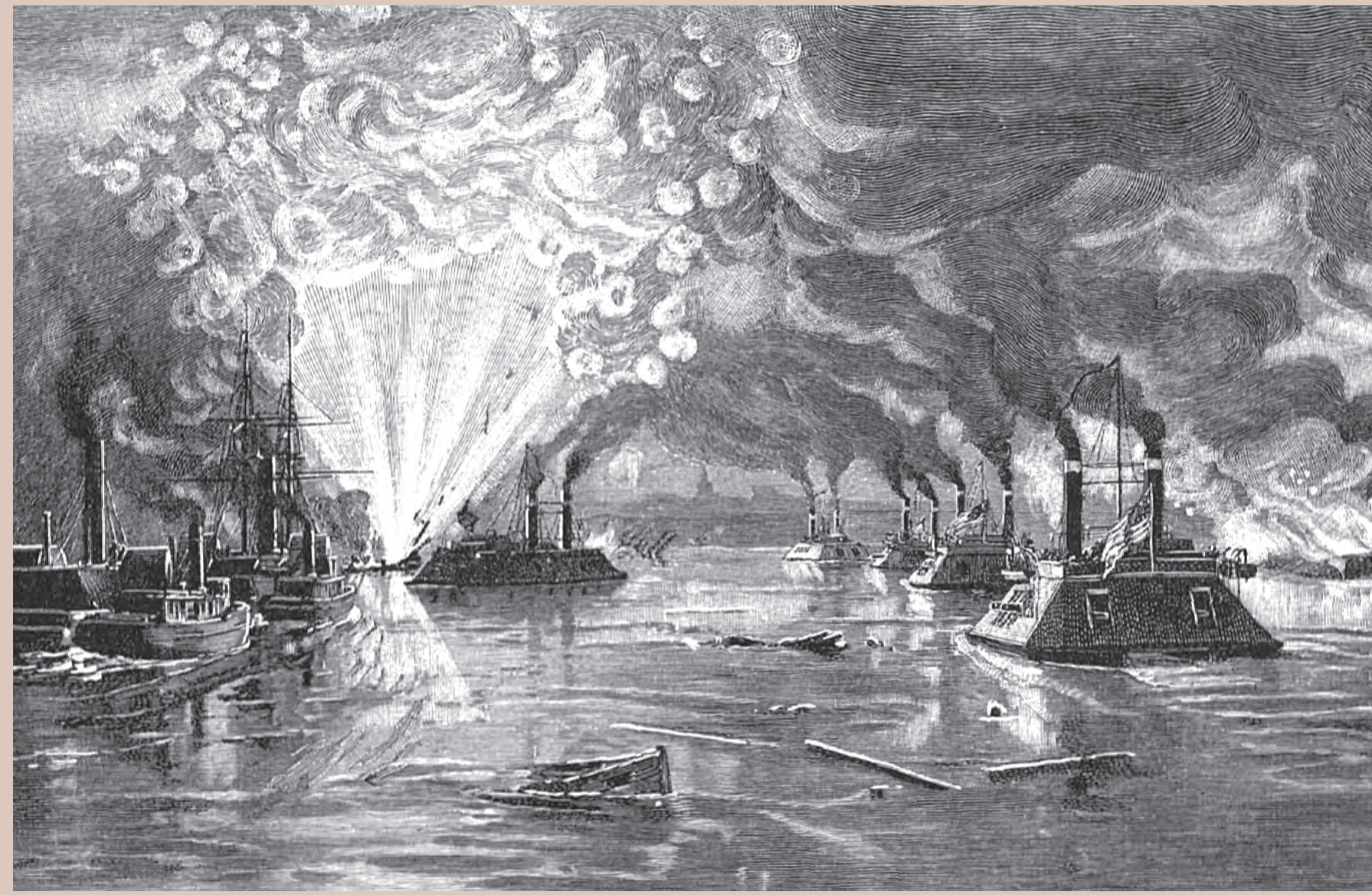


MEMPHIS NATIONAL CEMETERY



Battle of Memphis, June 6, 1862. Battles and Leaders of the Civil War (1887).

Civil War Memphis

When Tennessee seceded from the Union in June 1861, Memphis became the sixth-largest city in the Confederacy. Built on commerce and manufacturing, it was a vital river port and railroad hub.

After Nashville fell in early 1862 and the Confederate defeat at Shiloh in April, the city was isolated. Only eight wooden gunboats protected it. On June 6, 1862, a Union fleet of ten ships attacked and destroyed the Confederate vessels in less than two hours.

Union soldiers built Fort Pickering high above the banks of the Mississippi River, southwest of the city. It became a staging area for Union troops, and later a contraband camp for refugee slaves from Mississippi and Tennessee.

In August 1864, Confederate Gen. Nathan Bedford Forrest raided the city but quickly withdrew. Memphis remained in Union control and emerged from the Civil War relatively intact.

