BARRANCAS NATIONAL CEMETERY

Early U.S. Military Presence

In 1825, President John Quincy Adams ordered the creation of a naval station at Pensacola, Florida Territory. The Pensacola Navy Yard opened the following year.

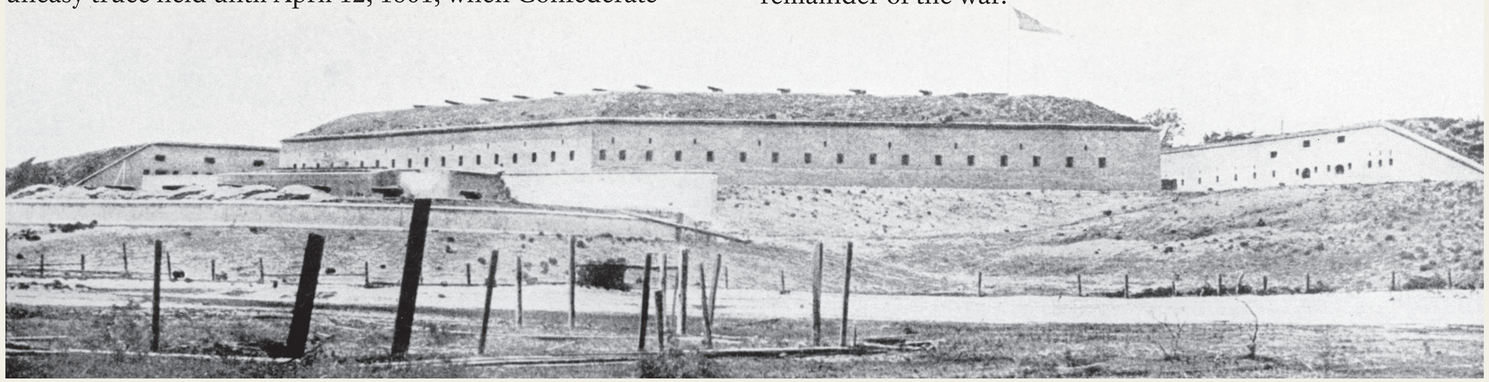
The first U.S. Naval Hospital was built here to treat victims of malaria, yellow fever, and other tropical diseases common to the Gulf Coast. A cemetery was established soon after.

The War Department improved the naval defenses in 1839 by building Fort Barrancas near the small hospital cemetery.

Confederates encamped near Pensacola Navy Yard, spring 1861. Library of Congress.

Civil War Pensacola

As Southern states were voting to secede from the Union, the small federal garrison at Pensacola abandoned mainland forts. Troops fled to Fort Pickens on Santa Rosa Island in the Gulf of Mexico. In February 1861, Confederate troops commanded by Gen. Braxton Bragg occupied the abandoned U.S. forts, including Fort Barrancas and the Pensacola Navy Yard. An uneasy truce held until April 12, 1861, when Confederate troops fired on Fort Sumter, South Carolina, and the Civil War began. Confederate forces attacked Fort Pickens on October 9, 1861. They captured an outlying Union camp but not the fort. Union batteries shelled the ships ferrying Confederate soldiers back to Pensacola. In early 1862, Confederate forces retreated to Mobile, Alabama. The U.S. Navy then held Pensacola for the remainder of the war.



Fort Barrancas, June 1861. Library of Congress.

National Cemetery

In 1868, the Quartermaster Department advised that the hospital cemetery be expanded to create Barrancas National Cemetery. Troops who died in Florida during the Civil War were reinterred in the 7-acre cemetery—soldiers on the west side and sailors on the east. Remains from coastal Escambia, Jackson, and Washington counties were later buried here. Seventy-two Confederate soldiers who died during the South's brief occupation of Pensacola are also interred here.

National cemetery entrance and brick wall are visible beyond the original wood gates, 1904. National Archives and Records Administration.

The cemetery superintendent lived at Fort Barrancas until the U.S. Army constructed a lodge on the grounds in 1868. An 8-foot-tall brick wall was erected around the cemetery the next year. The cemetery continued to change in the twentieth century. A replacement lodge was built in 1904 and razed in 1996.

In 1950, the U.S. Navy transferred 20-plus acres to the army to expand the cemetery. It contained Warrington Cemetery, a burial ground the navy created in 1935 when it consolidated several civilian cemeteries scattered through the navy yard. No burials have occurred in the civilian cemetery since.

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