

Andersonville

National Historic Site
Georgia

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide



Shabangs (shelters) and sinks (latrines), Andersonville prison camp, 1864

“...it takes 7 of its occupants to make a Shadow”

Sgt. David Kennedy, 9th Ohio Cavalry

Andersonville, or Camp Sumter as it was officially known, was one of the largest of many Confederate military prisons established during the Civil War. It was built early in 1864 after Confederate officials decided to move the large number of Federal prisoners kept in and around Richmond, Virginia, to a place of greater security and a more abundant food supply. During the 14 months the prison existed, more than 45,000 Union soldiers were confined here. Of these, almost 13,000 died from disease, poor sanitation, malnutrition, overcrowding, or exposure to the elements.

The prison pen initially covered about 16½ acres of land enclosed by a 15-foot-high stockade of hewn pine logs. It was enlarged to 26½ acres in June 1864. The stockade was in the shape of a parallelogram 1,620 feet long and 779 feet wide. Sentry boxes, or “pigeon-roosts” as the prisoners called them, stood at 30-yard intervals along the top of the stockade. Inside, about 19 feet from the wall, was the “deadline,” which the prisoners were forbidden to cross upon threat of death. Flowing through the prison yard was a stream called Stockade Branch, which supplied water to most of the prison. Two entrances, the North Gate and the South Gate, were on the west side of the stockade. Eight small earthen forts located around the exterior of the prison were equipped with artillery to quell disturbances within the compound and to defend against feared Union cavalry attacks.

The first prisoners were brought to Andersonville in February 1864. During the next few months approximately 400 more arrived each day until, by the end of June, some 26,000 men were confined in a prison area originally intended to hold 10,000. The largest number held at any one time was more than 32,000—about the population of present-day Sumter County—in August 1864. Handicapped by deteriorating economic conditions, an inadequate transportation system, and the need to concentrate all available resources on its army, the Confederate government was unable to provide adequate housing, food, clothing, and medical care to their Federal captives. These conditions, along with a breakdown of the prisoner exchange system, resulted in much suffering and a high mortality rate. On July 9, 1864, Sgt. David Kennedy of the 9th Ohio

Cavalry wrote in his diary: “Wuld that I was an artist & had the material to paint this camp & all its horrors or the tongue of some eloquent Statesman and had the privilege of expressing my mind to our hon. rulers at Washington. I should gloery to decribe this hell on Earth where it takes 7 of its occupants to make a Shadow.”

When Gen. William T. Sherman’s Union forces occupied Atlanta on September 2, 1864, bringing Federal cavalry columns within easy striking distance of Andersonville, Confederate authorities moved most of the prisoners to other camps in South Carolina and coastal Georgia. From then until May 1865, Andersonville was operated on a smaller basis. When the war ended, Capt. Henry Wirz, the stockade commander, was arrested and charged with conspiring with high Confederate officials to “impair and injure the health and destroy the lives...of Federal prisoners” and “murder, in violation of the laws of war.” Such a conspiracy never existed, but public anger and indignation throughout the North over the conditions at Andersonville demanded appeasement. Tried and found guilty by a military tribunal, Wirz was hanged in Washington, D.C., on November 10, 1865. A monument to Wirz, erected by the Georgia Division of the United Daughters of the Confederacy, stands today in the town of Andersonville.

Andersonville prison ceased to exist in May 1865. Some former prisoners remained in Federal service, but most returned to the civilian occupations they had before the war. During July and August 1865, Clara Barton, a detachment of laborers and soldiers, and a former prisoner named Dorence Atwater, came to Andersonville cemetery to identify and mark the graves of the Union dead. As a prisoner, Atwater was assigned to record the names of deceased Union soldiers for the Confederates. Fearing loss of the death record at war’s end, Atwater made his own copy in hopes of notifying the relatives of some 12,000 dead interred at Andersonville. Thanks to his list and the Confederate records confiscated at the end of the war, only 460 of the Andersonville graves had to be marked “unknown U.S. soldier.”

