

UNION CONFEDERATE MONUMENT

The Battle of Westport

In August 1864, Confederate Maj. Gen. Sterling Price led an expedition from Arkansas into Missouri. The raid had several objectives: to capture St. Louis, divert Union manpower from the East, recruit Missourians for the Confederates, and obtain military supplies. The raid went badly. St. Louis and Jefferson City were well defended, so Price decided to capture Kansas City. On October 23, Price's troops assaulted a strong Union defensive position held by Maj. Gen. Samuel Curtis at Westport, across the river from Kansas City. The Confederates retreated after a four-hour battle, leaving some 1,500 dead and wounded on the field.



Maj. Gen. Sterling Price, C.S.A. Alabama Department of Archives and History.

Caring for the Wounded

After the battle, Westport buildings were pressed into service as hospitals, including Curtis' headquarters, the Harris House hotel. A local newspaper praised Kansas City women for their tireless efforts in caring for the wounded. A Westport hospital reported eighteen wounded Confederates; four had died and it was feared more would follow. The number of Confederates who died following the Battle of Westport is unknown. A number of wounded were captured, treated, and died in area hospitals. Fifteen were reportedly buried in the Kansas City Cemetery.

The Confederate Monument

In 1908, the Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead began documenting the burials in Kansas City and learned that the Kansas City Cemetery no longer existed. The Confederate remains had been moved to Union Cemetery in the 1870s, and the cemetery records had been lost in a fire. It was not possible to determine where the dead might have been reinterred.

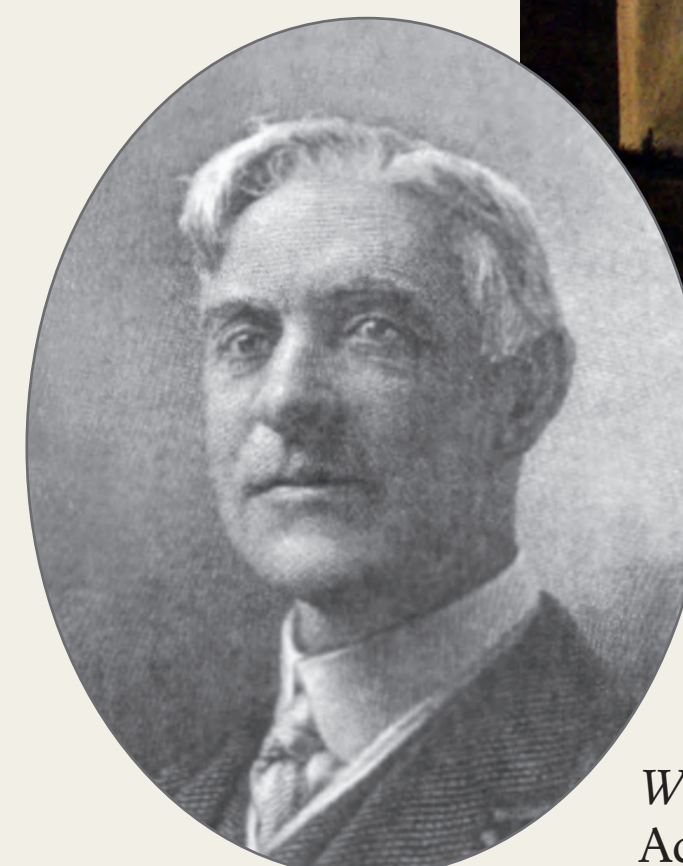
William P. Boreland, a U.S. Congressman from Missouri, worked with the Commission and cemetery officials to have a plot deeded to the U.S.

government for the placement of a memorial to the fifteen

Confederate soldiers who died in Kansas City. In 1911, the Commission erected a simple obelisk with bronze dedication plaques. That October, the mayor of Kansas City presided over the unveiling, which included Union and Confederate dignitaries. Judge John B. Stone, a former Confederate soldier, praised the federal government saying, "We are proud to honor a government broad enough and generous enough to erect a monument as this to their defeated enemies."



The contractor's concept for the Union Confederate Monument, c. 1911. National Archives and Records Administration.



William Boreland. Memorial Addresses, 1922.

