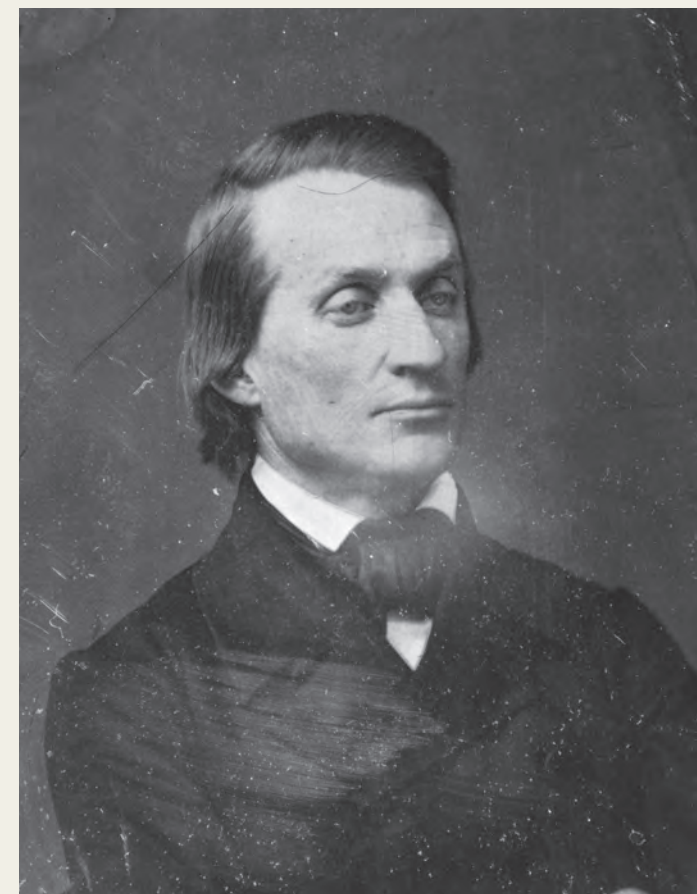


CONFEDERATE BURIALS IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY

The Confederate Occupation

The War Department established Fort Smith in 1817 and occupied it until April 23, 1861. Learning that the Arkansas militia was advancing, the garrison retreated, taking arms and supplies from the fort with them. Hours later, Arkansas Volunteers led by Col. Solon Borland, a former U.S. senator, marched into Fort Smith and took possession in the name of the state of Arkansas.



Solon Borland, Democratic Senator from Arkansas, 1848-1853. Library of Congress.

Fort Smith's location, transportation and communications network, and storage facilities made it an important supply depot. Over the next thirty months, Confederates launched military expeditions from this location. As the Union army approached Fort Smith on August 31, 1863, the Confederates withdrew.

During the occupation, Confederates buried their soldiers in the existing post cemetery. In 1867, the post cemetery was designated Fort Smith National Cemetery.



Fort Smith, Arkansas, c. 1855. Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

