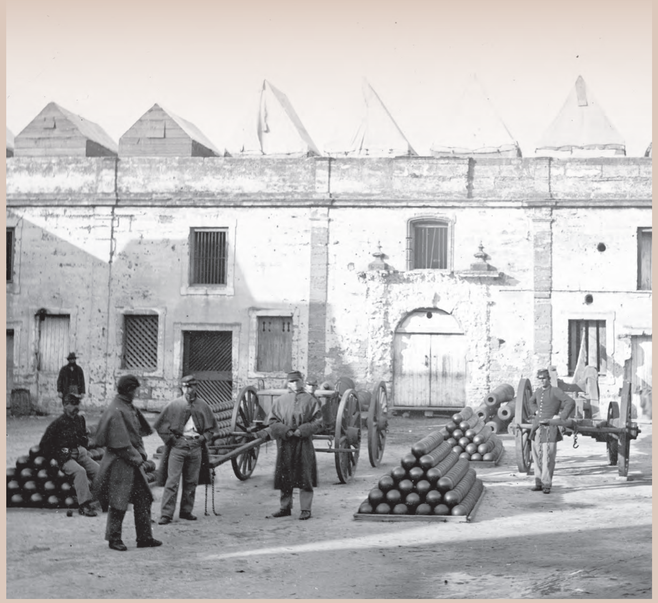
ST. AUGUSTINE NATIONAL CEMETERY



Fort Marion, c. 1863. Library of Congress.

Civil War St. Augustine

Florida seceded from the Union in January 1861. Confederate troops then captured Fort Marion, which was built in St. Augustine in the late 1600s as Castillo de San Marcos. By early 1862, the fall of Nashville, Tennessee, forced the Confederacy to make hard decisions. Troops in Florida were ordered to Tennessee, leaving the state virtually defenseless.

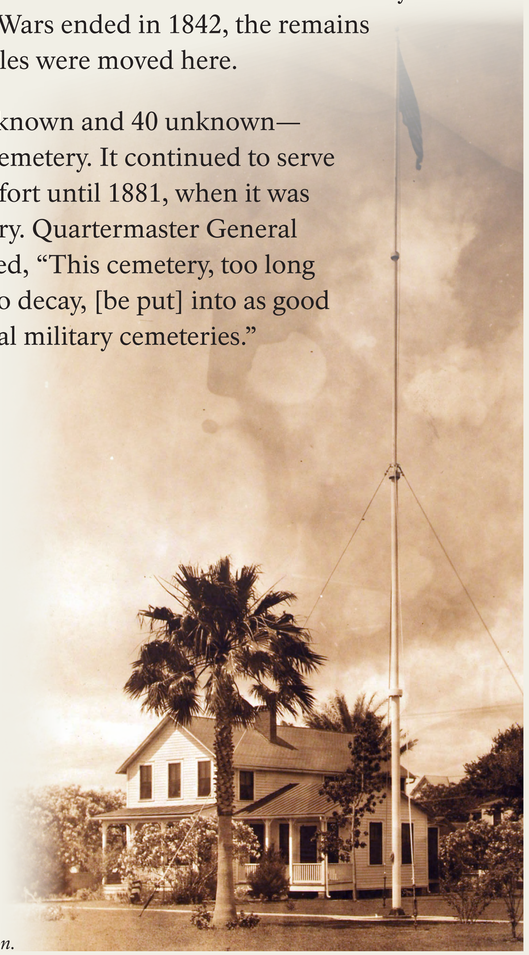
In March 1862, a combined Union Army-and-Navy operation moved on major cities located on Florida's Atlantic Coast. The U.S.S. *Wabash* anchored off St. Augustine. A few days later, Com. Christopher Rogers led a detachment of unarmed sailors ashore and accepted the surrender of Fort Marion and St. Augustine. Union forces controlled the city for the rest of the war.

National Cemetery

The land now occupied by St. Augustine National Cemetery was part of a monastery until 1763, when England took Florida from Spain. The British repurposed the monastery to house its soldiers, calling it St. Francis Barracks. The Spanish regained Florida in 1783 and continued to use the old monastery for military purposes. After Spain ceded Florida to the United States in 1821, the U.S. Army moved in. In 1828, a post cemetery was established here for those who died while stationed at nearby Fort Marion. When the Seminole Wars ended in 1842, the remains of soldiers killed in those battles were moved here.

By 1875, Union soldiers—42 known and 40 unknown—were also buried in the post cemetery. It continued to serve only soldiers who died at the fort until 1881, when it was reclassified a national cemetery. Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs directed, "This cemetery, too long neglected and lately fallen into decay, [be put] into as good condition as the other national military cemeteries."

By 1893, a wall enclosed the cemetery, which was expanded in 1912 and 1913. The current Spanish Colonial Revival-style superintendent's lodge, made of coquina stone to complement the city's historic architecture, was completed in 1938. The matching rostrum was built in 1940.



Original frame lodge and flagpole, 1933. National Archives and Records Administration.

Cemetery before 1873 with wooden headboards and stucco-covered pyramids. Library of Congress.

Florida War Monuments

Three coquina-block pyramids mark the graves of officers and soldiers who were killed in action or died in service between 1835 and 1842 during the Second Seminole War.

The remains of Maj. Francis L. Dade and 110 men under his command, killed December 28, 1835, are in this group burial. On July 25, 1842, Col. William J. Worth ordered that vaults be prepared for the reburial of these men and that "unostentatious monuments" be built to mark them.

In 1844, an 18-foot-tall marble obelisk was erected near the pyramids. Inscribed panels provide a dedication and information about the men who lie here. Members of the St. Augustine garrison contributed "one day's pay" toward the cost of the monument.

VA | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

To learn more about benefits and programs for Veterans and families, visit www.va.gov