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POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY HISTORY

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INTRODUCTION

Origins of the National Cemetery System

The advent of the Civil War found the people of the North wholly unprepared for war. No less unprepared were the civilian and military authorities of the Union Army. The rapid expansion of the United States Army—a mere frontier constabulary of about 16,000 men prior to 1861—and the mobilization of a vast "citizen's" army to meet the demands of "total" war created unprecedented problems of organization and administration. Confronted with these problems, the civilian and military authorities of the Union Army attempted to resolve them largely by accommodating them to existing organizational forms. Frequently this method of solving the organizational problems and needs of the Union Army proved wholly inadequate. A case in point is the effort made to provide for the proper care, identification, and burial of those "who died in defense of the Union." Precedent was not entirely lacking with respect to this problem, but it was scarcely adequate as a guide to the burial needs of the Union Army of 1861-65.

Between the end of the War of 1812 and the outbreak of the Civil War, a satisfactory burial policy was evolved for a small regular army acting as a frontier constabulary. Responsibility for the identification, burial, and proper registration of graves of soldiers who died at frontier posts or were killed in frontier actions, as well as care of the resulting cemeteries, devolved upon

the Quartermaster General. While this policy proved sufficiently adequate in time of peace, the Mexican War of 1846-47 proved that it would scarcely suffice in time of war. The field campaigns of the the Mexican War did not approach in severity or magnitude those of the Civil War, yet few or no identifications of remains were made during or after the war.¹ The national cemetery at Mexico City--provided for by a Congressional appropriation in 1850, some twelve years before similar legislation was enacted for the homeland--contains the remains of seven hundred and fifty "unknown" soldiers of the Mexican War which could not be identified upon their exhumation from battlefield graves and reinterment in the cemetery.

But the lesson learned in time of war some fourteen years before seems to have been completely forgotten in the hasty mobilization which took place at the outbreak of the Civil War. And when the first flurry of unplanned mobilization had subsided and some attention could be given to "secondary" problems, the War Department could devise no better solution than a reversion to a burial policy which had proved adequate only in time of peace.

¹Edward Steere, "Genesis of American Graves Registration, 1861-1870," Military Affairs, XII (No. 3; Fall 1948), 150. Mr. Steere is on the staff of the Historical Section, GPO, which is preparing a history of graves registration. For the purposes of this introduction, the writer has been obliged to rely heavily upon the work of Mr. Steere, which also includes the following articles: "Origins of the National Cemetery System," The Quartermaster Review, XXXII (No. 4; Jan.-Feb. 1953), 12-15, 136-39; "Early Growth of the National Cemetery System," The Quartermaster Review, XXXII (No. 5; March-April 1953), 20-22, 121-25; and the "Evolution of the National Cemetery System, 1865-1890," The Quartermaster Review, XXXII (No. 6; May-June 1953), 22-24, 120-123.

In General Orders, No. 75 of September 11, 1861, the War Department ordered the Quartermaster General to supply all general and post hospitals with blank books and forms for the preservation of accurate mortuary records, and to provide materials for the registered headboards which were to be placed over soldiers' graves.² Special Order No. 75 of the same date entrusted departmental and corps commanders with a similar responsibility for the execution of these burial regulations.³

The limitations of these burial regulations were soon apparent. General Orders, No. 75 presupposed a system of national cemeteries and yet no provision was made for the acquisition of burial sites. Public sentiment and indignation in the North at the failure of the government to provide sites for the proper burial of war dead led to the formation of private cemetery associations which set aside plots for this purpose.⁴ Within a year from the First Battle of Manassas, however, Congress responded to public sentiment, when, in the Act of July 17, 1862, it gave the President the authority, "whenever in his opinion it shall be expedient to purchase cemetery grounds, and cause them to be securely enclosed, to be used as a national

²The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880-1900), Series III, I, 498. Hereinafter cited as O.R.

³Ibid.

⁴Miss Stannal, "National Cemeteries" (typescript study prepared for the Director, Memorial Division, Office of the Quartermaster General), pp. 225; cited in Steele, Military Affairs, III, 191.

cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."⁵

An equally serious limitation of General Orders, No. 75 was the fact that these regulations could only be carried out in the rear zone. At the beginning of the war, moreover, these regulations could not even be carried out fully in the rear zone because facilities were lacking or wholly inadequate. But no effort was made to apply the provisions of General Orders, No. 75 to the combat zone; they were construed to apply only to the rear zone or zone of the interior. The War Department attempted to overcome this serious shortcoming six months later in General Order No. 33, April 3, 1862, which directed that:

Section II In order to secure, as far as possible, the decent interment of those who have fallen, or may fall, in battle, it is made the duty of commanding generals to lay off lots of ground in some suitable spot near every battle-field, so soon as it may be in their power and to cause the remains of those killed to be interred, with headboards to the graves bearing numbers, and where practicable, the names of the persons buried in them. A register of each burial ground will be preserved, in which will be noted the marks corresponding with the headboards.⁶

In issuing General Order No. 33 the War Department recognized the desirability and need to provide for the proper identification and burial of those soldiers who died in combat and yet utterly failed to recognize that so revolutionary a burial policy required

⁵Section 18, of "An act to define the Pay and Emoluments of Certain Officers of the Army, and for other purposes," U.S. Statutes at Large, XII, 536.

⁶U.S., Series III, II, 2.

the organization of a special service unit capable of carrying it out. Effective implementation of General Order No. 33 in the combat zone required the organization of a service unit whose sole functions would be the prompt recovery and identification of remains, registration of graves, and the maintenance of temporary cemeteries. Such a unit was momentarily improvised under Captain James M. Moore at the Battle of Fort Stevens, July 11-12, 1864, and showed its value by recovering, identifying, and interring in registered graves the bodies of forty Union soldiers killed in the battle.⁷ But the War Department drew no lesson from the successful accomplishment of this embryo theater graves registration unit. In fact, it was not until the issuance of General Orders, No. 104 in 1917 that the War Department authorized the organization of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Company-- the operating unit of a theater graves registration service-- as part of the military establishment.⁸ Lacking a theater graves registration service, army commanders were compelled to continue the obsolete and inadequate practice of detailing burial parties from the line.

The Union army and corps commanders did their best, it would appear, to implement General Order No. 33, hampered though they were by: (1) the lack of graves registration units and the necessity to detail combat troops to burial parties; (2) the

⁷Stears, Military Affairs, III, 156f.

⁸Ibid., p. 149.

official failure to provide soldiers with any means of identification;⁹ and, (3) the requirements of combat, which frequently involved continuous action, maneuver, and often hasty abandonment of a battlefield, as in the spring campaign of 1864 in Virginia. That their best efforts were often not good enough is apparent from the fact that forty-two percent of the Union dead of the Civil War remain "unknown."¹⁰

While the shortcomings and defects of General Orders, Nos. 75 and 33 were as significant as the provisions of these regulations, nevertheless they, in conjunction with the Act of July 17, 1862, formed the basis for the growth of a national cemeterial system. Subsequent to the passage of the Act of July 17, 1862, and prior to the end of that year, fourteen national cemeteries were established, among them two prewar post cemeteries, several at troop concentration centers, and one on the burial sites of the Battle of Antietam. The establishment of a national cemetery at Sharpsburg, Maryland, resulted from a decision to "transfer the burial sites of major battles into national cemeteries."¹¹ Only five national cemeteries were established

⁹This is the conclusion of Francis A. Lord, who discusses commercial identification discs available to Union soldiers in: "Federal Army Identification Discs of the Civil War," Journal of the Company of Military Collectors and Historians, IV (No. 1: March 1952), 7-9. Lord also cites an unsuccessful effort made "by a civilian to interest the War Department in issuing identification discs as an official item of equipment": in Journal of American Military Institute, III (Spring 1939), 61-63.

¹⁰Boore, Military Affairs, XII, 161.

¹¹Ibid., p. 152.

on battlefield burial sites during the war, of which the most notable was that established at Gettysburg in 1863 under the auspices of private citizens and states.¹² After the war was over, however, this was to be the most important criterion in the selection of sites for the establishment of new national cemeteries.

Within two months of the surrender of the Army of Northern Virginia at Appomattox Court House, the process of exhuming remains from the battlefields and concentrating them in national cemeteries was begun. Captain James M. Moore, who had supervised cemeterial operations in the Washington area during the war as Assistant Quartermaster of the Washington Depot, was ordered by the Secretary of War to supervise the recovery and decent interment of the Union dead at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House in June 1865.¹³ Following the completion of this assignment, Captain Moore was ordered to proceed to Andersonville, Georgia, to perform a similar service in behalf of the Union soldiers who had died in the Confederate prison there.¹⁴ Captain Moore and the "burial" corps under his

¹²In addition to those at Sharpsburg and Gettysburg in the East, battlefield national cemeteries were established during the war at Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Stones River in the West.

¹³Special Orders, No. 122, Headquarters, Middle Military Division, Washington, D. C., June 7, 1865; Records of Regular Officers, Quartermaster Department, Record Group 92, War Records Office, National Archives.

¹⁴Special Orders, No. 19, WFO, June 30, 1865, ibid. The results of Captain Moore's work at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania

supervision succeeded in identifying about 96 per cent of the 12,912 Union remains recovered at Andersonville, in contrast to the identification of only 26 per cent of the 5,350 remains recovered at the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House.¹⁵ This contrast was indicative of the difficulty which was to be encountered in the identification of remains recovered in the combat zone.

Central direction of the reburial program was entrusted to the Quartermaster Department and was assumed by Quartermaster General Meigs, when, on July 3, 1865, he issued General Orders, No. 40.

Officers of the Quartermaster's Department on duty in charge of the several principal posts will report to this office without delay the numbers of interments registered during the war, white and black, loyal and disloyal, to be separately enumerated.

All officers of the Quartermaster's Department who have made interments on battle-fields during the war will report the number of the same, giving the localities, dates of battles, and dates of interments.¹⁶

In response to this general order, quartermaster officers submitted reports which listed only 101,736 recorded interments, or less than 30 per cent of a total of 359,528 Union soldiers killed in action, died of wounds, and from sickness and other causes during the

Court House are summarized in his "Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 1865"; and at Andersonville, Georgia, in a "Special Report," September 20, 1865; to be found in O.R., Series III, V, 316, 319-22.

¹⁵O.R., *ibid.*, p. 321; and Steere, *Military Affairs*, III, 150f.

¹⁶O.R., Series III, V, 316.

war.¹⁷ Analysis of these recorded interments showed that they were predominantly those of soldiers who had died in the rear zone—at hospitals and troop concentration centers—and included few of the burials in the combat zone.¹⁸ Consequently, it was necessary to collect and analyze wartime casualty reports for information concerning the more than 250,000 unrecorded interments. This function was performed under the direction of Colonel C. W. Folsom of the Sixth Division, Quartermaster General's Office; and the information gleaned from the casualty reports, as well as from the reports of recorded interments, proved invaluable to the planning of search and recovery programs and in determining the sites of new cemeteries.¹⁹

To further facilitate the function of Colonel Folsom's office, Quartermaster General Meigs issued General Orders, No. 65 on October 30, 1865. This order required quartermaster officers to submit special reports on the "location and condition of cemeteries known to them" and "recommendations of the means necessary to provide for the preservation of the remains interred therein from desecration."²⁰

Congressional approval and stimulus to the reburial program was expressed in the Joint Resolution of April 21, 1866.

