MOUND CITY NATIONAL CEMETERY

Civil War Mound City

Mound City's location at a river crossroads was strategic to the Union war effort. It was near the junction of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, and the confluence of the Ohio, Tennessee, and Cumberland rivers.

The Illinois city was home to the headquarters of the Union Navy's Mississippi Squadron, some eighty vessels of the "brown water" or inland navy. Three ironclad gunboats—the U.S.S. *Cairo*, *Cincinnati*, and *Mound City*—were built here.
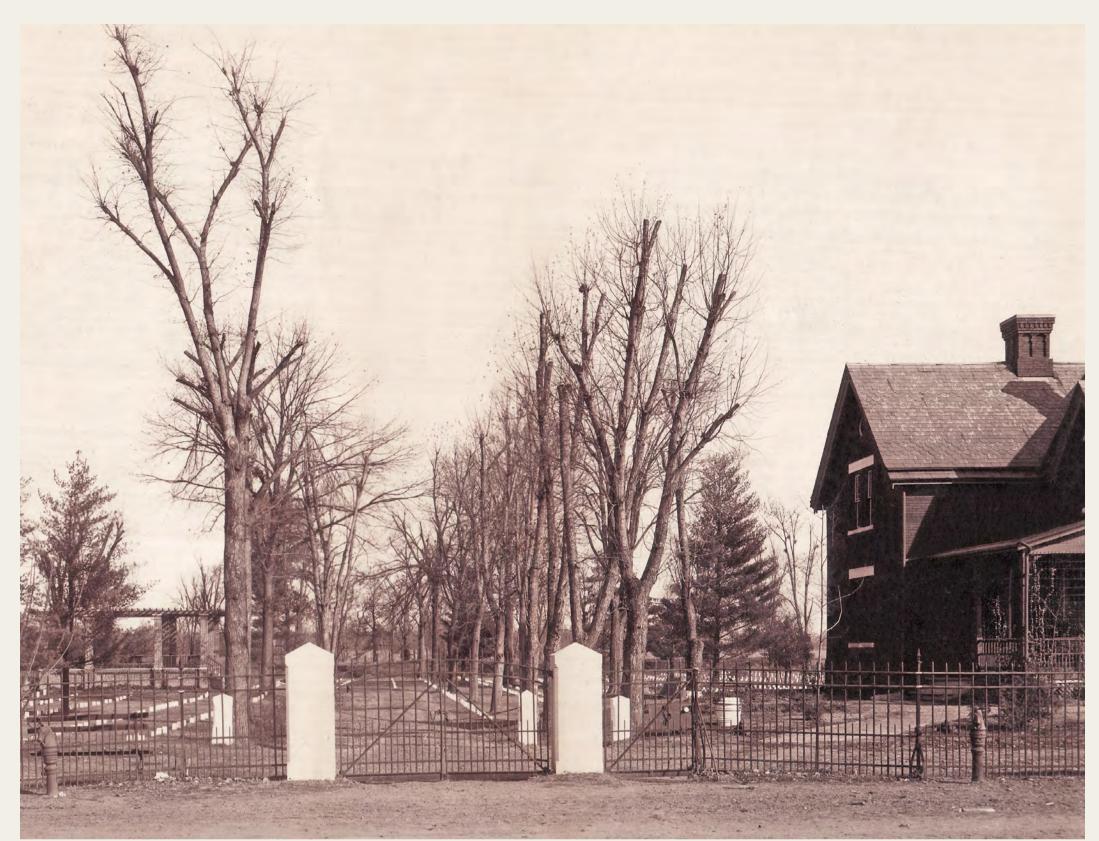
A U.S. General Hospital was erected in Mound City after the April 7, 1862, Battle of Shiloh in Tennessee. The army also converted a hotel, warehouse, and foundry into hospitals collectively containing 1,500 beds. Union medical personnel used the captured Confederate steamboat *Red Rover* to ferry wounded soldiers from areas of engagement along the Mississippi River to Mound City.

Union hospital ship Red Rover, *c. 1865. Library of Congress.*

View of cemetery entrance with rostrum (left) and lodge (right), 1903. National Archives and Records Administration.

National Cemetery

Mound City National Cemetery was established in 1864. A levee protected the 10-acre tract from high water. By 1871, the cemetery contained nearly 5,000 graves—1,644 dead from Mound City hospitals and the remainder from battlefields and Union garrisons in Illinois, Kentucky, and Missouri. More than half the remains were unknown, including twenty-seven Confederate prisoners. The cemetery had a flagstaff and four cannon monuments.

Completed in 1880, the superintendent's lodge was designed by the Office of the Quartermaster General. It differs from the mansard-roof, Second Empire-style lodge the army built in the previous decade at other national cemeteries. Made of two-color brick, a steep cross-gable roof on the Mound City lodge allows for a full-height second floor. The rostrum was built in 1939.

Monument

The elaborate Illinois State Monument, erected in 1874-75, rises from the center of the original cemetery. Its classically inspired granite-and-marble base supports figures of a soldier and sailor. The 15-foot-tall shaft is topped with the female figure "Liberty."

Illinois State Rep. Newton B. Casey of Mound City introduced the bill that funded the $25,000 monument. It honors all soldiers and sailors, known and unknown, who died during the Civil War and were buried here. More than 2,000 names, representing twenty states and the U.S. Army and Navy, are engraved on the base.

Early twentieth-century view of graves and monument. National Archives and Records Administration.