

Samuel P Rainwater
PVT Company D, 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment
by Barry Rainwater

Samuel P Rainwater was a Private in D Company, 1st Alabama Infantry Regiment. He enlisted, at the age of 27, on April 1, 1861. He first served in Company G, Perote Guards, along with his brother John Daniel Rainwater. Samuel was later transferred to company D. Samuel fought at the battle of Island No. 10. He was captured on April 8, 1862 when Confederate forces surrendered at the battle of Island No. 10. He was moved to the Camp Douglas prisoner of war camp in Chicago, IL. He died in captivity on September 3, 1862. He, along with approximately 6,000 other confederate soldiers, were buried at Oak Woods cemetery, Chicago, IL. Samuel P Rainwater, D, 1 Ala is identified on a bronze marker at the base of the Confederate mound monument at Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago IL.

1st Alabama Infantry Regiment

The 1st Alabama Infantry regiment was the first regiment organized under the act of the State legislature authorizing the enlistment of troops for twelve months. The companies rendezvoused at Pensacola in February and March 1861, and about the 1st of April organized by the election of regimental officers. Transferred to the army of the Confederate States soon after, it remained on duty at Pensacola for a year. It was chiefly occupied in manning the batteries and took part in the bombardments of November 23, and January 1, 1862. Being the oldest regiment in the Confederate service, it was first called on to re-enlist for the war, at the end of the first year, and seven of the companies did so. Ordered to Tennessee, the regiment, 1000 strong, reached Island Ten March 12, 1862.

Battle of Island Ten

In preparation for the defense of the Mississippi River, Confederate General Gideon Pillow, commanding the newly formed Army of Liberation, arrived in the small hamlet of New Madrid, Missouri in late July of 1861. The region was to be the first line of the Confederate defense of the Mississippi River Valley and the base for future expeditions up the river, both by land and water.

The site was chosen for several reasons. New Madrid was the terminus of the main river road leading to St. Louis, which was 175 miles up river. The town itself was located at the top of two horseshoe bends in the river, which appeared on the map like the letter "S" laid on its side. Up river from New Madrid lay Island Number 10, situated in the middle of the river, which could be easily fortified to block Federal passage. Engineers proclaimed the Island was without equal for the defense of the River. However, Pillow, a political General from Tennessee, had different aspirations. His first object was an invasion of St. Louis. Pillow became bogged down when he attempted to join up with General William J. Hardee. Thus, the construction of fortifications at New Madrid and Island No. 10 were ignored and his grand army sat idle.

During the period February 29 to March 2, 1862 in the preliminary moves of the Shiloh campaign, General Leonidas Polk sent a 5,000-man division commanded by Brigadier General John P. McCown to reinforce the 2,000 confederate forces then occupying these two river positions. McCown's army arrived at New Madrid and the Island in hurried confusion in late February of 1862, but in the days that followed the men managed to mount about 50 heavy guns (32 pounders and larger) in the Island No. 10 area. In total, the earthen works on Island No. 10, together with five shore batteries were reinforced with eight infantry regiments, several cavalry squadrons and a full regiment of heavy artillery.

In contrast, federal forces knew they had to reduce these fortifications in connection with their general offensive down the Mississippi (Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, and Shiloh campaigns). Major General Henry Halleck sent a portion of Brig. Gen. John Pope's force in central Missouri to reinforce Grant's attack on Fort Donelson; he also told Pope to organize a corps from the remaining troops in Missouri and capture New Madrid and Island No. 10.

General Pope realized that the 50 heavy guns and the small fleet of gunboats the Confederates had in and near the position necessitated a regular siege operation. He sent for siege artillery and started a bombardment and the construction of approaches on March 13, 1862. On this same date, General McCown ordered the evacuation of New Madrid and moved the garrison across the river to the peninsula in order to avoid being isolated. For this action he was relieved of command and succeeded by Brig. Gen. William W. MacKall.

General Pope now decided to cross the river south of New Madrid and attack the defenses of Island No. 10. Since his supporting naval transports were upstream, he had a canal cut through the swamps so that boats could by-pass the defenses. The canal was finished on April 4, 1862. Two Federal gunboats suppressed the Confederate batteries to support the river crossing, and on April 7, four Federal regiments were ferried across the Mississippi to cut the Confederate line of retreat at Tiptonville. On April 8, 1862 MacKall surrendered the 3,500 man force of Island No. 10 (over 1,500 of whom were sick). 500 others escaped through the swamps.

Camp Douglas, Chicago, Illinois

Camp Douglas was a prisoner of war internment camp near the 35th-street estate of Stephen Douglas, named for the late senator. The camp was populated by prisoners from the battle for Fort Donelson, Fort Henry, other battles from the western campaigns such as Island Ten. The first prisoners arrived at Camp Douglas in February, 1862. Like all P.O.W. camps of its day, it was rife with communicable diseases - smallpox and dysentery. Within one year the monthly mortality rate was at ten percent, a rate unsurpassed by any other prisoner of war camp in the North or South. Ultimately, one in five prisoners, or twenty percent, died at Camp Douglas establishing the camp's reputation for extermination. The highest death rate at Andersonville, GA was nine percent set for August, 1864. In total and estimated 6,000 died at Camp Douglas and about 12,000 at Andersonville.

By the end of the war, thousands had died and been buried in the North Side's Old City Cemetery. Upon the closing of City Cemetery, the bodies interred there were moved to the new cemeteries of Rosehill, Graceland, and Oak Woods.

Oak Woods Cemetery, Chicago, Illinois

A section of Oak Woods is known as the "Confederate Mound". A 46-foot monument stands alone, surrounded by cannon and cannonballs. Buried around it are an estimated six thousand soldiers and sailors of the Confederacy.

The federal government purchased a section of Oak Woods in 1867 to accommodate the 4200 known casualties of Camp Douglas. The coffins were placed in concentric circular trenches. Although the government only had 4200 names, cemetery records indicate that closer to 6000 coffins were buried here. In addition to the unknown number of Southerners, twelve Union soldiers are buried here as well, guards from the camp. Their markers, reading "Unknown U.S. Soldier", stand in a single row behind one cannon.

The 46-foot monument was dedicated on Memorial Day, May 30, 1895. Over 100,000 people attended the ceremonies, including large numbers of men from both armies. President Cleveland and his cabinet were there as well. In 1911, bronze panels were added to the base, with the soldiers' names, ranks, units, and home states.

The Confederate Mound at Oak Woods is the largest Confederate burial ground in the North.

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