Resolved . . . That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby authorized and required to take immediate measures to

¹⁷Stears, The Quartermaster Review, XXXII(No. 6), 22.

¹⁸I.R., Series III, V, 241.

¹⁹Stears, The Quartermaster Review, XXXII(No. 6), 123.

²⁰General Orders, Quartermaster General's Office, 1866 (Washington, Government Printing Office, [1867]). No pagination.

preserve from desecration the graves of the soldiers of the United States who fall in battle or died of disease in the field and in hospital during the war of the rebellion; to secure suitable burial places in which they may be properly interred; and to have the grounds enclosed, so that the resting-places of the honored dead may be kept sacred forever.²¹

While not fully spelled out until the Act of February 22, 1867, this joint resolution foreshadowed the transfer of authority to purchase land for national cemeteries from the President to the Secretary of War, a measure required by administrative expediency.

From the passage of the Act of July 17, 1862, until June 30, 1866, forty-three national cemeteries were established.²² Of these, ten were located in Virginia and had been established by Lt. Colonel James M. Moore who had been promoted and appointed to supervise the reburial program in Virginia as well as in the District of Columbia. It is at this point, with some conception of the origins of the national cemeterial system, that we must turn to the establishment of Poplar Grove National Cemetery.

²¹U.S. Statutes at Large, XIV, 953.

²²Stears, Military Affairs, XII, 161.

CHAPTER I

ESTABLISHMENT AND CONSTRUCTION

The Petersburg Campaign

Description. - The Battle of June 15 - 18, 1864, marked the beginning of an episode unique in the annals of American warfare. For almost ten long and weary months the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia successfully defended the city of Petersburg, key to the Confederate capital of Richmond, against the frontal assaults and the siege tactics of encirclement and attrition waged by the Union Army of the Potomac. When, on April 2, 1865, encirclement became an imminent reality, the Confederate Army abandoned Petersburg and Richmond in an effort to avoid destruction or capture by the Union Army. Within one week of the evacuation of Petersburg and Richmond, however, the Army of the Potomac succeeded in getting astride the Confederate route of retreat at Appomattox Court House; and there the Army of Northern Virginia was compelled to surrender.

The meeting between Generals Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant on April 9, 1865, brought to a close a campaign which had its inception at the Wilderness on May 5, 1864. In this campaign (the Virginia Campaign), as well as in the other campaigns of 1864 - 65 in the remainder of the Confederacy, General Grant - - General-in-Chief of the Union Armies - - was determined to bring the Civil War

to a victorious end by crushing all Confederate resistance.

In the Eastern theater, the Army of the Potomac was assigned the hitherto impossible task of destroying the Confederate Army of Northern Virginia and capturing the Confederate capital -- Richmond. This the Union Army failed to do in the Battles of: (1) the Wilderness, May 5 - 7, 1864; (2) Spotsylvania Court House, May 8 - 19, 1864; and, (3) Cold Harbor, June 3 - 12, 1864. Though its ranks were seriously depleted in these three engagements, the Army of Northern Virginia remained intact and retained possession of the Confederate capital and its defenses.

Having failed to achieve his objectives north of the James River, General Grant realized that they might be attained south of this river by the capture of Petersburg. As a strategic rail and road center through which war materiel from the lower South flowed to the defenders of Richmond, Petersburg was the key to the Confederate capital. Capture of Petersburg would compel the Army of Northern Virginia to abandon the defenses of Richmond and to move into the field where it would not have the benefit of strong defense works to nullify the numerical superiority of the Union Army.

But the initial attempt to capture Petersburg by a frontal assault on June 15 - 18, 1864, failed. With the exception of the Battle of the Crater on July 30, 1864, therefore, General Grant largely abandoned efforts to capture Petersburg in this manner after June 18. Instead he adopted the tactics of siege warfare -- encirclement and attrition -- to effect the fall of this city.

Holding to siege fortifications east of Petersburg, General Grant employed his left flank in a gradual enveloping movement to the south and west of the Confederate defenses of the city. After almost ten months of both victory and defeat, the left flank of the Army of the Potomac was brought to rest on the Appomattox River west of Petersburg. Confronted with the threat of encirclement, the Army of Northern Virginia hastily evacuated Petersburg, and Richmond as well, on the night of April 2, 1865. The Confederate withdrawal and retreat was to no avail, however, for within one week the Union Army had cut the Army of Northern Virginia off from further escape at Appomattox Court House. In that small village on the afternoon of April 9, 1865, therefore, General Lee met General Grant in the McLean House and surrendered his exhausted and decimated army to the Union commander.

Burial Practices of the Army of the Potomac. - The nature of the Petersburg Campaign was such that it both facilitated and hindered an improvement in the burial practices of the Army of the Potomac. Trench warfare and the lulls between the major engagements of the siege facilitated recovery and proper interment of those Union soldiers killed in action. Moreover, the practice of forwarding the most seriously wounded from the field hospitals to the depot hospital in the rear zone at City Point - - where more men and time were available to establish cemeteries and to give proper burial to those soldiers who died of their wounds - - decreased the number of

burials on the field of combat.¹ On the other hand, recovery and identification of the combat dead during the Petersburg Campaign was primarily hindered by the failure of the Union Army to retain the field of combat after several major engagements and far ranging cavalry raids.²

Under these circumstances it would appear that the commanders of the Army of the Potomac made every effort to recover the remains of the combat dead.³ But even where recovery was effected, usually as a result of a short truce between the combatants, the standard practice of burial of the dead where they had fallen predominated. General Order No. 33 received only nominal compliance from the Union commanders during the campaign. The only significant attempt to collect the scattered remains of the combat dead occurred early in 1865 when the II and IX Army Corps established cemeteries

¹Comparison of the photographs of graves at Warren's Station and City Point illustrates the contrast between burial practices in the combat and rear zones respectively; see Plates III and IV in Appendix IV.

² Notably the following battles and cavalry raids: (1) Weldon Railroad, June 22 - 23, 1864; (2) Crater, July 30, 1864; (3) Ream's Station, August 25, 1864; and (4) First Hatcher's Run, October 27, 1864.

³ O.G., Series I, Vols. XL, XLII, XLVI, passim.

at, and in the vicinity of, Meade's Station.⁴ The practice and the results were described by a soldier of the IX Corps in the following words:

[February 26, 1865] A detail is made to dig up the dead that have fallen before Petersburg this summer. "11 are to be buried in one burying ground.

[March 6, 1865] I took a ramble up to corps headquarters and visited the division cemetery. "They have a good fence around it, and it is filling up fast. They keep taking up the bodies that are scattered along the line. There are six of my regiment there now, and a number more to remove yet. A few are within the rebel line on the left and cannot be gotten now."⁵

But the 1,214 Union soldiers buried in the cemeteries at, and in the vicinity of, Meade's Station⁶ were only a fraction of the total number killed in combat during the Petersburg Campaign. In the absence of complete casualty reports it is difficult to arrive at an

⁴A cemetery was established near Peebles' House in October 1864 by the IX Army Corps, Army of the Potomac, but this cemetery contained only thirty-one graves; see: "Register of the Burial Ground of the 9th A. C. Lot west of Peebles' House before Petersburg, Va. Dead of Sept. Oct. & Nov. 1864 -," in Box 179, Records Group 92 (O.R.G.), War Records Office, National Archives.

⁵The Civil War Diary of William Boston, A Union Soldier of Company H, Twentieth Michigan Volunteer Infantry, Ninth Army Corps, August 19, 1862 - July 4, 1865, ed. Orlan W. Boston (Ann Arbor, Michigan: n.p. (misc), 1937), pp. 77, 80. A copy of this diary is to be found in the library of Petersburg National Military Park.

⁶Roll of Honor. Names of Soldiers who Died in Defense of the American Union, Interred in New York, Illinois, Virginia, West Virginia, Missouri, and the Territories of Colorado and Utah, VII (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867), 62-76.

accurate figure for the total number of combat dead. Analysis of existing reports, however, indicates that at least 5,114 Union soldiers were killed in action in this campaign.⁷ Based on this figure, which must be considered low, the Union soldiers interred at, and in the vicinity of, Meade's Station represent only 23.7 per cent of the combat dead of the Petersburg Campaign. The Union soldiers who were killed in action at Petersburg, therefore, were buried predominantly in scattered graves on the battlefield.

The burial practices described above were revealed in substance by Colonel C. W. Folsom to Quartermaster General Meigs on November 23, 1865. In a special report, submitted in accordance with the requirements of General Orders, No. 65,⁸ Colonel Folsom --

(O.R., Series I, Vols. XI, XIII, XLVI, Parts I, passim. Statistical analyses of casualties in the Civil War give varying estimates of the number of Union soldiers killed in action in the Petersburg Campaign. Frederick Phisterer, *Statistical Record of the Armies of the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), pp. 217ff. gives the number as 4,997. William F. Fox, *Regimental Losses in the American Civil War 1861-1865. A Treatise on the Extent and Nature of the Mortuary Losses in the Union Regiments with Full and Exhaustive Statistics Compiled from the Official Records on File in the State Military Bureaus and at Washington* (Albany: Albany Publishing Co., 1889), pp. 547ff., gives the number as 5,233. As for the work of Thomas L. Livermore, *Numbers and Losses in the Civil War in America, 1861-65* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1900), pp. 115 - 139, it is of little value since some losses are omitted and the author does not always separate those killed in action from the wounded.

⁸Quana, p. 9.

who had been attached to the Quartermaster Department, Army of the Potomac, during the Petersburg Campaign - - reported the existence of the II and IX Army Corps cemeteries at, and in the vicinity of, Meade's Station.⁹ Though these cemeteries had been established a scant ten or eleven months earlier, Colonel Folsom reported that the fences enclosing them and the headboards marking the graves were already decaying. Straying cattle would soon break through and complete the destruction of the fences, in Colonel Folsom's opinion, if they were not first torn down by neighboring farmers to alleviate the fuel shortage. As for the "sympathies" of the farmers, Colonel Folsom feared that they "would not lead them to the side of preservation"; consequently, they would soon begin "to fence in and plough the fields which were deserted." Not only would the cemeteries be partially destroyed, but - - equally, if not more important - - the more numerous "scattered graves would be obliterated" unless some action was soon taken. To prevent such desecration from taking place, Colonel Folsom recommended that

an officer or officers should be detailed or commissioned to select suitable grounds, and purchase them for a permanent military cemetery or cemeteries, having regard of course to those now established and making them the nuclei of any needed enlargements. All scattered remains to be removed to those grounds.¹⁰

⁹Colonel C. K. Folsom to Quartermaster General M. G. Heigs, November 23, 1865; Box 179, Records Group 92 (OWG), War Records Office, National Archives.