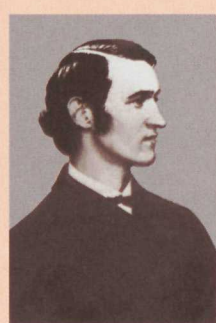
The prison site reverted to private ownership in 1875. In December 1890 it was purchased



Handmade shirt and trousers worn by Sgt. Nathan P. Kinsley (in photograph) of Co. H, 145th Pennsylvania Infantry, while imprisoned at Andersonville 1864-65.

by the Georgia Department of the Grand Army of the Republic, a Union veterans organization. Unable to finance improvements needed to protect the property, this group sold it for \$1 to the Woman’s Relief Corps, the national auxiliary of the G.A.R. The Woman’s Relief Corps made many improvements to the area with the idea of creating a memorial park. Pecan trees were planted to produce nuts for sale to help maintain the site and states began erecting commemorative monuments. The W.R.C. built the Providence Spring House in 1901 to mark the site where, on August 9, 1864, a spring burst forth during a heavy summer rainstorm—an occurrence many prisoners attributed to Divine Providence. The fountain bowl in the Spring House was purchased through funds raised by former Andersonville prisoners.

In 1910 the Woman’s Relief Corps donated the prison site to the people of the United States. It was administered by the War Department and its successor, the Department of the Army, until its designation as a national historic site. Since July 1, 1971, the park has been administered by the National Park Service.



Dorence Atwater, a member of the 2nd New York Cavalry, was 19 years old when he was sent to Andersonville and became the keeper of the books in which the deaths of prisoners were recorded. His lists proved invaluable to Clara Barton.



Clara Barton led the efforts to get medical supplies, aid, and care for the troops. Authorized by President Abraham Lincoln to gather information on missing soldiers so that their relatives could be informed, Barton came to Andersonville in July 1865 to identify and mark the graves of the dead.