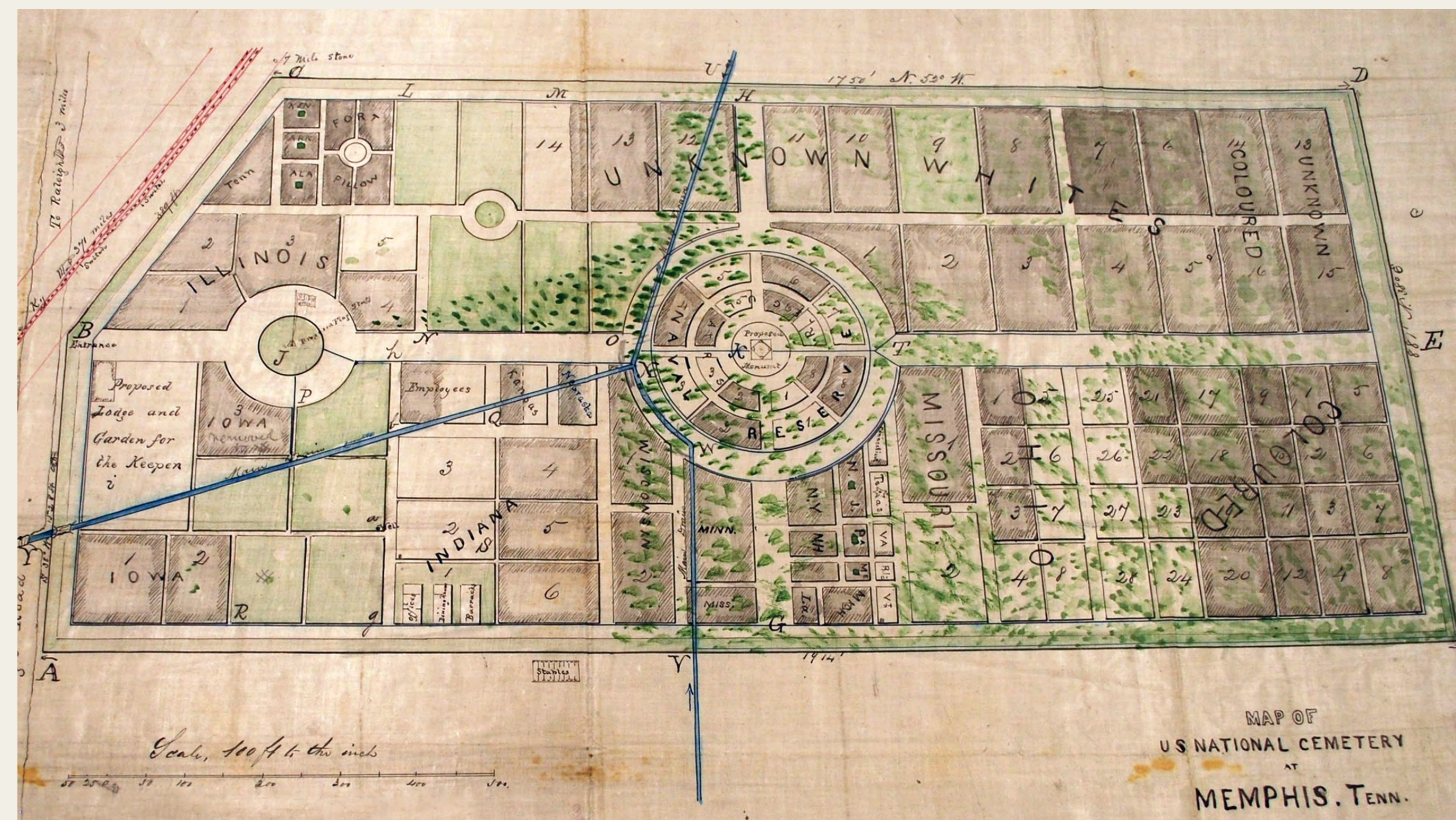
National Cemetery

The U.S. Army established Memphis National Cemetery in 1867. Remains from graves scattered along railroads in west Tennessee, and near the Mississippi River in Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi, Missouri, and Tennessee, were reburied here. By the 1870s, the remains of 13,932 Union soldiers lay in the cemetery—nearly 9,000 unknown. The 36-acre property was then enclosed by a brick wall.

There are two Civil War memorials in the cemetery. Erected in 1916, the Minnesota Monument was designed by St. Paul sculptor John K. Daniels. It is one of five placed in national cemeteries to honor the state's volunteer soldiers. The State of Illinois commissioned French-American sculptor Leon Hermant to create its monument. The bronze recumbent figure on a marble sarcophagus was completed in 1929.



Soldiers crowded on the deck of the Sultana at Helena, Arkansas, on April 26, 1865, a day before the disaster. Library of Congress.



Col. C. W. Folsom's cemetery plan shows sections reserved for officers, state volunteer soldiers, U.S. Colored Troops, and unknowns, July 15, 1867. Fort Pillow dead were buried in a separate section, upper left corner. National Archives and Records Administration.

Sultana Disaster

The worst inland marine disaster in U.S. history occurred in the early hours of April 27, 1865, on the Mississippi River near Memphis. The *Sultana* was a commercial steamboat licensed to carry 356 passengers. She was jammed with an estimated 2,485 former Union prisoners of war bound for Cairo, Illinois, to muster out of service.

The steamboat's boilers had just been repaired at Vicksburg, Mississippi, and again at Memphis. She steamed 8 miles north of the city on the rain-swollen river when her boilers exploded. Passengers were thrown into a 4-mile-wide torrent. More than half drowned. The official death toll was 1,547. Many of the victims are buried here.