



Courage and Sacrifice

Imagine yourself as a prisoner of war (POW) struggling to survive in a disease-ridden prison, sometimes in aching isolation, sometimes in filthy, overcrowded conditions. Imagine the day-to-day uncertainty when all you can think about is food, water, freedom, and death. What was it like to be, as one soldier wrote, "dead and yet, breathing?"

Would freedom ever come? How? When? Could you escape? Should you try? Questions like these tormented POWs. For some, freedom came in a matter of days; others waited torturous years. Too many found freedom only in death.

Andersonville prisoner George Tibbles, 4th Iowa Infantry, recalled, "No one can imagine the agony of continued hunger unless he has experienced it. I have

felt it, witnessed it, yet I cannot find the language to adequately describe it." POW experiences connect soldiers from one generation to the next. When William Fornes, held as a POW in Korea, visited Andersonville he said, "A feeling came over me that I had something in common with these people, and I feel that way about all wars."

Since the American Revolution our soldiers have marched off to war, defending our country, families, and liberties. Some have given their lives. Some have been captured and held as POWs, subjected to torture, starvation, inadequate medical care, and unspeakable conditions. Some have returned home but have been forever changed.

I had an undying faith that my country was not going to forget me. No matter how long I stayed there, no matter even if I died there, my country was not going to forget me.

—Col. Tom McNish, USAF, POW Vietnam 6.5 yrs

Andersonville National Historic Site is the only national park to serve as a memorial to all American prisoners of war. Once filled with desolation, despair, and death, Andersonville today offers a place for remembrance and reflection. Here we remember POWs and honor their courage, service, and sacrifice.

Walk the grounds of Andersonville—the **Prison Site**, where nearly 13,000 Civil War soldiers died in 14 months, mostly from disease and starvation; the **National Prisoner of War Museum**, dedicated to American soldiers who suffered captivity in all wars; and **Andersonville National Cemetery**, a final resting place for our veterans.

Illustration of Camp Sumter, above, drawn from memory by Andersonville prisoner Pvt. Thomas O'Dea, 16th Maine infantry. ¹⁸⁵

Exhibit items, left to right: stockade lock and canteen, Andersonville, Civil War; radio and headset, World War II; "blood chit," Persian Gulf War; Holy Bible, World War II; returning soldiers pamphlet, Korean War; toothpaste, toothbrush, and rubber sandals, Vietnam War. ¹⁸⁵

These images by Keith Rocco depict POWs of various wars supporting one another. The years changed and each war had a different name, but the suffering endured by these soldiers forged a common experience across time. ¹⁸⁵



Civil War Prisons: A Cruel Legacy

In 1901 and 1911 Emogene Marshall travelled from Ohio to visit the grave of her brother, Edwin Niver, buried here in grave 2183. In the decades following the Civil War, Americans were haunted by the deaths of their loved ones in military prisons. Although Andersonville was the most infamous Civil War prison, some 150 others were set up across the country. In 1863 the Union and Confederate governments adopted laws of war to protect prisoners, yet some 56,000 soldiers died in captivity. How and why did this happen?

When the Civil War started, neither side was prepared to hold thousands of enemy prisoners. Although no formal exchange system existed early in the war, both armies paroled prisoners to lessen the bur-

den of providing for captives. Prisoners of war were conditionally released, promising not to return to battle until officially exchanged.

A formal exchange system adopted in 1862 failed when the Confederacy refused to exchange or parole captured black US soldiers. In the South, captured Union soldiers were first housed in old warehouses and barns around Richmond, Virginia. As the number of prisoners increased, prisons were hastily erected in Florence, South Carolina; Millen and Andersonville, Georgia; and other locations. In the North, Federal training camps were converted into prisons at Camp Douglas, Illinois; Camp Chase, Ohio; and Elmira, New York. Other Confederate prisoners were held at Fort

McHenry in Baltimore, Fort Warren in Boston Harbor, and other coastal fortifications.

Confined soldiers suffered terribly from overcrowding, poor sanitation, and inadequate food. Mismanagement by war-weary governments worsened matters. Most prisoners died from disease, starvation, or exposure. The end of the war saved hundreds of prisoners from an untimely death, but for many the war's end came too late. For the men who survived, the memory of the atrocities they witnessed was the cruel legacy of all.



