

LEBANON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Civil War Lebanon

In 1860, Lebanon sat at the terminus of a Louisville & Nashville Railroad spur line. Turnpikes linked the city to Louisville and Lexington, Kentucky. This transportation network elevated Lebanon's strategic importance during the Civil War. The city served as a Union Army supply depot, recruiting center, and hospital.

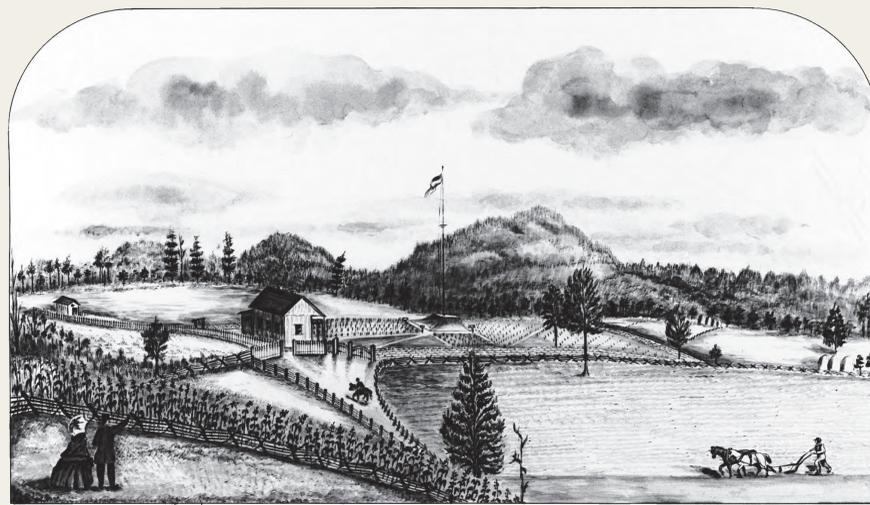
In 1861, Col. John Marshall Harlan established Camp Crittenden at Lebanon to recruit men for the Union army.

Confederate Brig. Gen. John Hunt Morgan's cavalry came through Lebanon on two of his four raids through Kentucky. During the second, in July 1863, he briefly captured the Union garrison here.

In spring 1864, Camp Crittenden reopened as a training camp for U.S. Colored Troops. More than 2,000 black men enlisted in the Union Army at Lebanon.



Mid-twentieth century photograph of Louisville & Nashville Depot at Lebanon. Some of the Union garrison retreated to this building during the 1863 Confederate attack on the city. Courtesy of Nash Hayes, Lebanon, Kentucky.



Lebanon National Cemetery, from Brvt. Lt. Col. E. B. Whitman's final report, c. 1869. Whitman used the phrase "Harvest of Death" in his exhaustive report to describe the work of collecting the dead. National Archives and Records Administration.

"Harvest of Death"

Early in 1866, Capt. E. B. Whitman began gathering information in preparation for the reinterment of Union soldiers buried in the Military Division of Tennessee. This huge district included Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, and Tennessee.

Captain Whitman, later lieutenant colonel, placed newspaper notices seeking locations of Union graves. Citizens, chaplains, soldiers, and officers replied. Whitman made three major expeditions across the region, stopping at hundreds of battlefields and engagement sites. Because of his work, thousands of Union dead were moved to twelve new national cemeteries.

In May 1869, Whitman submitted a detailed summary of this difficult project to the quartermaster general. The report contained sketches and site plans of each cemetery, and data on interments and service affiliations.

National Cemetery

Prior to 1869, ten federally established or public cemeteries in Kentucky contained the remains of Union soldiers. The work of reintering the dead was almost complete when the army changed its plan and reduced the number of cemeteries to six.

Lebanon National Cemetery was established in 1867. The 407 Union soldiers who died in Lebanon are buried here. The remains of another 458 men collected from nearby locales increased the number to 865. By 1869 the unusual triangular 2-acre cemetery was enclosed by a limestone wall and featured a flagstaff. The U.S. Army Quartermaster General's Office later provided gun monuments and, in 1875, a Second Empire-style lodge to house the superintendent and his family.



Cemetery entrance, 1904. National Archives and Records Administration.

By law, the secretary of war appointed a "meritorious and trustworthy" superintendent to manage the cemetery. The cemetery's first superintendent, Charles Gohe, arrived in 1868. Formerly a sergeant in Company F, 19th U.S. Infantry, he had previously served as superintendent of Chattanooga National Cemetery in Tennessee.