

Seven Pines National Cemetery
400 East Williamsburg Road
Sandston, Virginia 23150

Description

The Seven Pines National Cemetery, established in 1866, is located approximately eight miles southeast of Richmond. It can be reached by U.S. Highway No. 60 and Virginia State Highway No. 156. The cemetery is nearly square in shape and is enclosed by a brick wall extending approximately 1,011 lineal feet constructed in 1876. The main entry is located at the center of the south side, while a second pedestrian entry is near the lodge at the southeast corner of the grounds. Both were also constructed in 1876 and are protected by wrought iron gates, supported by stone piers. A third gate, 11 feet wide, constructed in 1934, gives access to the utility building. In the center of the cemetery is a circle, 32 feet in diameter, upon which a flagpole has been erected. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones.



The lodge was constructed in 1874 from a design by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs and is Second Empire in style. It is an L-shaped brick and stone structure with a tin and slate mansard roof. The main portion is one and one-half stories with dormer windows projecting from the mansard roof. The first floor contains a living room, dining room, kitchen and office. The upper story contains two bedrooms and a bath. The lodge also contains a basement. There is a total of 1,501 square feet of living space. The windows on the first story are six-over-six double-hung sash, while the upper story windows have glass louvers. In 1936, an enclosed porch was constructed to the rear of the lodge.



A brick and concrete utility building with comfort station, 33 feet 4 inches by 22 feet 3 inches, with an asphalt roof, was constructed in 1934 to the northeast of the lodge.

A brick and concrete gasoline storage building with an asphalt roof was constructed in 1936 near the northeast corner of the cemetery.

Significant Monuments/Memorials

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

UNITED STATES
NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERY
SEVEN PINES
ESTABLISHED JUNE 27TH, 1866
INTERMENTS 1357
KNOWN 150
UNKNOWN 1207

Civil War Activity in Area

The grounds occupy a portion of a battlefield of great significance to the Civil War. Here was fought the Battle of Fair Oaks, better known as the Battle of Seven Pines. Great heroism was exemplified by both sides—the one to capture and the other to defend the capital of the Confederacy at Richmond. This capital city was regarded as the symbol of the South, and throughout the conflict, Federal armies made repeated attempts to capture it.

One of the first attempts was made by Major General George B. McClellan when, in the spring of 1862, with the Army of the Potomac, he began his march on the Confederate capital. By the end of May, he was within a few miles of Richmond with his advanced line established at the junction of the Nine Mile Road and the Williamsburg Road. On the morning of May 31, General Joseph E. Johnston, who was in command of the defense of Richmond, attacked McClellan's forces on this front. Thus, the Battle of Seven Pines began.

For two days, the battle was bitterly contested and both sides lost heavily. The battle plan had been sound, but the attack was badly bungled. Directed by vague verbal orders instead of explicit written ones, whole brigades got lost, took the wrong roads, and generally got in each other's way. Nine of the 23 attacking brigades never actually got into the fight at all. Towards nightfall, Johnston was severely wounded in the chest. The command then fell to Major General Gustavus W. Smith. Fighting ceased with darkness. Early the next morning, June 1, Smith renewed the attack. The Confederates later withdrew and the battle was over before noon. That afternoon, President Jefferson Davis appointed his chief military advisor, General Robert E. Lee, as commander of the Southern forces. Although the battle itself was indecisive, the casualties were heavy on both sides. The Confederates lost 6,184 either killed, wounded, or missing; the Federals lost 5,031.

The cemetery derived its name from its proximity to the intersection of Nine Mile Road and Williamsburg Road, which was known as Seven Pines.