¹⁰Ibid.

THE SITE

Selection. - No action was taken by the Quartermaster Department on the recommendations of Colonel Folsom until the following spring.

On April 17, 1866, Lt. Colonel James M. Moore, who had been supervising the reburial program and the establishment of new national cemeteries in Virginia since the preceding fall, forwarded a request to the Secretary of War for authority to select sites for the establishment of national cemeteries in the vicinity of Petersburg and Richmond.¹¹ Within two weeks Lt. Colonel Moore was informed that his request had been approved, and he was ordered to "proceed to carry out the instructions of the Secretary of War" to

cause eligible Sites to be Selected and report the Same with proper estimates to the Secretary of War for his approval. The report to be accompanied by proper descriptions of the quantity of land, its value & a survey with an abstract of title.¹²

Acting on these instructions and orders Lt. Colonel Moore apparently surveyed the battlefields at Petersburg in the following month and chose the wartime campgrounds of the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers on the Flower's farm as the site for a national cemetery.

¹¹Brigadier General J. J. Dana to Lt. Colonel M. M. Moore, April 30, 1866, Pres. Copies, Letters Sent, QMS, Cemeterial Affairs, April 25 to August 23, 1866, Records Group 92 (QMS), War Records Office, National Archives.

¹²ibid.

History. - Located between the Halifax and Vaughan Roads, some six miles southwest of Petersburg, the Flower's farm had been purchased by John Flower on March 21, 1855, shortly after his arrival in Virginia from Delaware County, Pennsylvania.¹³ On April 25, 1856, John Flower sold this 450 acre tract of land, for which he had paid \$6,750, to the Reverend Mr. Thomas Brinton Flower for the sum of \$7,888.43.¹⁴ Nothing is known of the history of the Flower's farm from 1855 to 1864, but little distinction appears to have come to it until the advent of its occupation by the 50th New York Engineers in the fall of 1864.

As a result of the Union victory in the Battle of the Weldon Railroad, August 18 - 21, 1864, the left flank of the Army of the Potomac came to rest on the Petersburg and Weldon Railroad.¹⁵ Subsequently, Union siege fortifications were extended to this railroad from the Jerusalem Plank Road. When these fortifications had been

¹³Deed Book, VIII, 270, Dinwiddie County Records, Dinwiddie Court House, Dinwiddie, Virginia. For the location of the Flower's farm see the map in Appendix I.

¹⁴Ibid., pp 270, 522f. It has been impossible to determine the relationship between John and Thomas Brinton Flower. It may have been that of father and son or brothers, since the records indicate that Thomas Brinton Flower lent John Flower \$5,000 on February 21, 1855, apparently for the purpose of purchasing the farm one month later; ibid., p. 273.

¹⁵See location map in Appendix I

completed and the newly won positions consolidated, the Union Army once again thrust its left flank westward. Emerging as the victor of the Battle of Peble's Farm or Poplar Springs Church, September 29 to October 1, 1864, the Army of the Potomac had now established its left flank some three miles west of the Walden Railroad. Throughout the remainder of October, therefore, the Union siege fortifications were extended from Fort Wadsworth on the Walden Railroad to Fort Fisher, almost two miles beyond the Flower's farm.¹⁶

Much of the work of building the fortifications from Fort Wadsworth to Fort Fisher was performed by or under the direction of the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers.¹⁷ For convenience, therefore, the camp of the engineers was moved to the Flower's farm in the latter half of October 1864.¹⁸ This campsite was occupied by the 50th New York Engineers from late October 1864 to March 29, 1865.¹⁹ On the latter date, the engineers broke camp to take part in the final thrust against the Confederate defenses of Petersburg and, following the Confederate evacuation of the city, in the Appomattox Campaign.

¹⁶See location map in Appendix I.

¹⁷O.R., Series I, Vol. XLII, Part I, passim; and Volunteer Organizations, Civil War, 50th New York Engineers, Records Group 94 (Office of the Adjutant General), War Records Office, National Archives.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹O.R., Series I, XLVI, Part I, 642.

In the little more than five months during which they occupied a portion of the Flower's farm, the 50th New York Engineers radically altered the appearance of this area. The intensive work required on the building and strengthening of the siege fortifications during October and November 1864 prevented the engineers from doing very much to improve their camp. A period of relative inactivity followed from December 1864 to March 1865, however, and the engineers did their best to make their quarters as comfortable as possible for the winter.²⁰ Previous experience had made the engineers adept at the construction of log huts; consequently, during the winter of 1864-65 they transformed their camp into a small village of semi-permanent quarters.²¹

Most significant from the standpoint of this study, however, was the erection of Poplar Grove Church by the 50th New York Engineers

²⁰ Volunteer Organizations, Civil War, 50th New York Engineers, Records Group 94 (OAG), War Records Office, National Archives.

²¹ While the only photographs included in this study illustrating the skill of the 50th N. Y. Engineers are those of Poplar Grove Church, many photographs of the huts and quarters built by these engineers at their camp on the Flower's farm are available in the Library of Congress. For a descriptive list of these photographs see Appendix III.

in February 1865.²² Having completed their winter quarters, the engineers turned to the construction of a church to while away their many leisure hours. With abundant timber at hand, Captain Michael H. McGrath, commanding Company F, designed and the men of the 50th New York Engineers built a small Gothic church of unpeeled logs.²³ Upon completion the engineers named this edifice Poplar Grove Church in honor of the Poplar Springs Church,²⁴ which stood about eight-tenths of a mile northwest of their camp and was apparently destroyed

²²The records of the 50th New York Engineers in the National Archives fail to reveal any information on the construction of the church. Exact dates of the construction of the church are difficult to arrive at, therefore, but the negative of a photograph of the completed church is dated February 1865. Moreover, the information that an informal dedicatory service was held on Sunday, March 5, 1865 - - contained in the text accompanying this particular "View of Poplar Grove Church" in Alexander Gardner's, Photographic Sketch Book of the War (2 vols, Washington: Philip & Solomons, N.D.), Vol. II, No. 74 - - would seem to lend added credence to the negative date. The first recorded instance of the use of the church occurred on March 4, 1865; see infra, p. 23. For two views of the church see Appendix II.

²³Gardner, Photographic Sketch Book, Vol II, No. 74 (text to accompany this photograph).

²⁴This is implied in, ibid., and explicitly stated by a contemporary, James L. Bowen, in: History of the Thirty-Seventh Regiment Mass. Volunteers, in the Civil War of 1861-1865, A Comprehensive Sketch of the Doings of Massachusetts as a State, and of the Principal Campaigns of the War (Holyoke, Mass: Clark & Bryant Company, 1864), p. 40).

The photograph of the church in Gardner's Photographic Sketch Book, Vol. II, No. 74, also reveals the following inscription on the sign over the entrance to the church: "Presented to the Trustees of the Poplar Grove Church by the 50th New York Eng[ineers].⁷" According to Gardner, this sign was erected by the engineers when they abandoned their camp late in March 1865, and, therefore, it tends to remove any doubt as to the exact name given to the church by the engineers.

in the Battle of Poplar Springs Church, September 29 to October 1,
1864.²⁵

The church, capable of seating an estimated two hundred and twenty-five men,²⁶ was used by the 50th New York Engineers for both recreational and religious purposes. In fact, it seems that its first use was as a recreational hall for the performance of a minstrel show on the evening of Saturday, March 4, 1865.²⁷ Apparently it was not

²⁵Various Union reports of the Battle of Peeble's Farm or of Poplar Springs Church, September 29 to October 1, 1864, fail to mention anything about the destruction of this church; see Q.R., Series I, Vol. XLIII, Part I, passim. Several post-war descriptions of the Petersburg Battlefields state that Poplar Springs Church was destroyed in this engagement but differ as to whether it was destroyed by the Union or Confederate Army; see The Petersburg Advertiser, July 3, 1865, 3:5 and a letter entitled "Visit to a Petersburg Battle Field, June 7, 1865. A Guide to the Chief Points of Interest" in: A Guide to the Fortifications Around Petersburg (Petersburg: Daily Index Job-Print, 1865), p. 25.

²⁶The Petersburg Advertiser, July 3, 1865, 3:5.

Theodore Lyman, Meade's Headquarters 1863-1865. Letters of Colonel Theodore Lyman from the Wilderness to Appomattox, ed. George R. Agassiz (Boston: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), pp 31f. Colonel Lyman - - aide-de-camp to General George G. Meade, who commanded the Army of the Potomac - - described the church on this occasion in a letter to his wife, written on March 5, 1865:

" . . . Now where do you suppose I went last night? Why, to the theatre! . . . To explain you must understand that good Colonel Spaulding commands a regiment of engineers, a fine command of some 1500 men. As they are nearly all mechanics, they are very handy at building and have erected, among other things, a large building, which is a church on Sundays, and a theatre on secular occasions. Faithful the goodly Flint rode with me. On the outside was half the regiment, each man armed with a three-legged stool, and all waiting to march into the theatre. We found the edifice quite a rustic gem. Everything, except the nails, is furnished by the surrounding woods and made by the men themselves. The building has the form of a short cross and is all of rustic work; the walls and floors of hewn slabs and the roof covered with shingles nailed on beams, made with the bark on.

until the following day, Sunday, March 5, that the first religious service was held in the church, when the Reverend Mr. Duryea of New York conducted an informal dedicatory service.²⁸

During the scant month in which it was used, religious services were held in the church on Sundays and on many weekday evenings by army chaplains and visiting clergymen. Another recorded instance of its use for recreational purposes occurred on March 9, 1865, when Captain Halsted - - aide-de-camp to General Wright, who commanded the VI Army Corps - - conducted the band of a New Jersey brigade in a well received concert.²⁹ In addition to its religious and recreational functions, the church also served as a major tourist attraction for many of the dignitaries or their wives who visited the Army of the Potomac in March 1865. Among the known visitors to the church were Mrs. Grant, Miss Stanton, Mrs. Meade, Mrs. Lynch, and Mr. and Mrs. George Harding.³⁰ Lastly, the church was used as a

What corresponds to the left-side aisle was railed off for officers only, while the rest was cram-full of men. The illumination of the hall was furnished by a rustic chandelier, that of the stage by army lanterns, and by the candles whose rays were elegantly reflected by tin plates bought from the sutler."

²⁸Gardner, Photographic Sketch Book, Vol. II, No. 74 (text to accompany this photograph).

²⁹Lynch, Meade's Headquarters 1863-1865, p. 317.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 314ff., 322f.

hospital in the final movement of the Union Army against Petersburg.³¹

Reasons for Its Choice. - When Lt. Colonel Moore conducted his survey of the Petersburg Battlefields to select a site for a national cemetery, he must have known of Colonel Folsom's recommendations concerning the cemeteries at, and in the vicinity of, Meade's Station. Even if he were unaware of these recommendations, Lt. Colonel Moore's survey should have revealed the location and comparative size of these cemeteries to him. Moreover, he must have had some inkling that the remains of many Union soldiers were to be found in the Crater area, only a mile and three-fourths from Meade's Station. Despite the fact that Lt. Colonel Moore could not have known exactly how many remains were to be found in this region east of Petersburg, it would still appear to have been logical to select the existing cemeteries at, and in the vicinity of, Meade's Station as the nuclei for a national cemetery. Instead Lt. Colonel Moore chose a seven acre tract of land surrounding Poplar Grove Church, some six and one-half miles from Meade's Station, as the site for such a cemetery.³²

³¹Gardner, Photographic Sketch Book, Vol. II, No. 74 (text to accompany this photograph).