Andersonville Prison, Georgia, south end view of stockade (detail), August 17, 1864, by A.J. Riddle. ¹⁸⁵



Camp Douglas, Chicago, Illinois, ca. 1863. ¹⁸⁵

Prisoner of War Camps — North and South

Civil War Prisons' Death Toll

Whether held in the North or South, a prisoner of war was more likely to die than a soldier in combat. Prisons were overcrowded, short on food, medical supplies, shelter, and clothing, while disease and death ran rampant. How many prisoners died is not known. Surviving records suggest some 30,000, or 15 percent of Union prisoners, and about 26,000, or 12 percent of Confederate prisoners died.



Where We Held Each Other Prisoner

National Prisoner of War Museum, Prison Site, Andersonville National Cemetery

Established in 1970 Andersonville National Historic Site has three main features: the National Prisoner of War Museum, which also serves as a visitor center; the Prison Site; and Andersonville National Cemetery.

Start your visit at the POW Museum. It describes both the Civil War prison camp and the hardships, experiences, and sacrifices of American POWs throughout history.

Prison Site Hastily built to relieve crowding at Richmond prisons and to relocate Union prisoners away from the battlefield, Camp Sumter military prison, commonly known as Andersonville, was an unfinished, undersupplied prison pen when the first prisoners arrived in February 1864. Intended to hold 10,000 men, the 16½-acre pen had a 15-foot-high stockade wall and two gates. Nineteen feet inside the stockade was the "deadline," marked by a simple post and rail fence. Guards sta-

tioned in sentry boxes shot anyone who crossed this line. The stockade was expanded to 26½-acres in June, but POWs continued to arrive, and by August over 32,000 struggled to survive in what the men called "hell on earth."

Today this area is outlined with double rows of white posts. Two sections of the stockade wall have been reconstructed, the north gate and the northeast corner.

