

AUGUST.1861-65

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At the outbreak of the **Civil War**, Danville had a population of some 5,000 people. During those four years of war, the town was transformed into a strategic center of **Confederate** activity. Local planter and **industrialist William T. Sutherlin** was named **quartermaster** of its depot, the rail center was critical for supplying Confederate forces, and a hospital station was established for Confederate wounded. A network of batteries, breastworks, redoubts and rifle pits defended the town. A prison camp was set up, with the conversion of six tobacco warehouses, including one owned by Sutherlin, for use as prisons. At one time they held more than 5,000 captured **Federal** soldiers. **Malnutrition** and **dysentery**, plus a **smallpox** epidemic in 1864, caused the death of 1,314 of these prisoners. Their remains have been interred in the **Danville National Cemetery**. The **Richmond and Danville Railroad** was the main supply route into **Petersburg**, where Lee's **Army of Northern Virginia** was **holding the defensive** line to protect **Richmond**. The Danville supply train ran until General **Stoneman's** Union cavalry troops tore up the tracks. This event was immortalized in the song, "**The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down**".