³²Report from Lt. Colonel James H. Moore to Major General M. C. Meigs, MS, June 12, 1866; * Records Group 92 (ORNG), War Records Office, National Archives. This report was occasioned by the offer of William Griffith - - communicated to the Secretary of War by the Honorable Schuyler Colfax, member of the House of Representatives - - to donate a tract of land at the Crater for a national cemetery. In his report to Major General Meigs, Lt. Colonel Moore explained that he had already chosen the site at Poplar Grove Church and explained why he preferred this site to the Crater area. See also: Letter from Major General M. C. Meigs to the Honorable Edwin M. Stanton, Secretary of War, June 13, 1866; ibid.

Several reasons for Lt. Colonel Moore's selection of the site at Poplar Grove Church are known. He believed: (1) that the site was to be donated to the government; and, (2) that the site was more centrally located with respect to the battlefields of the Petersburg Campaign than either the Meade's Station or Crater area.³³ But it would appear that his principal reason for choosing the site on the Flower's farm was undoubtedly the presence of Poplar Grove Church.

Upon completion of the reburial program at Andersonville, Georgia, in August 1865, Lt. Colonel Moore had instructed the newly appointed superintendent of the cemetery "to allow no buildings or structures of whatever nature to be destroyed - particularly the stockade surrounding the prison pen."³⁴ Would not the principle inherent in these instructions -- that of preserving the physical remains of the war -- apply equally as well at Petersburg? Photographs of Poplar Grove Church show it to be an impressive looking structure, and it is not inconceivable that Lt. Colonel Moore considered it fitting to establish a national cemetery around it.³⁵ Not

³³Ibid.

³⁴O.R., Series III, V, 322.

³⁵That the presence of the church was Lt. Colonel Moore's primary reason for selecting the site on the Flower's farm for a national cemetery was the prevailing opinion of his contemporaries. See the Report of the Inspector of National Cemeteries for the Year 1874 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1875), p. 42 and several brief histories of the cemetery compiled by its first Superintendent, August Miller, among the Records of Poplar Grove National Cemetery. Hereinafter the

only would the church lend an air of sanctity to the cemetery, but, located within the protecting confines of the cemetery, it would be preserved as a memento of the war.

The presence of Poplar Grove Church on the site selected by Lt. Colonel Moore leaves little doubt, of course, as to the origin of the cemetery's name.

The Search and Recovery Program, 1866-1869

Methods.³⁶ - While the site of Poplar Grove National Cemetery was apparently selected in May or early June 1866, the search and recovery program was not begun until July 1866 - - probably July 18.³⁷ At that time a "burial corps"³⁸ numbering about one hundred men - - equipped with twelve saddle horses, forty mules, and ten army wagons - - established a base of operations on the cemetery site at Poplar Grove Church.

records of the cemetery will be cited as: Records, FGNC.

³⁶The discussion of the methods employed in the search and recovery program which follows is based on material to be found in: Records, FGNC.

³⁷Since the date of the establishment of the cemetery is somewhat controversial, a more complete discussion of this problem is to be found in Appendix I.

³⁸The term "burial corps" is a descriptive phrase used by the first superintendent of the cemetery, August Miller, for the search, recovery, and reburial unit employed at Poplar Grove; Records, FGNC. No evidence has been found to indicate that these units were ever named officially by the Quartermaster Department. Hereinafter the term will be employed in the sense used by Miller.

The burial corps was under the immediate supervision of a superintendent who, in turn, was directly responsible to Lt. Colonel Moore for the work of his corps. The supplies, equipment, and transportation facilities of the burial corps, as well as the pay and rations of the employees, were furnished by the Quartermaster Department. As for the organization of the burial corps, it was subdivided into several search and recovery teams, each of which was under the immediate supervision of a scout. The functions of these scouts were fourfold: (1) the location of battlefield graves; (2) supervision of the disinterment and the proper identification, if possible, of remains; (3) supervision of the transportation to, and the interment in, the cemetery of the remains recovered; (4) the recording of all information and facts pertaining to the recovery of the remains and their reinterment in the cemetery.

The greatest difficulties encountered by the search and recovery teams occurred in locating the scattered graves of the dead and in identifying the remains recovered. In the case of graves marked by headboards the process of recovery and identification were simplified, though the inscriptions on such headboards were not always legible. Laborers of the search and recovery teams would disinter the remains from a grave of this type, place them in a plain wooden coffin, nail the identifying headboard on the coffin, and then place the coffin on one of the wagons for transport to the cemetery. Unmarked graves were more difficult to locate and when opened required careful examination to determine: (1) whether the remains were those of a Union or

Confederate soldier; and, (2) the exact identity of the remains. The color of the uniform material, buttons and belt buckles, and letters found with the remains, as well as information obtained from local inhabitants, were important to the success of identification efforts. Records were kept to show the location from which the remains of each unknown soldier were disinterred, moreover, in the hope that other sources of information would be found to make identification possible.

The search and recovery procedures outlined above were evolved not only at Petersburg, but by the operations of search and recovery teams throughout the south from the inception of the program in June 1865. And these procedures were finally standardized by the issuance of General Orders, No. 26 on March 25, 1867, by the Quartermaster General.³⁹

Results.⁴⁰ -- From July 1866 to June 30, 1869, the burial corps scoured the battlefields around Petersburg and as far west as Lynchburg, Virginia, for the remains of the Union dead. The scene of every major battle of the Petersburg and Appomattox Campaigns and the roads traversed enroute by the Union Army -- involving, in all, nine Virginia counties⁴¹ -- were thoroughly searched.

³⁹General Orders, Quartermaster General's Office, 1867 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867). Each General Order is separately paged.

⁴⁰Unless otherwise indicated, all statistics which follow in this section are compiled from the Burial Records, PMSO.

⁴¹The counties are: Acadia, Appomattox, Campbell, Chesterfield, Dinwiddie, Hottelway, Prince Edward, Prince George, and Sussex.

By December 1, 1867, the burial corps had succeeded in locating, disinterring, and removing the remains of 5,544 soldiers to Poplar Grove for reburial.⁴² Shortly before this it was thought that the concentration program at Poplar Grove was complete and that the burial corps could be disbanded. Within several weeks of the order to disband the burial corps⁴³ information was received that several hundred more graves were to be found west of Petersburg, however, and the order was rescinded.⁴⁴ The burial corps was to continue its search and recovery efforts for almost two years more, but during this period only an additional 634 remains were to be found, recovered, and reinterred at Poplar Grove.

During the three years of its existence, therefore, the burial corps recovered the remains of 6,142 Union and 36 Confederate soldiers.⁴⁵ In addition the bodies of five civilians -- most of them were employees or children of employees of the burial corps, who died from 1866 to 1868 -- were also interred in the cemetery.⁴⁶ Of

⁴²statement of the Disposition of Some of the Bodies of Deceased Union Soldiers and Prisoners of War Whose Remains Have Been Removed to National Cemeteries in the Southern and Western States (4 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868-1869), IV, 18. The figure given in this source, 5,547, has been corrected for the three civilians who were interred in the cemetery during this period.

⁴³Lt. Colonel James M. Moore to August Miller, September 5, 1867; Records, PORG.

⁴⁴Lt. Colonel James M. Moore to August Miller, October 15, 1867; ibid.

⁴⁵(Records, PORG.) No satisfactory explanation has been found in these records for the interment of the 36 Confederate soldiers in the cemetery.

⁴⁶ibid.

the 6,178 remains recovered from the battlefields of the Petersburg and Appomattox Campaigns, only 2,139, or approximately 35 per cent, were positively identified.⁴⁷ This compares favorably with the identification of only 26 per cent of the remains recovered in another combat zone -- that of the Wilderness and Spotsylvania Court House. Both of these instances compare rather unfavorably with the post war results achieved in a rear zone such as City Point, Virginia, however, where 73 per cent of the 5,142 remains recovered were identified.⁴⁸ Only in the five instances where national cemeteries were established shortly after a major battle⁴⁹ can identification of the dead in a combat zone equal the record achieved in a rear zone.

Some of the reasons for this contrast have already been suggested in connection with the distinction between the wartime burial practices in these different zones. Analysis of the burial records of Poplar Grove National Cemetery lends further support to these conclusions. The records of the cemetery indicate that the small percentage of remains which could be identified by the burial corps

⁴⁷The figure given in ibid. is 2,196. This is in error due to the classification of the remains of those whose surnames had been partially learned among the known dead.

⁴⁸Roll of Honor, Names of Soldiers Who Died in Defense of the American Union, Interred in the National Cemeteries and Other Burial Places at . . . City Point (Additional). . . Virginia (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868), XVI, 167.

⁴⁹Juzva, p. 7.

is attributable to the following factors:

- (1) Where the demands of combat were heavy and sustained, the burial fatigues detailed from the line could not devote adequate time or effort to the proper interment and identification of their dead comrades. This was particularly true of the initial (June 15 - 18, 1864) and final (March 29 to April 2, 1865) assaults on the defenses of Petersburg and, to a lesser extent, of the Appomattox Campaign.
- (2) Failure of the Union Army to retain the field of combat after a major engagement prevented the recovery of the bodies of those soldiers killed in action. This sharply reduced the number of dead who could be identified in the postwar era. Not one of the 646 remains recovered from the Crater could be identified by the burial corps; and of the 139 remains recovered at Beams' Station, only 5 per cent could be identified.
- (3) Wartime compliance with the requirements of General Order No. 33 was not always possible, but, when concentration of the combat dead was effected, it led to an increase in the percentage of dead who could be identified. Of the 1,214 remains recovered from the cemeteries at, and in the vicinity of, Wanda's Station, the burial corps succeeded in identifying those of 780 Union soldiers, or about 64 per cent.

(4) A lengthening time lag between original burial and recovery of remains diminished the chances of identification. From the spring of 1868 to June 30, 1869, the burial corps recovered the remains of 544 soldiers but only 58, or roughly 11 per cent, of them could be identified. This is in contrast to the identification of 37 per cent of the 5,634 remains recovered from July 1866 to the spring of 1868.

The inability to identify more than 35 per cent of the combat dead of the Petersburg and Appomattox Campaigns illustrates the inadequacy of the attempts made by the Union authorities to meet the burial needs of the Civil War. The conclusions reached above were ultimately to prove ample reason and justification for the organization of the theater graves registration service so sadly lacking during the Civil War. But even the experience of the Civil War was not able to overcome the weight of tradition immediately. It was not until World War I, some fifty-two years and an intervening war later, that the Quartermaster Graves Registration Company - - the operating unit of a theater graves registration service - - was organized as part of the military establishment.⁵⁰

⁵⁰General Orders, No. 104, 1917; cited by Steere, Military Affairs, XII, 156f.

