

# THE BANNER

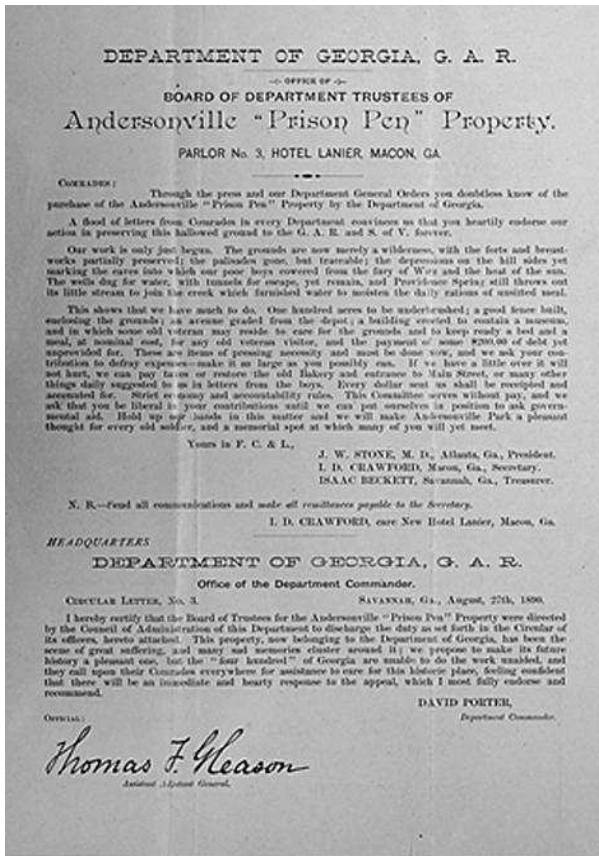
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*IN MEMORY OF OUR HEROIC DEAD*



## SAVING ANDERSONVILLE



Andersonville. The very name conjures up visions of the dreadful suffering that Union prisoners of war endured; visions of starvation, sickness and squalor.

Today, Andersonville is hallowed ground. It is entirely appropriate that the National Prisoner of War Museum was opened there in 1998, honoring the sacrifices of prisoners of war from all of our great nation's wars.

But this was almost not the case.

If it were not for the dedicated efforts of our forefathers of the old GAR Dept. of Georgia & South Carolina, and the steadfast loyalty of the Woman's Relief Corps, Andersonville may have been relegated to a mere historical marker as has been the fate of a number of other POW camps, such as Camp Sorghum and the Florence Stockade.

While the prisoners' burial ground was made into a Nat. Cemetery after the Civil War, Camp Sumter, the old prison site, reverted to the private ownership of a local farmer. The wooden stockades were dismantled and much of the land was put under the plow. Parts of the site which were not farmed became overgrown with weeds, brambles, and trees.

From the Dept. of Georgia & South Carolina's establishment in 1889, the preservation of Andersonville prison was a top priority. Because the Dept. was one of the smallest in the country, having only about 420 members, it lacked the financial resources to buy the property outright. So, the Dept. decided to sell subscriptions to their brothers in the Northern departments. Advertising flyers were printed and sent to every GAR department.

This enterprise proved to be successful. Within two years, the Dept. had raised sufficient funds from the subscriptions as well as a \$1,000 loan from a wealthy benefactor.

The Dept. purchased the Prison Pen property in late 1891 for \$1,500.

This initial success was followed by several years of turmoil. The Panic of 1893 wreaked havoc with the young Department's finances, and it struggled to pay off the loan it had incurred to buy the prison site. The risk of foreclosure and loss of the property loomed.

Rather than giving up, the Dept. redoubled its efforts to pay off the loan. More flyers were sent out to other Depts. soliciting contributions, "A flood of letters...convincing us that you heartily endorse our action in preserving this hallowed ground to the GAR and S of V forever.... This property... has been the scene of great suffering, and many sad memories cluster around it; we propose to make its future history a pleasant one, but the "four hundred" of Georgia are unable to do the work unaided." One enterprising member, J.W. Stone, MD, while on a lecture tour in the northern states, visited several

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GAR Posts in order to solicit donations. The Nat. Woman's Relief Corps generously contributed \$650.

These efforts bore fruit, as attested to in records of Dept.'s Sixth Annual Encampment in 1894 which triumphantly reported, "The property known as 'Andersonville Prison Pen Property,' adjoining the National Cemetery, where sleep nearly 14,000 of comrades who 'touched the elbow' with us, consisting of 80 acres in the county of Macon, is now free from debt and the deed is in the 'Department of Georgia, Grand Army of the Republic.'"

Having secured the property, the Dept. now sought to develop it. But this too required some creative solutions. At the 1896 Dept.

