**Andersonville**

Andersonville, or Camp Sumter as it was known officially, held more prisoners at any given time than any of the other Confederate military prisons. It was built in early 1864 after Confederate officials decided to move the large number of Federal prisoners in and around Richmond to a place of greater security and more abundant food.

The first prisoners were brought to Andersonville in late February 1864. During the next few months, approximately 400 more arrived each day. By the end of June, 26,000 men were penned in an area originally meant for only 10,000 prisoners. The largest number held at any one time was more than 33,000 in August 1864. The Confederate government could not provide adequate housing, food, clothing or medical care to their Federal captives because of deteriorating economic conditions in the South, a poor transportation system, and the desperate need of the Confederate army for food and supplies.

These conditions, along with a breakdown of the prisoner exchange system between the North and the South, created much suffering and a high mortality rate. “There is so much filth about the camp that it is terrible trying to live here,” one prisoner, Michigan cavalryman John Ransom, confided to his diary. “With sunken eyes, blackened countenances from pitch pine smoke, rags, and disease, the men look sickening. The air reeks with nastiness.” Still another recalled, “Since the day I was born, I never saw such misery.”

When the War ended, Captain Henry Wirz, the prison’s commandant, was arrested and charged with conspiring with high Confederate officials to “impair and injure the health and destroy the lives…of Federal prisoners” and “murder in violation of the laws of war.” Such a conspiracy never existed, but public anger and indignation throughout the North over the conditions at Andersonville demanded appeasement. Tried and found guilty by a military tribunal, Wirz was hanged in Washington, D.C., on November 10, 1865. Wirz was the only person executed for war crimes during the Civil War.