The Reinterment and Construction Program, 1866-1869

The burial corps was not only responsible for the search and recovery program but also for the reinterment in the cemetery of the remains recovered from the battlefields. The process of reinterment, moreover, entailed a certain amount of construction which likewise devolved upon the burial corps.

One of the first acts of the burial corps was to erect a flagpole in the center of the cemetery, a short distance south of the church.⁵¹ As the remains recovered by the burial corps were brought to the cemetery in plain coffins, they were reinterred in graves to form concentric circles around and facing the flagpole.⁵² This pattern was altered only near the boundaries of the cemetery, where the graves were arranged in parallel rows. Each grave was neatly mounded to a height of 10 or 12 inches⁵³ and marked with a white headboard on which the proper inscription had been lettered in black.

Interesting

While the reinterment program was being carried out, the burial corps also turned its attention to the construction of: (1) a fence to enclose the cemetery; (2) walks and avenues for access to

⁵¹Records, FGAC.

⁵²Consult grave plot in Appendix II.

⁵³General Orders, No. 26, March 25, 1867; General Orders, Quartermaster General's Office, 1867 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1867/), no pagination.

the graves; and (3), gutters to drain the grounds. By February 8, 1868, the cemetery had been completely enclosed with a white wooden fence consisting of cedar posts and pine palings.⁵⁴ Almost 12,000 feet of brick gutters had been laid by October 19, 1867, and three days later the graveling of the walks and avenues was completed.⁵⁵

Passage of the Act of February 22, 1867, by Congress placed an additional burden of construction upon the burial corps. Among other things, this act established the position of cemetery superintendent and provided that a lodge should be erected at each national cemetery for the use of this official.⁵⁶ Construction of the lodge at Poplar Grove was delayed for more than a year, well after the arrival of August Miller who had been appointed superintendent of the cemetery on August 6, 1867.⁵⁷ Miller found the original seven acre cemetery tract too small to accommodate existing and anticipated burials, as well as the projected lodge; consequently, he requested and received authority to add an additional acre of land to the cemetery on the right hand approaching the entrance gate.⁵⁸ When

⁵⁴Records, FGHC.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶An Act to establish and to protect National Cemeteries, approved February 22, 1867, U. S. Statutes at Large, XLV, 3991f.

⁵⁷Records, FGHC.

⁵⁸Let. Colonel J. N. Moore to August Miller, November 23, 1867; ibid.

this tract had been cleared, the burial corps began the construction of a wooden lodge which was ultimately completed in September 1868.⁵⁹

The Act of February 22, 1867, also vested authority for the purchase of land for national cemeteries in the Secretary of War; and it provided that if the owner and the Secretary of War could not agree on a purchase price, application for appraisal could be made by the owner to the U. S. District Court having jurisdiction over the district within which the land in question lay; upon payment of the appraised value of such land, title in fee simple would be vested in the United States of America.⁶⁰ When Lt. Colonel Moore appropriated a portion of the Flower's farm for the site of Poplar Grove in 1866, it was apparently with the understanding that the owner was going to donate the land to the government.⁶¹ Whether Thomas B. Flower had actually agreed to do so is relatively unimportant, for, subsequent to the passage of the Act of 1867, his widow, Rebecca T. Flower, applied to the U. S. District Court of Virginia for appraisal of the cemetery land.⁶² Upon payment of the \$1,500 appraised value on April 3, 1868, title in fee simple was obtained by the United States

⁵⁹August Miller to Lt. Colonel J. M. Moore, March 9, 1868; and the "Monthly Report for September 1868, Poplar Grove National Cemetery"; *ibid.*

⁶⁰U. S. Statutes at Large, XIV, 399ff.

⁶¹Supra, p. 36.

⁶²The date of death of Thomas B. Flower is unknown.

of America to the 8.13 acre tract of the Flower's farm occupied by Poplar Grove National Cemetery.⁶³

Within little more than three years of its construction, the most significant feature of the cemetery, Poplar Grove Church, had to be removed from the grounds by the burial corps. After the 50th New York Engineers abandoned their camp on March 29, 1865, the church was appropriated for use as a meeting house by local negroes. This use was continued until October 1867, when, on the complaint of August Miller that the negroes were creating frequent disturbances around the church after dark and desecrating the cemetery thereby, Lt. Colonel Moore ordered that the church be kept locked and visitors only be permitted to enter the cemetery.⁶⁴ Even this measure was insufficient to preserve the church, however, for the entire structure had begun to decay. And once begun, the process of decay continued so rapidly that by the following March only major repairs could save the church from ruin. The Quartermaster Department was unwilling to provide the funds required for rehabilitation, however, and the church was therefore torn down and removed from the cemetery between March 20 and April 28, 1868.⁶⁵ Subsequently, the ground on which the church had stood was used for burial purposes.

⁶³The deed in question is reproduced in Appendix VII.

⁶⁴August Miller to Lt. Colonel J. H. Moore, October 15, 1867; and Lt. Colonel J. H. Moore to August Miller, October 15, 1867; Records, FGNS.

⁶⁵For a fuller discussion of the location and the date of the removal of Poplar Grove Church, see Appendix II.

The Reverend Mr. David Macrae, a Scotaman who toured the eastern United States in 1868, has left a touching description of his visit to Poplar Grove and the thoughts which it inspired:

We rode out to the Federal Soldiers' Cemetery at Poplar Grove, and tying our horses in the pine wood outside went in to wander for a while among the graves. The place is laid out in sections, each section with its melancholy forest of white head-boards on which are painted the names and regiments of the dead men below. One of the first head-boards I stopped to read was marked

UNKNOWN
U. S. SOLDIER
REMOVED FROM
FORT DREAD

I wondered who the man was who lay beneath - - where his home was - - whether his mother was still alive, away, perhaps, in some far-off part of the world, wondering what had become of her boy, that she had not heard from him for so long, but still hoping that one day he would return to gladden her heart in her declining years. Here he lay, alas! sleeping his long sleep among the unknown dead. There were long rows of these "Unknown." Altogether 7500 dead men - - soldiers of the Union - - lay buried in this one cemetery. It was strange to walk through it with one before whom perhaps many of them had fallen.⁶⁶

Before the burial corps was disbanded on June 30, 1869, some effort was also made to decorate and landscape the grounds. In the fall of 1868, four 32-pounder cannon were transferred to the cemetery from Fort Monroe, Virginia; and, in the following February, they were

⁶⁶David Macrae, The Americans at Home (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1952), p. 173. Macrae was conducted on a tour of the Petersburg Battlefields by Major Giles Cook, of Petersburg. He was in error on the number of Union dead interred in the cemetery, and the Fort Dread mentioned on the headboard of the Unknown soldier cannot be identified.

placed upright on the outer edge of the drive encircling the flagpole.⁶⁷ During the winter and spring of 1868-69, moreover, the graves were sodded and about 1,200 small cedar trees were transplanted to the cemetery from the neighboring woods.⁶⁸

The total cost of the three year search, recovery, reinterment, and construction program at Poplar Grove was some \$107,000, or almost \$33,000 more than the estimated cost of completion as foreseen in October 1867.⁶⁹ A further breakdown of this figure reveals that the cost of this program per body was a little more than \$17, as opposed to an earlier estimated cost of \$9 per body in the Department of Virginia.⁷⁰ The latter figure, however, did not take the cost of gutters, a lodge, land acquisition, landscaping, and numerous additional

⁶⁷Records, FGMC.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹"Report of the Inspector of the National Cemeteries of the U. S. for the year 1869," in U. S. Senate Executive Documents, 41st Congress, 2nd Session, 1869-70 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), II, No. 62, 31; "Report of the Inspector of National Cemeteries for 1870 & 1871," in U. S. Senate Executive Documents, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-72 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), II, No. 79, 30; and, "Report of Expenditures made on National Cemeteries up to Oct. 31st, 1867 (as reported in Officers' Monthly Reports of Progress)," Records Group 92 (OAMG), War Records Office, National Archives.

⁷⁰"Schedule of actual or contracted, or estimated cost of the various items connected with the disinterment and removal of the remains of deceased soldiers in the various sections of the United States, July 1866," Records Group 92 (OAMG), War Records Office, National Archives. The costs are listed as follows: fencing, \$.25; digging and filling grave, \$1.00; coffin, \$2.50; clerk-hire, maintenance of animals, & \$4.75; transportation by wagons, \$1.25; grading roads, paths, \$.50; headboards, \$1.25.

expenses into consideration.

With the completion of the work of the burial corps, Poplar Grove National Cemetery entered on a period of relative inactivity which has continued to the present day. The history of the cemetery since 1869, therefore, is a comparatively routine account of administration and maintenance under the War Department until 1933 and the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, since that time.

CHAPTER II

ADMINISTRATION AND MAINTENANCE

Administration

War Department, 1866-1933

Expansion of the national cemeterial system to include forty-three cemeteries by June 30, 1866, and the further anticipated growth of the system in the postwar period required additional legislative regulation to supplement the inadequate provisions of the Act of July 17, 1862. The Joint Resolution of April 13, 1866, which authorized and required the Secretary of War to preserve the graves of Union soldiers from desecration and to secure suitable burial places for their proper interment, was little more than a stop gap measure. Comprehensive legislation -- which "not only provided a legal basis for the system in process of development, but committed Congress to a constructive fiscal policy"¹ -- for the national cemeterial system was finally enacted by Congress, however, in the Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries, approved February 22, 1867.

As we have seen, the Act of 1867 vested authority for the acquisition of land for national cemeteries in the Secretary of War

¹Stoore, "Evolution of the National Cemetery System, 1865-1869," The Quartermaster Review, XXIII (May-June 1953), 124.

and, in case of dispute, defined the legal process by which acquisition was to be effected; and it established the position of cemetery superintendent, with the additional proviso that a lodge was to be erected at each national cemetery for the use of this official.

Moreover, the Act of 1867 provided: (1) specific penalties and punishment for defacement of national cemeteries; (2) that the national cemeteries were to be enclosed with a stone or iron fence; (3) that graves were to be marked with a small headstone or block; (4) that an annual inspection was to be made by an "Inspector of National Cemeteries," whose report was to be forwarded to Congress through the Secretary of War at the beginning of each session "along with an appropriation estimate"; and, (5) an appropriation of \$750,000 to carry out its provisions.²

In pursuance of the Acts of 1862 and 1867 and the Joint Resolution of 1866, the War Department created a national cemeterial system by 1870, when the recovery and reinterment program was considered complete, which included seventy-three cemeteries.