The Confederate Monument

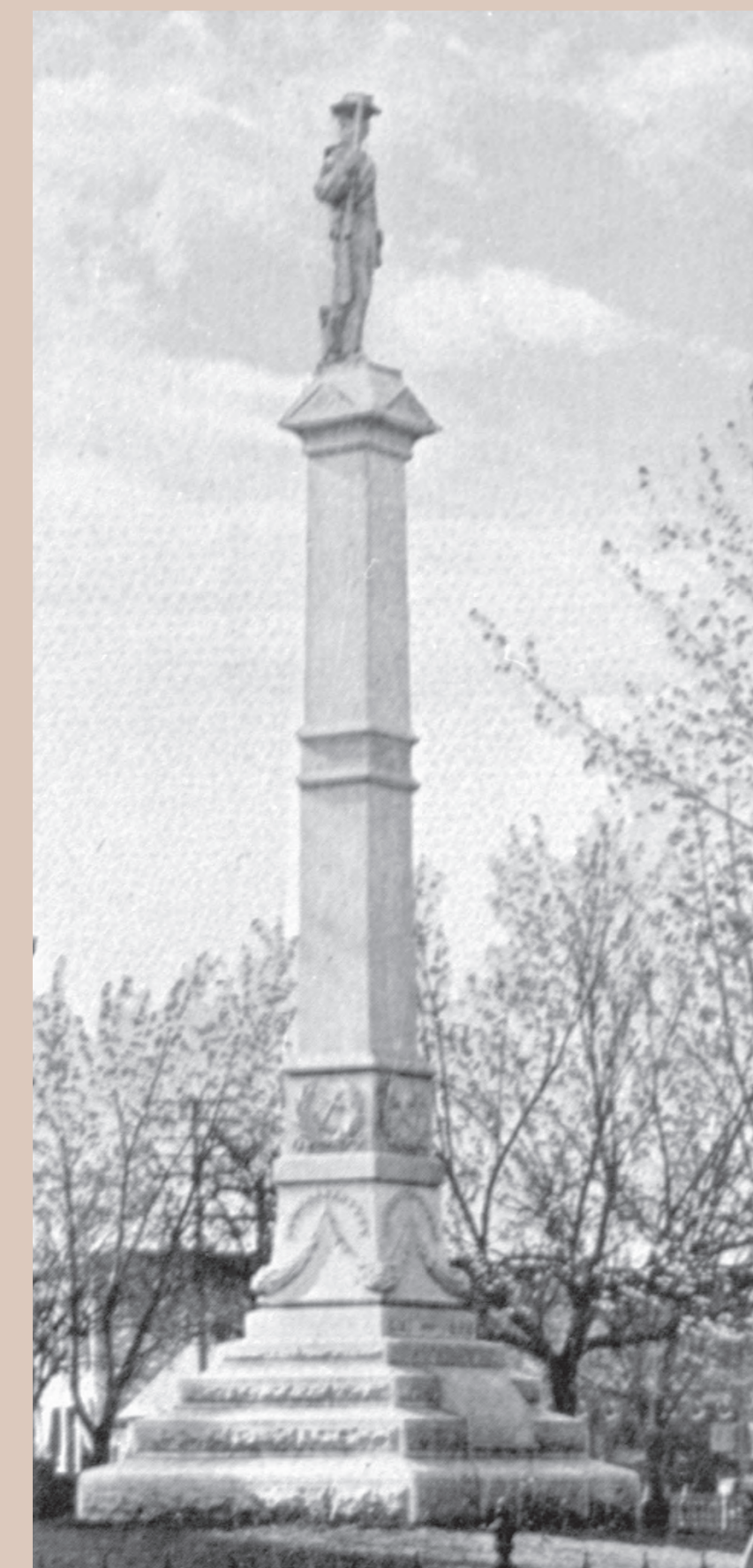


James F. Fagan, c. 1880. Arkansas History Commission.

Sometime after Fort Smith National Cemetery was established, former Confederate general James F. Fagan and Dr. Elias Duval decided to erect a memorial here honoring Confederate dead buried in the cemetery including Gens. Alexander E. Steen and James McIntosh. Fagan and Duval, aided by the women of Fort Smith, raised money for the memorial and sometime before 1898, "a modest, yet appropriate shaft" was erected in Section 2. A tornado in

January 1898 destroyed the memorial and caused considerable damage to the cemetery.

The United Confederate Veterans and the United Daughters of the Confederacy raised money to replace the monument, and in 1901 they submitted the design to the War Department. The design was rejected because the inscription violated government policy that text be "without praise and without censure." The proposed monument was eventually erected on the Sebastian County courthouse lawn, where it stands today. About 1904, the War Department replaced the destroyed monument with a small marble obelisk.



The Fort Smith Confederate Monument on the courthouse lawn, 1960. Arkansas History Commission.

Fort Smith National Cemetery

The largest group of Confederate burials in Fort Smith National Cemetery is in Section 3; other interments are scattered throughout Sections 1, 2, 4 and 8. Many graves contain two or more burials, and some as many as thirty individuals.



Confederate headstones, c. 1934, with the Southern Cross of Honor. The 1904 monument is in the background. National Cemetery Administration.

The Confederate Headstones

The distinctive pointed-top headstones on the Confederate graves were installed after 1930. That year, the War Department authorized the addition of the Southern Cross of Honor to the Confederate headstone. The United Daughters of the Confederacy created the cross medal in 1898 and bestowed it upon Confederate veterans or their families. The emblem on the headstone is a simplified version of what appears on the medal.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

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