Toward Reconciliation

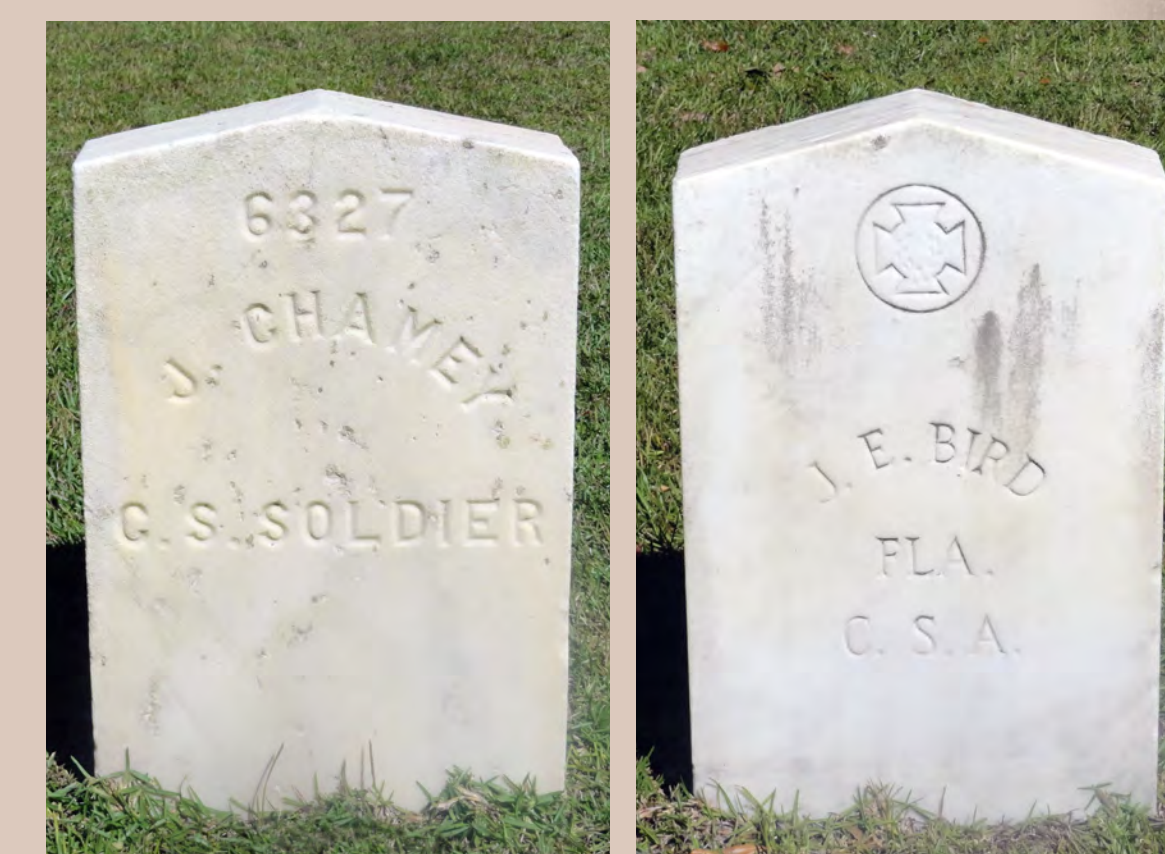
On May 30, 1868, the Grand Army of the Republic decorated Union and Confederate graves at Arlington National Cemetery. Thirty years later President William McKinley proclaimed:

The Union is once more the common altar of our love and loyalty, our devotion and sacrifice . . . Every soldier's grave made during our unfortunate Civil War is a tribute to American valor . . . in the spirit of fraternity we should share with you in the care of the graves of the Confederate soldiers.

The War Department created the Confederate section at Arlington in 1901, and marked the graves with distinctive pointed-top marble headstones. Five years later, Congress created the Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead to identify and mark the graves of Confederates who died in Northern prisons. Its mission was later expanded to encompass all national cemeteries that contained Confederate burials.

Four former Confederate officers headed the Commission over its lifetime. By 1916, it had marked in excess of 25,500 graves and erected monuments in locations where individual graves could not be identified.

In 1930, the War Department authorized the addition of the Southern Cross of Honor to the Confederate headstone.



North Alton Confederate Cemetery Monument, 1909, Alton, Ill. Original Commission headstone (left) and headstone with Southern Cross of Honor (right).