Administrative control of this system was vested in the Quartermaster General, as it had been since 1862. A further sub-delegation of administrative authority within the War Department made departmental, corps, or army commanders directly responsible for the supervision and control of all national cemeteries within the territorial limits

²U. S. Statutes at Large, XIV, 399 ff.

of their commands.³ Initial responsibility for the protection, maintenance, and administration of each national cemetery was, of course, vested in the cemetery superintendent by the Act of 1867. In practice, however, the detailed administrative control exercised by the Quartermaster General, as embodied in the Regulations for the Government of National Cemeteries, left little discretion to the cemetery superintendent in the performance of his functions.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Department of the Interior
1933 to the Present

For sixty-seven years, under twenty-nine superintendents,⁴ Poplar Grove functioned as a unit of the national cemeterial system administered by the Quartermaster General. Then, when the nation was in the midst of an economic depression in 1933, Congress sought to effect widespread economies in governmental expenditures by the reorganization of the executive branch of the government.

In the Legislative Appropriation Act of 1933, as amended by Section 16 of the Act of March 3, 1933, Congress instructed the President to conduct an investigation of the organization of the executive branch of the government to determine what changes were

³National Cemetery Regulations (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1931), p. 16; ibid., (1947 edition), p. 2.

⁴A list of the cemetery superintendents and the dates of their tenure at Poplar Grove is to found in Appendix V.

necessary to "eliminate overlapping and duplication of effort."⁵ In particular, Congress stressed that reorganization of the executive branch of the government was intended "to reduce the number of such agencies by consolidating those having similar functions under a single head, and by abolishing such agencies and/or such functions thereof as may not be necessary for the efficient conduct of the Government."⁶

Under the authority of these statutory provisions, the President issued Executive Order No. 6166 on June 10, 1933, which provided, in part, that:

All functions of administration of public buildings, reservations, national parks, national monuments, and national cemeteries are consolidated in an Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations in the Department of the Interior, at the head of which shall be a Director of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations; except that where deemed desirable there may be excluded from this provision any public building or reservation which is chiefly employed as a facility in the work of a particular agency. This transfer and consolidation of functions shall include, among others, those of the National Park Service of the Department of the Interior and the National Cemeteries and Parks of the War Department which are located within the continental limits of the United States.⁷

Executive Order No. 6166 was interpreted by Executive Order No. 6228, July 28, 1933, however, as transferring only eleven national cemeteries to the National Park Service; the transfer of the other national cemeteries "located within the continental limits of the

⁵Quoted by Felix S. Cohen, Acting Solicitor, Department of the Interior, in Order M. 31833, July 3, 1942, addressed to The Secretary of the Interior; a copy of this order is to be found in the files (601-09: Cemeterial Sites) of Petersburg National Military Park.

⁶Ibid.

⁷United States Code 78 (1940 edition).

United States" was postponed until further order.⁸ The eleven national cemeteries enumerated in Executive Order No. 6228 were either adjacent to, or in the immediate vicinity of, a national park or battlefield site already under--or transferred by Executive Orders, Nos. 6166 and 6228 to--the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. Apparently, therefore, the eleven cemeteries transferred to the National Park Service were chosen with the view that their administration could be consolidated with that of adjacent national parks or battlefield sites under a single head.

Within a week of the issuance of Executive Order No. 6228, a conference was held between a representative of the Director, National Park Service, and the Quartermaster General, General DeWitt, to determine what functions the Quartermaster General would retain with respect to the national cemeteries to be transferred to the National Park Service. The policy determined upon at the conference of August 4, 1933, agreed that the Office of the Quartermaster General would continue to perform seven specific activities in connection with the administration of these eleven national cemeteries:

- (1) Telegraphic requests from superintendents for authority to inter remains in the National cemeteries - verify service and authorize interments. Action direct to and from G.,M.G.
- (2) Have monthly reports of interment submitted by superintendents and take action thereon to supply headstones.
- (3) Take action on requests for the erection of private monuments--determine if private monuments may be erected and give approval of design, material, inscription, etc.
- (4) Take action on quarterly condition reports submitted by superintendents.

⁸Ibid.

- (5) Maintain record of interments in the national cemeteries.
- (6) Filling positions of cemetery superintendents (according to law).
- (7) Reply to inquiries re eligibility to burial, location of graves, inscription on headstones and monuments, establishment of the cemeteries and historical incidents pertaining thereto.⁹

As one of the eleven cemeteries enumerated in Executive Order No. 6228, Poplar Grove National Cemetery was subsequently transferred to the National Park Service by the War Department on August 10, 1933.¹⁰ On the same day—and also in accordance with Executive Orders, Nos. 6166 and 6228—Petersburg National Military Park was transferred to the National Park Service by the War Department.¹¹

Subject to the conditions agreed upon by the National Park Service and the Office of the Quartermaster General in the conference of August 4, 1933, administrative control of Poplar Grove National Cemetery has been vested in the following officials, in ascending order, since 1933:

- (1) The cemetery superintendent, until this position was abolished in 1949.
- (2) The Superintendent, Colonial National Historical Park, from August 23, 1933 to December 16, 1935; on the

⁹Mr. Chatelain represented the Director, National Park Service, at this conference: Letter from Secretary of War George H. Dern to Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, September 1, 1933; copy to be found in the Records, PQMS. Official confirmation and approval of the agreement reached between the War Department and the National Park Service was expressed by Mr. A. E. Denaray, Acting Director, National Park Service, in a letter to the Quartermaster General, August 10, 1933; and by The Secretary of the Interior to The Secretary of War, September 9, 1933; *ibid.*

¹⁰Records, PQMS.

¹¹Records, Petersburg National Military Park.

latter date, supervisory control of the cemetery was made the responsibility of a newly created Superintendent, Petersburg National Military Park, since the cemetery was immediately adjacent to the park administered by this official.¹²

- (3) The Regional Director, Region One, National Park Service.
- (4) The Director, National Park Service.
- (5) The Secretary of the Interior, as the administrative head of the executive department in which the National Park Service is a bureau.

Significant Administrative Problems

1866 to the present

In the decade which followed the close of the Civil War, several administrative problems of major significance for the future of the national cemeterial system arose to confront the War Department.¹³ And as a unit of this system, the administrative decisions of the War Department and the legislative regulation of Congress with respect to

¹²Records, FONG.

¹³The discussion of the expansion of the national cemeterial system and the question of eligibility which follows in this section is largely based on Edward Steere, "Expansion of the National Cemeterial System, 1860-1900," The Quartermaster Review, XXXIII (September - October, 1953), 201., 131-137. Hereinafter The Quartermaster Review will be cited as QMR.

these problems affected the evolution and development of Poplar Grove National Cemetery.

Expansion of the National Cemeterial System

The Congressional acts and resolution which established the national cemeterial system left the question of whether the system could be expanded open to administrative interpretation. The Act of July 17, 1862, had authorized the President to secure cemetery lands "for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."¹⁴

The Joint Resolution of April 13, 1866, however, appeared to restrict the authority given to the Secretary of War to purchase land for national cemeteries solely for the burial of the Union soldiers "who fell in battle or died of disease in the field and in hospitals during the war of the rebellion."¹⁵ As for the Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries, approved February 22, 1867, the Secretary of War was given authority to purchase cemetery lands without restriction.¹⁶

By the incorporation of the post cemetery at Fort Smith, Arkansas, into the national cemeterial system in 1867,¹⁷ the

¹⁴U. S. Statutes at Large, XII, 596. (Emphasis added)

¹⁵Ibid., XIV, 352. (Emphasis added)

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 39988.

¹⁷Steele, "Expansion of the National Cemeterial System, 1860-1900," SMH, XXXIII (September-October 1963), 132.

Secretary of War indicated that he adhered to a literal interpretation of the Act of 1867, regardless of the conflicting provisions of the earlier Congressional enactments. While many Civil War dead had been reinterred in the Fort Smith cemetery during the postwar reinterment program, it had originally been established as a post cemetery in 1819 and contained the remains of many soldiers and their families interred prior to 1861.¹⁸

In the twelve years following this precedent, the national cemeterial system was further expanded by the War Department to include: (1) other post cemeteries containing both Civil War and pre Civil War dead -- i.e., Fort Gibson, Indian Territory, in 1868; (2) cemeteries of the pre Civil War period containing the dead of the Indian frontier or Mexican War exclusively -- i.e., Fort McPherson, Nebraska, and Mexico City in 1873; and (3) post and other cemeteries containing the dead of the post Civil War Indian frontier -- i.e., Custer Battlefield in 1879.¹⁹

While the Secretary of War acted on his own initiative at first in expanding the national cemeterial system, his administrative interpretation of existing legislation was soon sanctioned by Congress. In approving the Act of June 1, 1872, Congress authorized the interment

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 132 ff.

of the "current dead" of the Army in the national cemeteries,²⁰ and thereby approved the administrative policy of incorporating new cemeteries into the system or expanding existing cemeteries to meet current needs.

Eligibility for Interment in a National Cemetery

Primary eligibility. - One of the effects of the expansion of the national cemeterial system was to extend eligibility for interment in a national cemetery to a new category of persons - - that is, the "current dead" of the Army. But whereas eligibility was first extended to the "current dead" by the administrative decision of the War Department, and only later granted as a right by Congress, the War Department refused to extend the privilege of interment in a national cemetery to deceased veterans of the Civil War on its own initiative.

Foremost among the advocates in the War Department of the policy which would have restricted interment in the national cemeteries to the Civil War dead was Quartermaster General Meigs.²¹ When he learned, in December 1863, that Major General George H. Thomas, Commanding General of the Department of the Cumberland, had permitted burial in the Chattanooga National Cemetery to deceased veterans and members of their families by a departmental order, Quartermaster

²⁰Ibid., p. 134

²¹Ibid., p. 21

General Meigs ordered the practice prohibited.²² Subsequently, the refusal to permit burial of the remains of a deceased veteran in Chattanooga National Cemetery brought forth a storm of protest and a petition addressed to Major General Thomas by a group of Union veterans who were residing in Chattanooga. This petition was forwarded by Major General Thomas to the General-in-Chief and then to the Secretary of War, who, in turn, referred it to the Quartermaster General and the Judge Advocate General for consideration.

Quartermaster General Meigs justified his action in denying burial to deceased veterans by citing Statutes at Large, particularly the Joint Resolution of April 13, 1866, from which he quoted and underlined the phrase "during the war of the rebellion."²³ General-in-Chief Sherman vigorously opposed the opinion of Quartermaster General Meigs, contending that the national cemeteries²⁴ should be devoted to the burial of soldiers for all time to come. The brief of Judge Advocate General Joseph Holt supported the administrative interpretation that existing Congressional legislation, despite seeming conflicts, extended the privilege of interment in the national cemeteries to the

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 131.

²⁴Quoted by Stearns, Ibid.

"current dead" of the Army; but it found no legislative justification for the extension of the privilege to deceased veterans of the late war.²⁵ Judge Advocate General Holt recommended that the matter be left to Congress to decide by additional legislation, therefore, and the Secretary of War accepted his opinion.

