

FAYETTEVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY



An 1889 lithograph depicting the Battle of Pea Ridge, March 6-8, 1862. Library of Congress.

Civil War in Northern Arkansas

The first battle in Arkansas occurred on February 16, 1862, at Big Sugar Creek just south of the Missouri border. The next day, Union Gen. Samuel Curtis' Army of the Southwest continued its southward march.

The invasion culminated in the Battle of Pea Ridge three weeks later. Curtis defeated Gen. Earl Van Dorn's Confederate forces, which retreated east across the Mississippi River. The Battle at Prairie Grove in early December, also a Confederate defeat, left northern Arkansas firmly in Union control.

After the victory at Prairie Grove, federal troops occupied Fayetteville. In April 1863, Confederate troops attacked the city. They held the town briefly while the engagement continued, but eventually were forced to retreat. Except for a few months in summer 1863, Union forces occupied Fayetteville throughout the war.

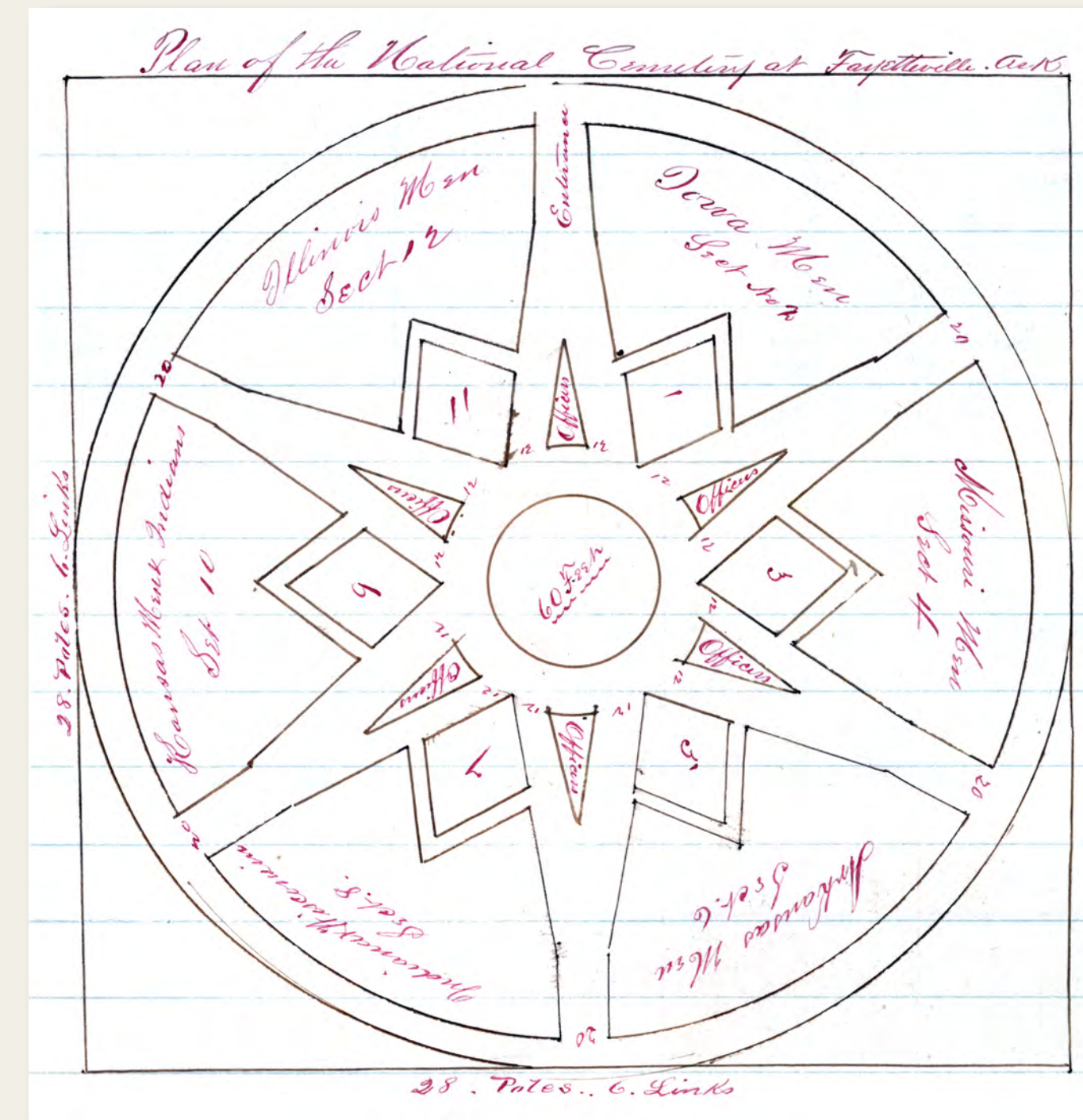
National Cemetery

The U.S. Army established Fayetteville National Cemetery in 1867. Remains were brought here from the battlefields of Pea Ridge, Prairie Grove, Cane Hill, and Fayetteville.

The Quartermaster Department created a compass-rose design for the roughly square cemetery lot. A circular grass walkway enclosed the burial sections and six interior walks provided access to the central flagpole. These walkways defined distinct burial sections.

Six sections were designated for soldiers from Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Wisconsin, and for "Indian" soldiers. Diamond-shaped areas near the center were set aside for monuments. Officers were interred in triangular sections within the interior walkways.

By law, the secretary of war appointed a "meritorious and trustworthy" superintendent to manage the cemetery. To qualify for the position, an individual must have been an army enlisted man disabled in service. Josiah Nutting, formerly a private in the 19th Maine Infantry, was named superintendent in September 1867.



Quartermaster Department sketch plan for cemetery, 1869. National Archives and Records Administration.



The cemetery in 1903. The lodge, rostrum, and most of the wall were removed in the late twentieth century. National Archives and Records Administration.

Cemetery Changes

In the 1870s, the federal government undertook improvements to the cemetery. Permanent marble headstones replaced temporary wooden headboards. A brick wall was constructed to enclose the cemetery, and a Second Empire-style lodge was erected for the superintendent and his family. Areas intended for monuments were planted with flowers and shrubs. In 1894, a brick-and-iron rostrum was completed for ceremonial events.

As the cemetery expanded over the years to provide additional burial space, original features have been removed. The compass-rose design was lost as walkways filled with graves. The lodge and rostrum were razed, and only a fragment of the boundary wall exists.