



Alton Confederate Cemetery

January 16 2012 9:49 AM

The State of Illinois purchased a three acre plot in an area known as "Buck Inn," just north of Alton, to bury the prisoners who died while incarcerated in the Illinois State Penitentiary at Alton. While the penitentiary was open, from 1833 to 1860, thirty prisoners were known to have been buried there.

Confederate prisoners arrived at the Alton Military Prison on February 9, 1862 and just one week later Private T.J. Stephens and Joseph Pascal, a citizen from Marion County, Missouri, died from pneumonia. During the next three years over 1,600 soldiers and civilians were buried in the cemetery. Most were buried in trenches and the graves were marked with numbered wooden stakes.

After the war, the cemetery was largely forgotten and the wooden stakes rotted away or were carried off for firewood. In 1905, when the U.S. government provided for the marking of the graves of Confederate soldiers who died in northern prisons, an attempt was made to again identify the grave locations with no success.

The Sam Davis Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy petitioned the government to use the total funds that would have been spent to mark the individual graves and erect a monument on the cemetery grounds. In 1907, the government purchased the site and erected the fence. By 1909 the monument had been erected and inscribed with the names of 1,534 Confederate soldiers that died at Alton. In addition to the names is a tablet that reads:

"Erected by the United States to Mark the Burial Place of 1,534 Confederate Soldiers who died here and at the Small Pox Hospital on Adjacent Island, while Prisoners of War, and whose Graves cannot be Identified"

Although there are at least 300 civilians buried in the cemetery, no effort has ever been made to acknowledge their burials.

The gates to the cemetery were erected by the Sam Davis Chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy. On one of the gate's pillars is inscribed:

"Soldier, rest, thy warfare o'er:
Sleep the sleep that knows no waking;
Dream of Battlefields, no more,
Days of danger, nights of waking."