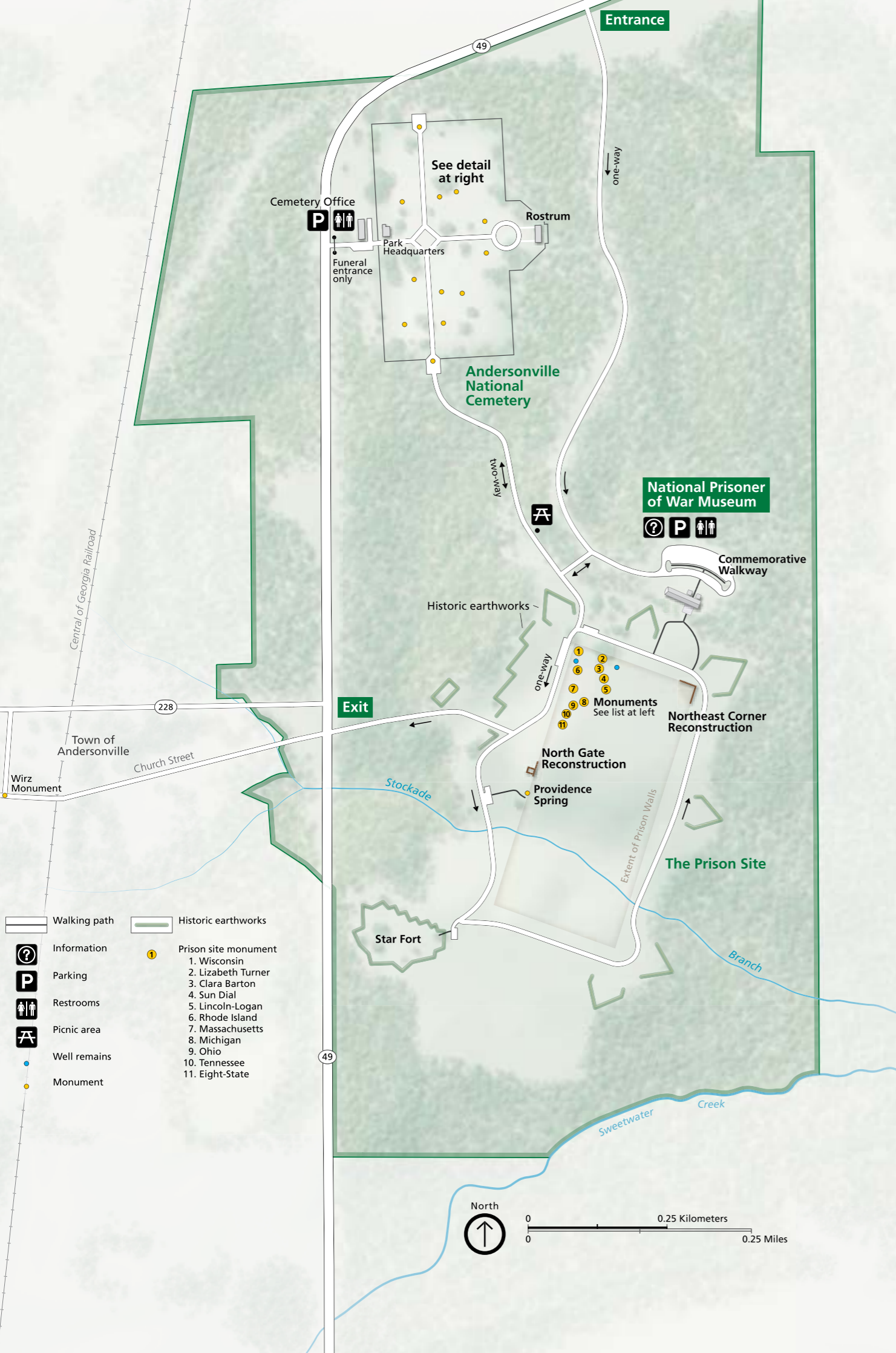


In 1901 and 1911 Emogene Marshall travelled from Ohio to visit the grave of her brother, Edwin Niver.
FROM THE MEMORY OF MY BROTHER BY EMOGENE NIVER MARSHALL

The camp was covered with vermin all over. You could not sit down anywhere. You might go and pick the lice all off of you, and sit down for a half a moment and get up and you would be covered with them. In between these two hills it was very swampy, all black mud, and where the filth was emptied it was all alive; there was a regular buzz there all the time, and it was covered with large white maggots.

—Sgt. Samuel Corthell
Co. C, 4th Massachusetts Cavalry

Andersonville National Historic Site



Andersonville National Cemetery



Andersonville National Cemetery, established July 26, 1865, is a permanent resting place of honor for deceased veterans. The first interments, in February 1864, were soldiers who died in the prison. They are in sections E, F, H, J, and K. By 1868 over 800 more interments in sections B and C—Union soldiers who died in hospitals, other prison camps, and on battlefields of central and southwest Georgia—brought the total burials to over 13,800. Five hundred of these graves are marked "unknown US soldier." Today the cemetery contains over 19,000 interments in 18 sections lettered A through R (no section O), and one memorial section. Sections are in four quadrants separated by cemetery roads.

Please respect graves and funerals that might be in progress. Use the Nationwide Grave Locator, gravelocator.cem.va.gov, to locate burials online.

Please help maintain a reverent atmosphere by following these cemetery regulations:

- Pets are prohibited on landscaped and grassy areas. Pets on leash are welcome in other parts of the park.
- No jogging, picnicking, or recreation activities
- Keep voices lowered
- Place all litter in refuse containers
- Do not sit on cemetery headstones or monuments
- Respect the privacy of all funerals

Dorence Atwater



CONNECTICUT STATE LIBRARY

Nineteen-year-old Dorence Atwater, 2nd New York Cavalry, was captured in July 1863. He spent eight months in Richmond, Virginia, prisons before arriving at Andersonville. In June 1864 he was detailed to work in the hospital where he recorded the names and grave locations of the deceased. He secretly copied this list and

smuggled it out when he was released. After the war he asked the War Department to publish the list, but they refused. He met Clara Barton, a battlefield nurse, who was looking for missing soldiers. She was eager to help. Barton accompanied Dorence in the US Army Quartermaster expedition to Ander-

sonville to mark the graves of the dead. Atwater's death register, published in 1866, enabled many families to locate their loved ones. Thanks to his work, over 95 percent of the graves were identified.

Right: Soldiers were buried side by side in trench graves.



GEORGIA ARCHIVES

Visiting Andersonville

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all. For information go to the visitor center, ask a ranger, call, or check our website.