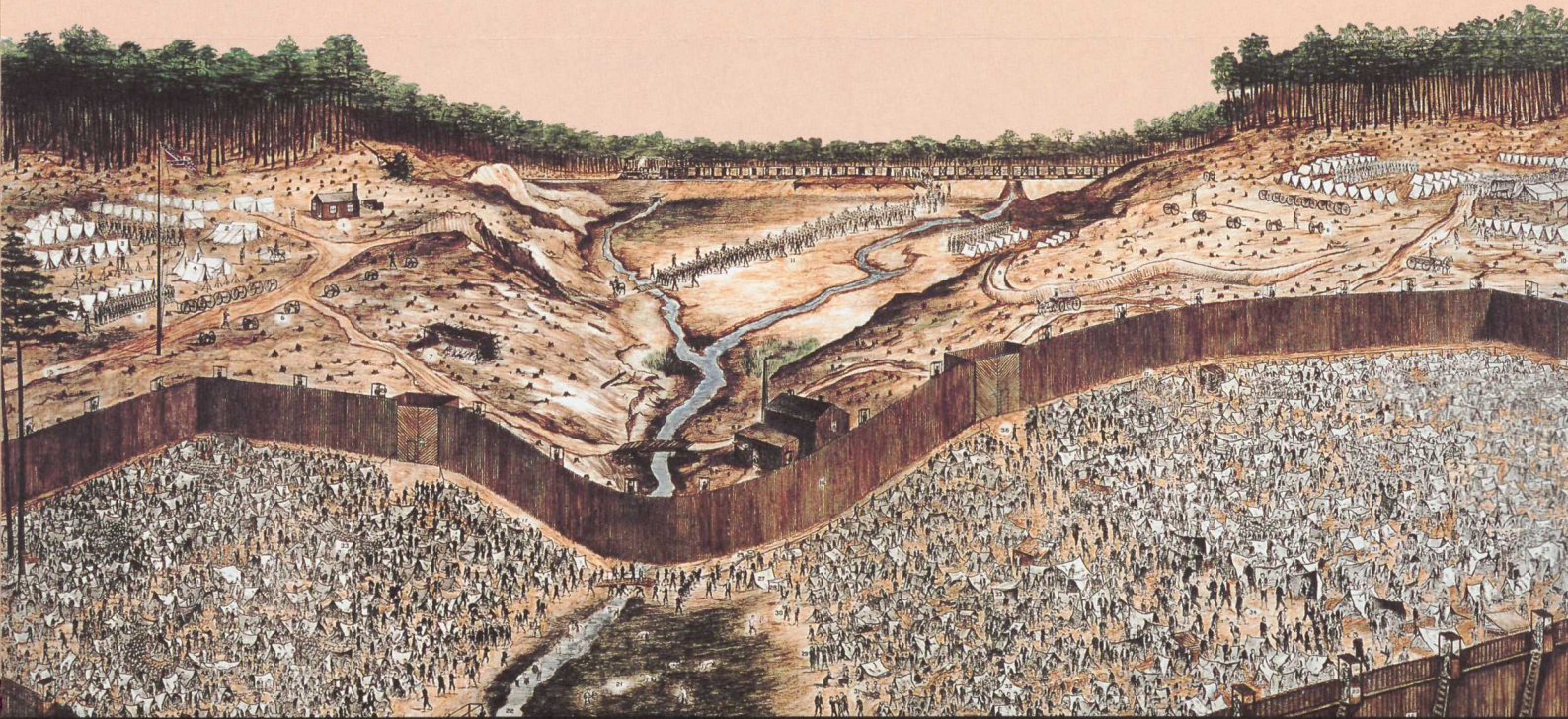
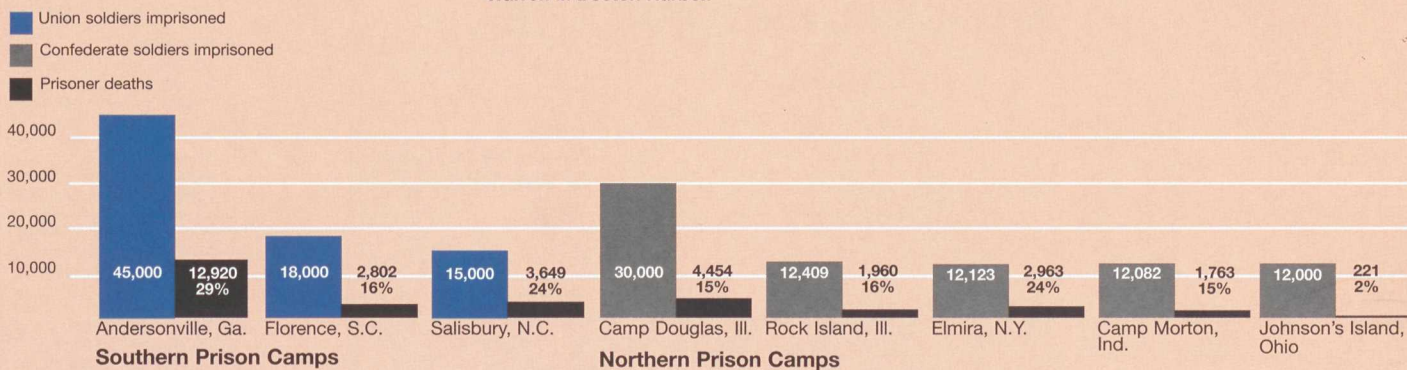
Capt. Henry A. Wirz enlisted with the 4th Louisiana Infantry and later saw duty at prisons in Alabama and Virginia. Wirz was assigned to Andersonville in March 1864 and put in command of the prisoners. He held this position until the end of the war, when he was arrested, tried, and hanged as a war criminal.

Civil War Prison Camps

When the Civil War began, neither side expected a long conflict. Although there was no formal exchange system at the beginning of the war, both armies paroled prisoners. Captured men were conditionally released on their oath of honor not to return to battle. This allowed them to return to camps of instruction as noncombatants. It also meant that neither side had to provide for the prisoners’ needs. In 1862 an exchange system was established but within a year disputes between the two sides led to the system’s demise. North and South found themselves with thousands of prisoners of war.