Encampment, the Commander reported, "Our poverty renders it impossible to put the property in suitable repair.... I have rented the improved land... for 50 dollars, ten dollars to be paid in cash, and 40 dollars to be expended in building a house over the spring, and defining the lines by substantial oak posts, so that it may at least, be possible to find the property."

Within a year, however, the tide had turned. The nation's economic depression had lifted. And the Dept. reached an agreement with the Nat. WRC to deed the Andersonville Prison site to them, sparking a cooperative effort by both organizations to develop the property. The WRC had the sorely needed resources, and the Dept. of Georgia had the manpower.

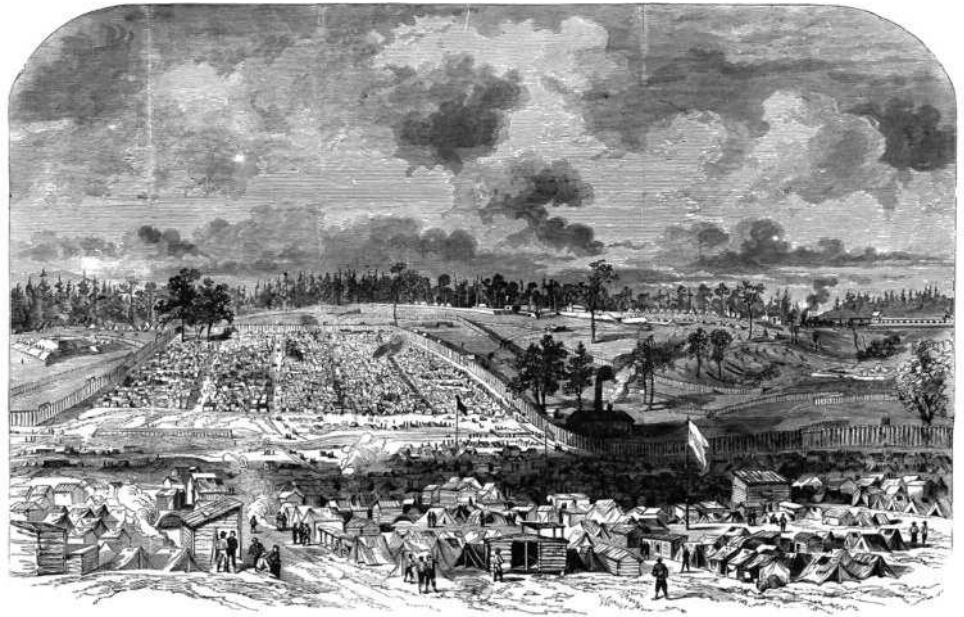
First, an additional 14 1/2 acres were purchased, which all previous attempts had failed to secure. All of the old stockade, and the large earth-works surrounding it were now owned by the WRC and managed by a committee under the leadership of the Dept. Commander.

The improvements were rapid. The entire property was enclosed by a gated fence and a driveway was laid out, immediately inside of the perimeter. At the northwest corner a double gate opened onto a road leading directly to the National Cemetery where the dead of Andersonville were buried. Plans were made to erect a marble pavilion at "Providence Spring", which had been covered by a temporary wooden building. The tangled vines and thick brush along the creek were cleared away, and the ground inside the stockade was sown with Bermuda grass.

As with other Departments, time took its toll on the membership of both the GAR and WRC. In Georgia & South Carolina, these effects were particularly acute. So, in 1910, the WRC deeded the Andersonville Prison property to the Federal Government to be preserved forever as a memorial to the soldiers who were imprisoned there.

We should all take pride in the high and patriotic devotion and foresight of our predecessors, and draw inspiration from their zeal and unfaltering patience in every adversity, to save Andersonville. This was undoubtedly the greatest achievement in the old Department's history. At the Department's Tenth Annual Encampment in 1898, the Commander remarked, "The future history of this most worthy enterprise will continue to be a subject of absorbing interest from year to year, not only to comrades of this Department, but to every loyal person throughout the country, North and South."

In our day, we have seen the fruits of his prophetic words. Andersonville was not only saved, but it has thrived. And today, the Allied Orders in Georgia and South Carolina proudly carry on the traditions of the old Department every Memorial Day at Andersonville.



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ANDERSONVILLE - PRISON - PICTURE  
FOR  
G. A. R. POSTS.

SPECIAL NOTICE

This will be your last chance to get one of these pictures free. We will now offer what remains on hand free to each person or G. A. R. Post, who will send us a club of six subscribers at \$1.00 each to the AMERICAN TRIBUNE. The pictures are the same as sold by the artist, Comrade Thomas O'Don, for \$3.00 each. They are five feet long by three and one-half feet high. They are the last lot that will ever be published. You could get up this club in a few moments' time and make your post a present of the picture. If you intend to make up a club, drop us a note so we can set one of the pictures aside for you. We have not enough on hand for all, and first clubs get the pictures.

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Yours in P., C. and L.,

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