Thus, matters remained until mounting pressure and protests from the Grand Army of the Republic, the powerful veterans' organization of its day, ultimately forced Congress to act. By approving the Act of March 3, 1873, Congress granted the right of interment in the national cemeteries to any deceased veteran of the Civil War who died subsequent to the passage of the act.²⁶

"Secondary" eligibility. - Army tradition, moreover, had also permitted interment in post cemeteries to certain members of a soldier's family - - that is, a wife or dependent child. This tradition, sustained by the decisions of the Judge Advocate General, ultimately led the Secretary of War to extend "secondary" eligibility for interment in the national cemeteries to wives in 1890, and to minor children and unmarried adult daughters in 1904 and 1908 respectively.²⁷

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶The provisions of the Act of March 3, 1873, are quoted by Steere, ibid., p. 134.

²⁷National Cemetery Regulations, 15 September 1947 (Washington: [Government Printing Office], 1947), p. 14.

Summary. - The administrative decisions of the War Department and the legislative regulations of Congress, as traced above, soon destroyed any identity of the national cemeterial system with the Civil War alone. Moreover, extension of eligibility to categories of persons other than the dead of the Civil War from 1865-1873 had far reaching consequences, for:

- (1) The extension of eligibility to the "current dead" of the Army established a precedent which later admitted the war dead of the Spanish-American and subsequent wars to interment in the national cemeteries without question.²⁸
- (2) The Act of March 3, 1873, established a precedent which led the Secretary of War to grant eligibility for interment in the national cemeteries to deceased veterans of the Spanish-American War.²⁹ Subsequently, in the Act of April 15, 1920, Congress granted the right of interment to honorably discharged veterans of all past and future wars.³⁰

²⁸O'Keefe, "Expansion of the National Cemeterial System, 1880-1900," AME, LXXIII (September-October 1953), 134.

²⁹O'Keefe, "National Cemeteries and Public Policy," ibid., (January-February 1954), p. 18.

³⁰ibid.

- (3) "Secondary" eligibility, first extended by administrative interpretation, was granted as a legal right by the Act of May 14, 1948.³¹

In the eighty-eight year history of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, only fifty non-Civil War dead had been interred in the cemetery in pursuance of the administrative interpretations and legislative regulations liberalising the requirements for interment in a national cemetery.³² Poplar Grove, therefore, has essentially retained its identity with the Civil War.

Headstones

An administrative problem of lesser consequence, but one which remained unresolved for five years, arose to plague the War Department from that section of the Act of 1867 which provided that a headstone or block should be erected over the grave of each soldier.

Following approval of the Act of 1867, the Secretary of War appointed a board of officers on May 7, 1867, to consider the questions of the type of material and the design of such a headstone or block.³³

³¹National Cemeteries: General Regulations (AM 290-5) (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1951), pp. 151.

³²Records, PCHG.

³³Colonel G. W. Folsom, "Annual Report of Cemeterial Operations ending June 30, 1868," Records Group 92 (OJMG), War Records Office, National Archives.

After two days of deliberation, the board submitted a recommendation for the adoption of a sinked, cast iron headblock (square and hollow) as the most durable and economical marker.³⁴

Public opinion, supported by an Inspector of National Cemeteries and other officers of the War Department, opposed the adoption of this type marker, however, and, instead, preferred that a solid headstone of marble or granite be adopted.³⁵ But Quartermaster General Waige, who favored the adoption of the galvanized iron block, would not concede to public opinion, and his opposition continued to delay a decision by the War Department.³⁶

Congress finally settled the dispute by passage of the Act of June 6, 1872, which amended Section 1 of the Act of February 22, 1867, to require that "each grave be marked with a small headstone," thereby ruling out the adoption of the headblock.³⁷ Subsequently,

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Ibid. and "Report of the Inspector of National Cemeteries [Oscar A. Mack] for 1870 & 1871," U. S. Senate Executive Documents, 42nd Congress, 2nd Session, 1871-72 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), II, No. 79, 100 (report is separately paged).

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷An Act to amend an Act entitled 'An Act to establish and to protect national cemeteries,' approved February twenty-second, eighteen hundred and sixty seven - approved June 6, 1872; U. S. Statutes at Large, XVIII, 345.

in the Army appropriations Act of March 3, 1873, Congress appropriated \$1,000,000 for the erection of headstones and specified that they "be of durable stone . . ." ³⁸

In accordance with the provisions of the above acts, therefore, the Secretary of War established standards for the type of material, color, dimensions, and quality of the headstone and advertised nationally for proposals. Contract awards were subsequently made by the War Department in December 1873,³⁹ and the erection of an upright, white marble headstone over each grave was begun at several of the national cemeteries in 1874. Setting of the headstones at Poplar Grove was delayed until June 1877, but the work was then completed within a few months.⁴⁰ The cost of erecting the headstones at Poplar Grove amounted to about \$15,500,⁴¹ while the total cost of the project throughout the national cemeterial system came to \$786,360.⁴²

³⁸Ibid., p. 545

³⁹Records Group 92 (O&MG), War Records Office, National Archives and Records, RGNO.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Estimated on the basis of the following contractual costs: (1) for a "known" stone, \$3.39; and, (2) for an "unknown" stone, \$2.42; Records, RGNO. }

⁴²Stears, "Evolution of the National Cemetery System, 1865-1880," CMR, XXIII (May-June 1952), 125.

Maintenance⁴³

War Department, 1866-1933

The seventy-three national cemeteries established by 1870 had been laid out without adequate planning by the Quartermaster Department; no master plans were drawn up in advance to govern construction, development, or landscaping. It is true, however, that certain general instructions were issued and standards set, particularly after 1870, which established a considerable degree of uniformity among the units of the system.

In setting aside \$20,000 of the Army appropriation of 1870 for landscaping purposes, Congress gave financial support to the desire to improve the appearance of the national cemeteries.⁴⁴ In pursuance of this provision, the Quartermaster Department devised a plan for a "sylvan hall" of elm trees to be set out in each of the national cemeteries.⁴⁵ One hundred and ten elm trees were provided

⁴³The discussion of the maintenance of Poplar Grove, both under the War Department and the National Park Service, which follows, is based primarily on the Records, PQMC. Citations for the facts appearing in this section will be generally omitted, therefore, except where other sources have been consulted.

⁴⁴Annual Report of the Quartermaster-General Made to the Secretary of War for the Year 1870 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), p. 67.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 70; Records, PQMC; and the actual plan is to be found in: Records Group 92 (QMC), War Records Office, National Archives.

for the purpose at Poplar Grove, and they were planted to form the outline of a cross or gothic church in May 1871.

This was to be only the first step in a constant and continuous yearly effort to improve the landscaping of Poplar Grove. The cemetery soil was poor in many places and marshy in others, and constant effort was required on the part of the superintendent and laborers to encourage the growth of trees, shrubs, and grass. A severe blow was dealt these efforts in 1915 when a storm on July 30 was followed by a tornado on August 2, which struck the cemetery at approximately 6 p. m. Together, these two storms destroyed a total of 139 trees aside from the damage which was done to headstones, the wall, and several buildings of the cemetery. Replacement of these trees was not effected by the Quartermaster Department until the spring of 1931, when 101 trees were planted in the cemetery and along the entrance road.

During the first decade of the cemetery's existence, a great deal of effort and money was required to maintain the wooden fence which enclosed the cemetery. Within three years of its erection, the posts and palings of the fence were rotting badly and only constant effort by the superintendent kept the fence from falling down. In 1870 the Quartermaster Department decided to plant an osage orange hedge inside the fence which, as it grew, would gradually hide and replace the latter; consequently, from September 14, 1870, to March 6, 1871, about four thousand separate osage orange plants were set out.

A few years later the War Department began to implement that section of the Act of 1867 which provided that the national cemeteries were to be enclosed with a stone or iron fence. Since native stone was unobtainable in the vicinity, an award was made in 1873 to a local contractor, Mr. Childrey, for the erection of a brick wall to enclose Poplar Grove. While Mr. Childrey manufactured about 140,000 bricks near the cemetery in the fall of 1873 and the spring of 1874, he defaulted on his contract before beginning the actual construction of the wall.

Two years were to elapse before a new contract for the wall was awarded by the Quartermaster Department. And preparatory to a second attempt to build the wall, and primarily because the wall would be too near the cemetery boundary and the graves, a resurvey of the cemetery was made in 1876. This survey disclosed that the original deed of 1868 did not fully convey title to the land on which the cemetery was actually situated.⁴⁶ In order to correct these discrepancies, to provide title to the access road, and to secure an additional ten foot strip of land around the cemetery for the erection of the wall, the government purchased several additional strips of land from the heirs of Thomas B. Flower and Francis Farley in 1877.⁴⁷

⁴⁶National and Post Cemeteries, General Correspondence - Poplar Grove; Records Group 92 (OAS), War Records Office, National Archives.

⁴⁷Copies of the deeds are to be found in Appendix VII.

These additional purchases brought the total acreage of Poplar Grove up to 9.5019 acres, at a total acquisition cost of \$1,600.

Upon completion of the survey, a contract for the erection of the wall was awarded to Mr. A. L. Hutton of Washington, D. C. Work was begun by this contractor on June 22, 1876, and the enclosing wall -- consisting of some 400,000 bricks, shipped by schooner from Alexandria, Virginia -- was completed on September 31, 1876, at a total cost of \$10,187.

Within less than a year of its erection by the burial corps in 1868, Superintendent Miller began to complain about the dampness, unhealthiness, and general unfitness of the wooden lodge erected for his occupancy. Meanwhile, the Quartermaster Department had been engaged in preparing plans for a standard type lodge to be erected at each of the national cemeteries.⁴⁸ Upon completion and approval of these plans, a contract was awarded and work was begun on a new lodge at Poplar Grove in August 1870. As in the case of the wall, however, the first contractor defaulted before he had done more than excavate a foundation for the building. In the following year, a new contractor undertook the job and began work on the present building on October 24, 1871. The site chosen for the lodge in the previous

⁴⁸Records Group 92 (QMG), War Records Office, National Archives.

year was abandoned, and a one and one-half story stone building was erected to the right of the entrance gate. On March 30, 1872, this lodge was completed and ready for occupancy.

Perhaps no single feature of the cemetery has required as much or more maintenance and expenditure than the lodge. The building was neither aesthetically pleasing nor architecturally sound. In its original design, it consisted of three rooms on the ground floor, one of which was to be used as a public office, and an unfinished upper half-story whose exterior walls were formed by the copper roof. So cramped were the living quarters of the superintendent that, within seven years, the Quartermaster Department was forced to convert the attic into sleeping quarters, a wholly unsatisfactory solution considering the heat of Virginia summers. But it was not until 1914, that a kitchen was added to the rear of the lodge; prior to that time, a temporary wooden shack behind the lodge served as a kitchen.

Structural defects also added to the problem of maintaining the lodge. When it was built, the plaster was applied directly to the exterior walls. Until this condition was corrected by tearing the old plaster off and inserting lathing between the exterior and interior walls, the wallpaper or paint continually peeled from the interior walls of the first floor because of the excessive dampness. Indeed, the dampness of the lodge appears to have been detrimental to the health of many of its inhabitants, if we are to believe the complaints of various superintendents.