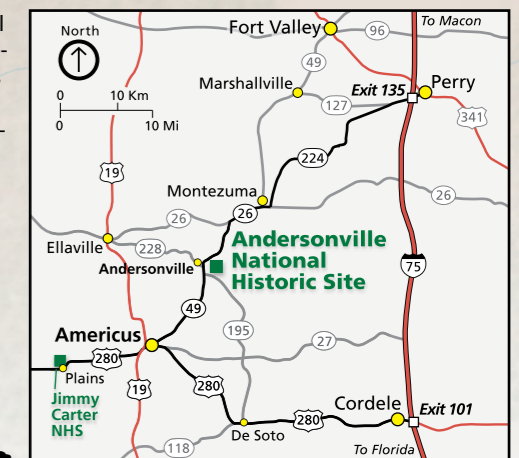
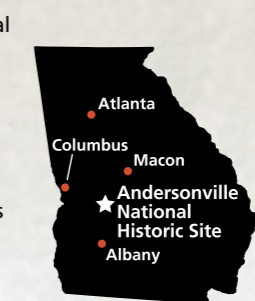
Federal law prohibits firearms in certain facilities in this park, including the National Prisoner of War Museum. Those areas are marked with signs at all public entrances. For firearms regulations check the park website.

Preservation and Safety Stay on roadways, do not park on grassy areas. • Do not climb on earthworks. • Do not disturb plants, animals, monuments, buildings, relics, or artifacts. • Possession or use of metal detectors is prohibited. • Natural conditions can be hazardous. Wear shoes to protect against sandspurs in the grass. • Watch for snakes, poison ivy, and fire ants (red sandy mounds.) • Be alert and observe posted traffic regulations.

More Information Andersonville National Historic Site 496 Cemetery Road Andersonville, GA 31711 229-924-0343 www.nps.gov/ande

Andersonville National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

Andersonville National Historic Site is in southwest Georgia, 12 miles north of Americus and 11 miles south of Montezuma on GA 49. No public transportation serves the park.



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Black Soldiers: Captives for Freedom



STATE ARCHIVES OF FLORIDA

Many of the African American soldiers and white officers imprisoned at Andersonville were captured at the Battle of Olustee, Florida (above) on February 20, 1864, including Corp. James Gooding, 54th Massachusetts Infantry. Gooding died a prisoner on July 17, 1864 (left).

On January 1, 1863, Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation opening the door for the enlistment of African Americans, enslaved and free, in the Union army. The North demanded all captured soldiers be exchanged equally, but the South refused to exchange black prisoners. Some Confederate officers ordered African Americans killed, not captured. Some former slaves were returned to their owners, some were sold, and others were forced to work for the Confederacy.

Records show over 100 African American soldiers were imprisoned at Andersonville. Black prisoners set up their own area near the south gate, received no medical treatment, and were forced to work the burial detail and other hard labor. They were discriminated against by captors and fellow

prisoners, who believed they were the reason the Union refused to make prisoner exchanges.

At the trial of Captain Wirz black prisoners testified they were treated "just the same as any of the rest." However, punishment was severe. Pvt. William C. Jennings, 8th US Colored Troops, received 30 lashes for not going to work and was put in the stocks, while Isaac Hawkins of the 54th Massachusetts Infantry received 250 of 500 lashes. Records show 33 African Americans died at Andersonville and were buried side-by-side with fellow prisoners.

Capt. Henry Wirz

Swiss-born Henry Wirz enlisted in the Confederate Army, was wounded, and assigned to General Winder, commander of military prisons. Wirz worked at prisons in Virginia and Alabama, before taking command of Andersonville in March 1864. At war's end, nearly 1,000 individuals were tried for violations of the laws of war. Captain Wirz remains the most famous of the officers executed for war crimes.

Capt. Henry Wirz (top right) NPS

Wirz was hanged on November 10, 1865, in Washington, D.C. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



After the War

What happened to Andersonville prisoners? Hundreds died on their way home when the steamboat *Sultana* exploded and sank near Memphis, Tennessee, April 27, 1865. Many others died of diseases contracted during their imprisonment.

In 1890 the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR), a Union veterans organization, purchased the site. The Woman's Relief Corps (WRC) of the GAR took charge of the property, hoping to create a memorial park. In 1910 the WRC donated the prison site to the people of the United States. It was administered by the War Department and the Department of the Army until Congress designated it a national historic site in October 1970.

Some survivors made post-war pilgrimages to the infamous site. The photo (right) was taken in 1897.



GEORGIA ARCHIVES