In the South, captured Union soldiers were first housed in old warehouses and barns. As the number of prisoners increased, camps were built specifically as prisons in Florence, South Carolina, Millen and Andersonville, Georgia, and many other locations. Most were wooden stockades enclosing open fields, as depicted in the lithograph below of the Andersonville camp by former inmate Thomas O’Dea. In the North, officials converted many Federal camps of instruction into prisons. Stockades were placed around Camp Butler in Illinois, Camp Chase in Ohio, and camps at Elmira, New York. Other Confederate prisoners were held at Fort McHenry in Baltimore and Fort Warren in Boston Harbor.

The confined soldiers suffered terribly. The most common problems confronting prisoners both North and South were overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate food. Mismanagement by prison officials, as well as by the prisoners themselves, worsened matters. The end of the war saved hundreds of prisoners from an untimely death, but for many the war’s end came too late. Of 194,732 Union soldiers held in Confederate prison camps, some 30,000 died while captive. Union forces held about 220,000 Confederate prisoners, nearly 26,000 of whom died. The mortality rates for some of the Civil War prison camps are shown below.



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Exhibits in the museum, clockwise from left: Stockade lock and canteen, Andersonville prison; Holy Bible, World War II; Korean War pamphlet for returning soldiers; rubber sandals, toothpaste, and toothbrush from Vietnam; "blood chit," Persian Gulf War; radio and headset from World War II.



A Memorial to All U.S. Prisoners of War

Andersonville National Historic Site is the only park in the National Park System to serve as a memorial to all American prisoners of war throughout the nation's history. Congress stated in the authorizing legislation that this park's purpose is "to provide an understanding of the overall prisoner of war story of the Civil War, to interpret the role of prisoner of war camps in history, to commemorate the sacrifice of Americans who lost their lives in such camps, and to preserve the monuments located within the site." In 1998 the National Prisoner of War Museum opened at Andersonville, dedicated to the men and women of this country who suffered captivity. Their story is one of sacrifice and courage.

It is neither dishonorable nor heroic to be a prisoner of war. Often capture comes as a complete surprise and is frequently accom-

panied by injury. Internment is a physical and emotional ordeal that is all too often fatal.

Throughout our history, American prisoners of war have confronted varying conditions and treatment. These are affected by such factors as climate and geography, a culture's concept of the armed forces, its view of reprisals as a "legitimate" activity of war, and even something as simple as the whim of individual captors. International rules require that prisoners of war be treated humanely and not be punished for belonging to enemy forces. History has taught that the concept of what is "humane treatment" varies with different nations and cultures.

The American prisoner of war experience has been one of constant trials. Prisoners have suffered and seen fellow captives die

from disease, starvation, exposure, lack of medical care, forced marches, and outright murder. They have been victims of war crimes such as torture, mutilation, beatings, and forced labor under inhumane conditions. POWs have been targets of intense interrogation and political indoctrination. At times they have faced severe privations because their captors were not adequately prepared to care for them.

Some Americans have experienced the prisoner of war ordeal for a few days, others for years. All have experienced the loss of freedom. This is the most important story told at Andersonville National Historic Site. To fully understand this loss is to cherish freedom all the more.

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Your Visit to Andersonville

Andersonville National Historic Site, a 495-acre park, consists of the National Prisoner of War Museum, the Andersonville National Cemetery, and the prison site. The park exemplifies the grim life suffered by prisoners of war, North and South, during the Civil War. Here, however, the harshness of war is tempered by a landscape of beauty which raises the hope that reason and harmony may still prevail.

Location and Activities

The park is 10 miles northeast of Americus on Ga. 49. We suggest you begin your visit at the National Prisoner of War Museum. National Park Service personnel will answer questions and provide information. An orientation film provides insight into the ordeal of being a prisoner of war. Museum exhibits examine the American POW experience throughout the

country's history. A computer database lists Union prisoners and Confederate guards at Andersonville. Informational publications are available in the sales area. Schedules of activities and special events are posted at the museum. Camping is not permitted in the park. A picnic area is located near the museum.

