers to General Pickett informing him and asking instructions. The Commanding General dispatched Captain Robert A. Bright of his staff to communicate with Barton. Barton was ordered to join the troops before New Bern for an assault on that front. To get across the Trent, Barton had to retrace his steps to Pollocksville, at which place on February 3 he received new orders directing him to Kinston. General Pickett decided to abandon the entire New Bern operation when he learned that Barton could not join him until the 4th, if then. The General withdrew his forces from New Bern on the third. He bungled the New Bern operation. The coordinated attack on the city, as outlined by Hoke, never materialized.