NEW BERN NATIONAL CEMETERY

Civil War New Bern

In February 1862, the Union Army began a campaign to capture large areas of coastal North Carolina. By the end of the month, Union Gen. Ambrose Burnside had seized Roanoke Island and Elizabeth City.

Union fleet bombards Fort Thompson during the Battle of New Bern, March 14, 1862. Battles and Leaders of the Civil War *(1887).*

On March 14, in a combined land-and-sea operation, Burnside attacked the Confederate fortifications south of New Bern. After a five-hour battle, the Union force of 10,000 men overwhelmed Gen. Lawrence Branch's 5,000 Confederates. By summer, eastern North Carolina and the Outer Banks were in Union control.

In March 1865, Union troops marched west from New Bern. They defeated Confederate forces at Wyse Fork near Kinston, then won the Battle of Bentonville, the last significant engagement in North Carolina.

Late-nineteenth century view of cemetery. National Archives and Records Administration.

National Cemetery

In 1869, the U.S. Army Quartermaster General's Office purchased 7 acres to develop New Bern National Cemetery. By 1874, there were 3,249 interments here. The dead included 140 civilians and 1,068 unknown soldiers. The remains came from cemeteries in New Bern, Morehead City, and Beaufort; battlefields at New Bern, Hatteras, Kinston, Roanoke Island, and Wyse Fork; and other eastern North Carolina sites.

An 1867 law directed the secretary of war to appoint a "meritorious and trustworthy" superintendent to manage each national cemetery. William Dougherty, formerly a sergeant in the 101st Pennsylvania Infantry, was appointed here on August 31, 1867.

Over the years the army improved the property. A stone Second Empire-style lodge was constructed for the superintendent and his family. The cemetery was enclosed by a brick wall. An octagonal rostrum was erected in the 1890s, and the present lodge in 1916.

Monuments

Four monuments here honor Union soldiers who fought and died in North Carolina during the Civil War. A granite soldier erected by the State of New Jersey in 1905, honors the Ninth New Jersey Infantry. A bronze female figure sculpted by W. W. Manatt distinguishes the 1906 Rhode Island Monument. Two other states donated memorials in 1908.

Sculptor Melzar Mossman created the bronze female figure on the Massachusetts Monument. Connecticut erected a granite flag-draped obelisk to memorialize its soldiers who died in 1864 of yellow fever and those killed in battle in 1865.

Dedication of New Jersey Monument, 1905. New Jersey State Archives, Department of State.