Andersonville National Cemetery, established on July 26, 1865, continues to provide a permanent resting place of honor for deceased veterans. The initial interments were of those who had died in the nearby prison camp and are contained in sections E, F, H, J, and K. By 1868 more than 800 additional interments in sections B and C—Union soldiers who had died in hospitals, other prisoner of war camps, and on the battlefields of central and southwest Georgia—brought the total burials to more than 13,700. Of these, more than 500 are unknowns. Today the cemetery contains more than 18,000 interments. The cemetery is composed of 18 sections: A through R (no section O) and one memorial section. Sections are arranged in four quadrants separated by the cemetery roads. Please be respectful of graves and of funerals that might be in progress.

Preservation and safety

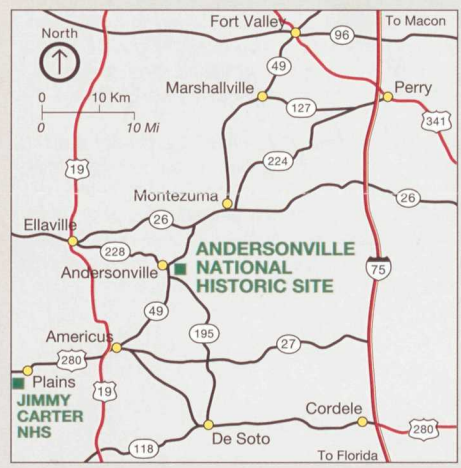
Help us preserve the park for the enjoyment of this and future generations.

- Stay on the roadways and do not park on grassy areas.
- The earthworks are fragile; climbing on them destroys the valuable historic resource.
- Do not disturb the plants, animals, monuments, buildings, relics, and artifacts within the park.
- The possession and use of metal detectors on park grounds is prohibited.

Wading is prohibited in the POW commemorative courtyard. • You are in an area where natural conditions can be hazardous. Wear shoes to protect yourself from sandspurs which grow wild in the grass. • Be wary of snakes, poison ivy, and fire ants (characterized by red sandy mounds) which have a painful sting. • Be alert and observe posted traffic regulations.

Administration

Andersonville National Historic Site is part of the National Park System, one of more than 375 areas that are important examples of our nation's natural and cultural heritage. For more information, write to: Superintendent, Rt. 1, Box 800, Andersonville, GA 31711; call 912-924-0343.



The Georgia Monument in Andersonville National Cemetery honors all United States prisoners of war.



Points of Interest

- 1 Escape Tunnels and Wells**
Prisoners dug many tunnels in their attempts to escape confinement. Nearly all of the men who made it outside the stockade were recaptured. Not all of the holes in this area are escape tunnels, however; many are the remains of wells dug by prisoners searching for fresh drinking water. Two examples of wells are enclosed by wrought-iron fences. The locations of other wells and tunnels are designated by concrete survey markers.
- 2 The Stockade**
The inner row of posts mark the location of the deadline. Prisoners were forbidden to cross the 4-foot high rail. The outer row of posts marks the location of the stockade wall. It was built of 20-foot pine logs sunk 5 feet into the ground. The northeast corner, as well as the North Gate and adjoining walls, have been reconstructed.
- 3 Third Hospital Site**
The third and last prison hospital, was a large stockaded structure with inadequate sheds for sick prisoners. Because of the Union blockade of Southern ports, a shortage of transportation, and great demands on existing supplies, few medicines were available. As a result, Confederate doctors could do little to alleviate patients' suffering.
- 4 The Star Fort**
This earthwork, along with several others around the perimeter of the stockade, was constructed to quell disturbances inside the prison and to guard against Union Cavalry attacks.
- 5 The Dead House**
Men who died in the stockade were removed to a small structure built of tree branches outside the South Gate. From here they were carried by wagon to the cemetery for burial.