

FORT SCOTT NATIONAL CEMETERY



Fort Scott as it appeared in the 1890s. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.

Civil War Fort Scott

Fort Scott, founded 1842, was named for former commander-in-chief of the U.S. Army, Gen. Winfield Scott. The army abandoned the fort in 1853, but the Civil War prompted federal troops to return in 1862. Fort Scott became the headquarters of the Department of Kansas and an important supply depot. Pro-Union supporters in Kansas—white, black, and American Indian—also found refuge here.

The first black regiment recruited in a Northern state, the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry, mustered into service at Fort Scott on January 13, 1863. The 2nd Kansas Colored Infantry was organized here in fall 1863 before departing for Arkansas.

Prior to this, in late October 1862, a group of 224 Union soldiers, seven officers, and several scouts—men who later served in the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry—left Fort Scott for Missouri in search of Confederates. They quickly found them. At Island Mound fighting lasted two days. The 1st Kansas “fought like tigers,” reported a Union lieutenant. It was the first of many battles where the regiment excelled.

National Cemetery

From 1842 to 1853, seventeen individuals were buried in the Fort Scott post cemetery. When the fort was reoccupied in 1862, the U.S. Army established a new area as Fort Scott National Cemetery for the interment of Union soldiers.

An 1867 law directed the secretary of war to appoint a “meritorious and trustworthy” superintendent to manage the national cemetery. To qualify for the position, the individual had to have been an enlisted man disabled in service. These restrictions were loosened over time. Absalom Hyde, formerly a captain in the 16th Kansas Cavalry, was named superintendent here in July 1868.

The U.S. Army improved the cemetery in the 1870s. A stone wall enclosed the 5-acre property, which contained 492 interments, including fourteen Confederate prisoners. A brick Second Empire-style lodge housed the superintendent and his family. Prior to its completion, the superintendent lived in town.



Postcard view of cemetery entrance, c. 1900. National Cemetery Administration.



Undated photograph of the superintendent's family near the lodge and a 20-pounder Parrott rifle. National Archives and Records Administration.

Several notable Civil War soldiers are buried or memorialized in the cemetery. A large sandstone boulder marks the grave of Capt. Eugene F. Ware, 7th Iowa Cavalry, who worked as a lawyer and author, known as “Ironquill,” after the war. He died in 1911 (west end of Sections 10 and 13, Grave 1).

Also buried here are sixteen American Indian soldiers who enlisted in Union Indian Home Guard during the Civil War. These regiments were made up of loyal refugees who came to Kansas from Indian Territory (Oklahoma) in 1861 and 1862. The men served as scouts for other Union regiments.

A granite monument dedicated to soldiers of the 1st Kansas Colored Infantry and the 2nd Kansas Battery was erected here in 1984. It is inscribed with the names of eighteen men killed in battle near Sherwood, Missouri, on May 18, 1863.