

I was at the Florida Archives in Tallahassee, 15 March 1985, and from a book, "RISE UP SO EARLY - A History of Florence County, South Carolina" by G. Wayne King, and published for Florence County Historical Collection by The Reprint County, published in Spartanburg, South Carolina, 1981. Following are my notes:

Page 49..."On September 17, 1864, with the construction of the stockade scarcely begun, over 6,000 prisoners arrived from Charleston. Guarded by old men and teenage boys, the gaunt prisoners were assembled in an open field to await completion of the camp."

2,802 prisoners died at Florence.

The Florence Camp functioned for only five months"

General Winder wanted the prisoners moved to another site moved to another site; reason was the vulnerability of Florence to raid by Federal Cavalry. Union lines were only 60 miles distant. Besides this, Winder noticed the Florence site was unhealthy. The stockade was located in a morass. Of the 24 acres it covered, almost 6 acres could not be used at all. The presence of over 12,000 prisoners made this totally impractical as a suitable site, according to Winder, prison supervisor, also terrain did not provide adequate water supply for the prisoners. Winder wanted to send prisoners back to Andersonville but never succeeded. Events confounded his every effort. By the end of January he wrote he wrote his superiors in despair. "I am at a loss to know where to send prisoners from Florence. In One direction the enemy is in the way. In the other the question of supplies presents an insuperable barrier." He suggested the prisoners be paroled. Death solved Winder's dilemma. While visiting Florence on February 16, 1865, he dropped dead from a heart attack. The problem fell on the shoulders of Col. Henry Forno, the Sr. Officer at Florence after the death of Winder.

On February 15, 1865, Sherman's advance cut the last railroad line leading to the area. On the same day, Forno began the removal of all able-bodied prisoners at Florence for transportation to Greensboro, North Carolina. Here they were paroled through the Union lines.

The sick and wounded prisoners were paroled through Union lines at Wilmington, North Carolina. Their attendants removed their rags, scrubbed the free men "as thoroughly as out hides would permit" and issued them new clothes boarding them on ships for home.

By the end of the month, the Florence camp was empty and quiet. Even quieter however was the nearby cemetery where 2,802 Union soldiers who died while in captivity were buried.