SAN ANTONIO NATIONAL CEMETERY

Confederate militia accept the surrender of Union Gen. David Twiggs. Harper's Weekly *(March 23, 1861).*

Civil War San Antonio

When Texas became a state in 1845, the annexation treaty transferred all Texas forts to the U.S. Army. In 1848, the army established a small garrison and quartermaster depot at the Alamo, a former Spanish mission. Eleven years later an arsenal was added.

On February 1, 1861, a convention of Texas officials voted to secede from the Union, although a public vote would not be held until spring. Just two weeks after the convention, Texas state cavalry led by Col. Benjamin McCulloch rode into San Antonio. They surrounded Maj. Gen. David E. Twiggs, commander of all U.S. troops stationed in Texas, and his garrison.

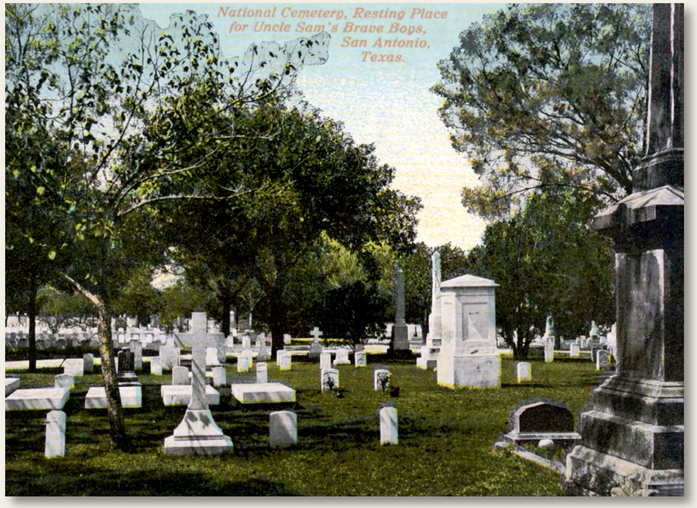
Twiggs surrendered all federal property in Texas and evacuated 2,700 Union troops at frontier forts scattered throughout the state. San Antonio and its supply depot remained under Confederate control through the war. The U.S. Army returned to the city in 1865.

National Cemetery

San Antonio National Cemetery was established in 1867 on land the city gave to the federal government. The 2-acre parcel occupied a hill about a mile east of the city plaza. By December 1868, the cemetery was enclosed by a limestone wall. Two years later the army constructed a two-room Swiss-style cottage at the main entrance to shelter the cemetery caretaker and store tools.

Symmetrical drives formed two circular areas within the rectangular cemetery. A flagstaff was centered in the east circle, where officers were buried. By 1892, a rostrum occupied the west circle.

In 1874, the cemetery contained 334 graves—one-third of them unknown. U.S. officers who died and were buried elsewhere in San Antonio were reinterred here. So were the remains of soldiers who died at Austin, Indianola, the Medina River vicinity, and Salado.



Postcard view of cemetery, c. 1910, showing many of the private headstones here. National Cemetery Administration.

Cemetery entrance in 1904. On left is the Swiss-style cottage used as an office and chapel until it was razed in 1945. On right is the Second Empire-style lodge, 1878-1910. National Archives and Records Administration.

By July 1878, a Second Empire-style lodge was completed for the superintendent and his family. It was replaced in 1910. The federal government erected a small granite memorial to the unknown dead in Section H in 1912.

One Civil War Medal of Honor recipient is memorialized here: Pvt. William H. Barnes, 38th U.S. Colored Infantry. Though wounded, he was among the first to enter the Confederate earthen works at the Battle of Chaffin's Farm, Virginia, September 29, 1864 (Section MA, Grave 86).

Civil War Army Medal of Honor. Gettysburg National Military Park.