



Foundation Document Overview

Andersonville National Historic Site

Georgia



Contact Information

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Purpose

The purpose statement identifies the specific reason(s) for establishment of a particular park. The purpose statement for Andersonville National Historic Site was drafted through a careful analysis of its enabling legislation and the legislative history that influenced its development. The park was established when the enabling legislation adopted by Congress was signed into law on October 16, 1970. The purpose statement lays the foundation for understanding what is most important about the park.

The purpose of ANDERSONVILLE NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE is to preserve the resources and stories that illustrate the experiences of American prisoners of war throughout U.S. history and to educate the public about the deadliest ground of the Civil War.



Significance

Significance statements express why Andersonville National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit designation as a unit of the national park system. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

1. Andersonville National Historic Site preserves the location of the most notorious of all Civil War military prisons. Nearly 13,000 Americans died at Andersonville, more than in any other prison or battle of the Civil War.
2. The national outrage over conditions at Andersonville and the subsequent trial and execution of Confederate Captain Henry Wirz represented significant steps in the evolution of the laws of war and the humane treatment of prisoners of war.
3. Andersonville National Cemetery, one of only two active national cemeteries managed by the National Park Service, preserves the burial ground of those who perished at Andersonville and honors the sacrifices of all veterans from the Revolutionary War to the present.
4. Andersonville National Historic Site is the only national park established as a memorial to all American prisoners of war.
5. Former prisoners of war partnered with Andersonville National Historic Site to create and develop the National Prisoner of War Museum, the only museum solely dedicated to interpreting the American prisoner of war experience.



Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.



- **Prison site and associated resources.** This encompasses all of the components of the prison camp officially named Camp Sumter. These include the Star Fort, earthworks, wells, potential archeological resources, stockade branch, and the Providence Spring.
- **Commemorative monuments.** This group encompasses all of the physical resources dedicated to commemorating the captives who were confined at Andersonville, those who died, prisoners of war from subsequent wars, and individuals and groups who worked to preserve the historic landscape. These resources include all cemetery and prison site monuments and the POW commemorative walkway. Groups of monuments are listed below:
 - » Sixteen monuments erected by states and veterans groups in the early 1900s
 - » Three monuments dedicated between 1976 and 1989 to prisoners of war of post-Civil War conflicts and unknown soldiers buried in the national cemetery
 - » Five monuments erected by the Woman's Relief Corps between 1908 and 1934
 - » Sixteen memorial plaques located near the National Prisoner of War Museum with space for continued memorialization
- **National cemetery.** The cemetery preserves, protects, and honors the graves of the nearly 13,000 prisoners who died at Camp Sumter as well as nearly 8,000 graves of deceased veterans

from every subsequent conflict in which the United States has been engaged. Other physical resources include the cemetery cultural landscape and its associated features, such as the grave markers, the cemetery wall, and the rostrum.

- **Museum and collections.** The artifacts and other collections contained in the National Prisoner of War Museum provide an outstanding opportunity for education and research to further the understanding of the history of Andersonville and the larger history of prisoners of war throughout American history. The museum courtyard provides a poignant reminder of the sacrifices of prisoners of war throughout U.S. history and a moving portrayal of resolve in the face of despair.
- **Commemorative atmosphere.** The physical environment of Andersonville National Historic Site fosters an awareness of patriotism, sacrifice, duty, honor, country, and civic education.
- **Timeless connection to the prisoner of war experience.** The national historic site creates a setting in which former prisoners of war can unite with one another through a shared experience and other Americans can gain an appreciation and understanding of the constant relevancy of this experience.

Other Important Resources and Values

Andersonville National Historic Site contains other important resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but should be considered in management and planning decisions.

- **Stockade reconstructions.**
- **Civilian Conservation Corps structures and features.**
- **Former prisoners of war and families.**



Description

Andersonville National Historic Site was established by Congress on October 16, 1970, by Public Law 91-465 (H.R. 140). The 515-acre park consists of the site of the Civil War military prison Camp Sumter, the Andersonville National Cemetery, and the National Prisoner of War Museum.

Andersonville, or Camp Sumter as it was officially known, was one of the largest of many Confederate military prisons established during the Civil War. It was built early in 1864 after Confederate officials decided to move the large number of Federal prisoners kept in and around Richmond, Virginia, to a place of greater security and a more abundant food supply. During the 14 months the prison existed, more than 45,000 Union soldiers were confined here. Nearly 13,000 died from disease, poor sanitation, malnutrition, overcrowding, and exposure to the elements.

Andersonville National Cemetery was established to provide a permanent place of honor for those who died in military service to our country. The initial interments, beginning in February 1864, were those who died at Andersonville prison. The cemetery remains open for the burial of veterans and presently contains more than 20,000 interments.

Andersonville is the only national park in the National Park System to serve as a memorial to all American prisoners of war throughout the nation's history. In 1998 the National Prisoner of War Museum opened at Andersonville, dedicated to the men and women of this country who have suffered captivity.

The national historic site includes 38 historic structures identified on the List of Classified Structures. Many of these structures are monuments placed by the states to honor those who suffered and died at Andersonville. The site also manages a large artifact and archival collection totaling nearly 75,000 items.

