

SALISBURY NATIONAL CEMETERY



Baseball game in the prison yard, 1863. Camp conditions deteriorated in the last years of the war. Library of Congress.

Civil War Salisbury

Salisbury was a vital location and the Confederate government invested heavily in the city. Early in the war, an auxiliary ordnance installation was established here. The converted factory became Salisbury Arsenal and it produced munitions, guns, and artillery. In addition, the Confederates built hospitals, warehouses, and a distillery. The city housed the Nitre and Mining Bureau, and commissary department district headquarters. Finally, the Confederacy established a prisoner-of-war camp in Salisbury—where thousands of Union soldiers were held until it was abandoned in February 1865.

Union authorities also recognized Salisbury's strategic importance. In spring 1865, Union Gen. George Stoneman and 6,000 cavalry rode into North Carolina. On April 12, Stoneman attacked Salisbury. The Federals defeated the Confederate force of 800 and captured the city. Then they destroyed the railroad track and anything of use in a fire that burned for two days.

National Cemetery

Salisbury National Cemetery was established in 1865 around the old prison burial ground. By 1874, it occupied 7 acres. In addition to the prisoners, 425 soldiers were buried here in individual graves—ninety-two were known.

In the 1870s, the cemetery was enclosed with a stone wall. The entry features ornate iron gates cast with iconic military symbols. The original Second Empire-style lodge built for the superintendent was replaced in 1934 with the current Dutch Colonial-style building.

There are two state Civil War monuments here. The Maine Monument, erected 1908, honors its soldiers who died while imprisoned at Salisbury. The 25-foot-tall granite monument features a statue of a Union soldier and polished ornamental cannon.



Superintendent E. R. Fonda and his wife standing in front of cemetery lodge, c. 1910. National Cemetery Administration.



Pennsylvania Monument under construction. National Cemetery Administration.

In 1910, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania funded construction of a 32-foot-tall memorial pavilion. It is topped by an 8-foot-tall bronze prisoner of war to honor its volunteer soldiers who perished here.

The Pennsylvania members of the National Association of the Union Ex-Prisoners of War organization were inspired by the New Jersey Monument that they saw at Georgia's Andersonville National Cemetery. As a result, the Pennsylvania government donated monuments to national cemeteries at Andersonville and Salisbury. It also paid the travel expenses of more than 100 former prisoners to attend the Salisbury dedication ceremony.