In 1873, a combination wooden toolshed and stable was erected directly across the road from the lodge. And though the toolshed - stable was unroofed by the tornado of August 2, 1915, it was not until the fall of 1929 that it was replaced by a new concrete building. During the latter year, moreover, a small concrete building was erected behind the lodge to house the water pump, coal bin, and rest rooms.

Efforts were made as early as 1891, by Superintendent E. L. Grant, to secure the erection of a rostrum at Poplar Grove for use on Memorial Day and other commemorative occasions. It was not until the summer of 1896, however, that the approval of the Quartermaster Department was given and work was begun; the rostrum was subsequently completed on January 2, 1897. In reality, it would appear that the rostrum has been little used for the purpose for which it was originally intended, since observance of Memorial Day at Poplar Grove has never received very much support from the people of the nearby community.⁴⁹

No discussion of the history of Poplar Grove would be complete without some reference to its central feature, the flagpole, from which the walks and avenues radiate and toward which the graves face. The first flagpole, erected in 1866 by the burial corps, was torn down in July 1873 because it was decayed. More than half a year elapsed before a new wooden flagpole was erected on March 13, 1874,

⁴⁹According to Superintendent Miller, May 30, 1871, was the first time the graves at Poplar Grove were "generally decorated by [the] people of Petersburg;" Records, RMC.

and the surrounding mound reduced from forty to twenty-three feet in diameter. In 1913, this flagpole was torn down and replaced by an iron one which stands to the present day.

National Park Service

1933 to the Present

Transfer of Poplar Grove National Cemetery to the National Park Service on August 10, 1933, in no way altered the obligation to maintain the cemetery in accordance with legislative regulations; it merely transferred the obligation to administer and maintain the cemetery to the National Park Service.⁵⁰

⁵⁰This is the opinion of Felix S. Cohen, Acting Solicitor, Department of the Interior, given in Order M.31833, July 3, 1942, to the Secretary of the Interior; a copy of this brief is to be found in the files (691-09: Cemetery Sites) of Petersburg National Military Park. The principal question involved in Order M.31833 was whether the National Park Service was obligated to maintain a porter's lodge at each of the National Cemeteries transferred to its jurisdiction in 1933. On the basis of an examination of the provisions of: (1) the Legislative Appropriation Act of 1933, as amended by section 16 of the Act of March 3, 1933; (2) Executive Order No. 6266 of June 10, 1933; and (3) Executive Order No. 6228 of July 28, 1933, Solicitor Cohen came to the following conclusion:

"In my opinion, therefore, the Director of the National Park Service is not required to maintain a porter's lodge and to employ a superintendent at each of the national cemeteries under his jurisdiction when, in his judgment the continuance of the office of a cemetery superintendent and the maintenance of a porter's lodge at certain cemeteries is no longer justified. He may assign the duties of such superintendents to other qualified personnel and he may allocate porters' lodges to other appropriate uses."

Since 1933, therefore, the pattern of maintenance has not been altered to any considerable extent though the details have. Until the position was abolished in 1949, a portion of the maintenance work at the cemetery continued to be the responsibility of the superintendent. Since this official was, by law, a disabled veteran and the work could not be performed by one man alone during the growing season, additional labor was required. From 1933 to 1941, in an era of varying degrees of economic depression, the labor supply was plentiful, and additional labor was furnished the cemetery superintendent by the nearby camps of the Civilian Conservation Corps and other public works agencies. But with the demise of the public works agencies in 1941 -- and, to a further degree, with the abolishment of the cemetery superintendent's position in 1949 -- maintenance of Poplar Grove became the added responsibility of the maintenance staff of Petersburg National Military Park.

Only one significant alteration has been made in the physical appearance of Poplar Grove since 1933, and that occurred early in 1934 when the upright headstones were cut off and placed flush with the ground. This step was taken in an effort to reduce the amount of time required to maintain the cemetery in a presentable manner, thereby effecting an economy in labor costs.

Indeed, economy of operation has been, and has had to be, forcefully stressed ever since the transfer of Poplar Grove to the National Park Service in 1933. The legislative mandate contained in the Appropriation Act of 1933 to "reduce the number of such [executive]

agencies by consolidating those having similar functions under a single head . . .⁵¹ has been achieved. Poplar Grove National Cemetery is now administered and maintained under the direction of the Superintendent, Petersburg National Military Park. But there is some reason to think that the National Park Service has been forced to absorb the economic consequences of the unification. It would appear that the appropriation allotted to the National Park Service for the administration and maintenance of Poplar Grove, and for the other national cemeteries transferred to this agency as well, is not comparable to the Congressional appropriation and allotment for equivalent units of the national cemeterial system which remain under the administrative jurisdiction of the Department of the Army.

⁵¹Quoted by Cohen, *ibid.*

CONCLUSION

With only fifty non-Civil War interments since its establishment in July 1866, Poplar Grove has essentially remained a memorial to those soldiers who died "in defence of the American Union" in the Petersburg and Appomattox Campaigns. In addition, and as a result of its location on the Civil War campsite of the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers, Poplar Grove has served to commemorate, but largely in name only, the unusual war development of the cemetery site which reached its apex in the construction of Poplar Grove Church.

In the past this memorial aspect of Poplar Grove has received little public recognition, however, even on the day traditionally set aside for this purpose -- Memorial Day. Only one commemorative ceremony worthy of note is recorded in the annals of Poplar Grove; that occurred on April 16, 1931, when the remains of twenty-nine Union soldiers, which were recovered from the Grater Battlefield on March 28-29, were reinterred in the cemetery with full military honors.

Greater emphasis should be placed on the memorial aspect of Poplar Grove in the future, for therein lies the only justification for the integration of this national cemetery with Petersburg National Military Park. The role of the cemetery grounds as the campsite of the 50th New York Volunteer Engineers and, more particularly, the

Good

construction and use of Poplar Grove Church should be fully interpreted. It is even more imperative, however, that Poplar Grove be closed after the remaining dozen gravesites are filled. Closure of the cemetery at that time will restrict non-Civil War interments to about 1 per cent of a total of slightly more than 6,300 burials, and thereby serve to preserve the identity of Poplar Grove as a memorial to the Civil War dead.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX I

DATE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF
POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY

It is difficult to reconcile the conflicting dates given for the establishment of the cemetery in the cemeterial records. These records indicate both the dates June 13 and July 13, 1866, and there are references as well to unspecified dates in the months of April and May 1866.¹

Recourse to other sources provides similarly conflicting information. In his report of June 12, 1866, to Major General Meigs, Lt. Colonel Moore states that "previous to the receipt of this communication [an offer by William Griffith to donate land at the Crater for a national cemetery], a site had already been selected by me at Poplar Grove, and the work of removing bodies to same had commenced."² In his "Annual Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1866," however, Brigadier General J. J. Dana -- in charge of the Sixth Division (Cemeterial Affairs) Office of the Quartermaster General, states that:

There still remains very much to be done in this department [Virginia], both in finishing the national cemeteries commenced by the above officers [Colonels Moore and Ludington],

¹Records, PMSG.

²Records Group 92 (O.MG), War Records Office, National Archives.

and also in collecting and enclosing the remains at many points where national cemeteries are not yet established, such as Petersburg³

It is also intended to establish a very considerable cemetery at 'Poplar Grove church,' near Petersburg, Virginia, to contain all the bodies from some twenty miles around that city, with the exception of those in the cemeteries at City Point and Point of Rocks.⁴

What conclusions can be drawn from the above information as to the date of the establishment of Poplar Grove National Cemetery?

First, Brigadier General Dana's statement that "it is also intended to establish a very considerable cemetery at 'Poplar Grove church,' near Petersburg, Virginia" substantially confirms the fact that this site had been selected for a national cemetery prior, at least, to June 30, 1866. Lt. Colonel Moore indicates that the selection of this site was actually made prior to June 12, in pursuance of the orders and authorization which he had received from the Secretary of War almost a month and a half before.⁵

³In "Annual Report of the Quartermaster-General for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1866," which is to be found in: Annual Reports of the Quartermaster General 1861 to 1866 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880), p. 221 (each report is separately paged).

⁴Ibid., p. 223

⁵Communicated to Lt. Colonel Moore by Brigadier General J. J. Dana in a letter dated April 30, 1866, Process Copies, Letters Sent, QMG, Cemeterial Affairs, April 25 to August 23, 1866, Records Group 92 (O-90), War Records Office, National Archives.

Secondly, Lt. Colonel Moore's statement that "the work of removing bodies to same [Poplar Grove] had commenced" prior to June 12 cannot be fully accepted. Aside from the implication in Brigadier General Dana's report, the records of the cemetery and a wholly independent source⁶ indicate that the recovery and reinterment program was not begun at Poplar Grove until July 1866. Perhaps an effort was made to get the recovery program under way prior to June 12, as Lt. Colonel Moore contends; but there is little reason to think that this was more than a token beginning which must have been suspended almost immediately.

Thirdly, if the conclusion that the recovery and reinterment program was not actually begun at Poplar Grove until July 1866 is accepted, it becomes clear that the criterion in dating the establishment of the cemetery is not the date on which the selection of the site was made but rather the date on which the recovery and reinterment program was begun. This is implicit in Brigadier General Dana's statement, and it explains why he categorically states that no cemetery had been established at Petersburg as of June 30, 1866.

Fourthly, of the several dates given for the establishment

⁶ Statement of the Disposition of Some of the Bodies of Deceased Union Soldiers and Prisoners of War Whose Remains Have Been Removed to National Cemeteries in the Southern and Western States (4 vols., Washington: Government Printing Office, 1868-69), IV, 13-18. This source fails to indicate the specific date in July on which the recovery and reinterment program had its inception.

of the cemetery in the cemeterial records, only one occurs in July - -
July 18. Though it cannot be fully confirmed,⁷ this date probably
marks the beginning of the recovery and reinterment program and,
therefore, the establishment of the cemetery.

⁷ibid.

APPENDIX II

POPLAR GROVE CHURCH

Date of Removal from and

Location in the Cemetery

A thorough search of the records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, in the War Records Office, National Archives and the Records of Poplar Grove National Cemetery has failed to reveal the exact date of the removal of Poplar Grove Church from the cemetery grounds. Collateral evidence found in these records, however, indicates that the church was razed subsequent to March 20 and prior to April 23, 1868.

August Miller, superintendent of the cemetery, first indicated that the church was beginning to decay when he reported on September 30, 1867, that "to preserve the Church," The Roof and Windows require repairing."¹ On February 8, 1868, Miller reiterated his earlier warning, pointing out that "the Church, located in the

¹August Miller to Major General D. H. Ryker, Acting Quartermaster General; Records, PQMG. Since Miller's reports to the Quartermaster General were forwarded through the Chief Quartermaster, First Military District, Richmond, Virginia, Lt. Colonel Moore, who held this post in addition to that of supervising cemeterial operations in Virginia, was also a recipient of this and other information conveyed to the Quartermaster General by Miller.

Cap[ital]e[ry] . . . is fast decaying; the roof is leaking in several places."² In his monthly report for February 1868, moreover, Miller devoted a special section to the subject of the church in which he stressed the fact that "this Building is now fast decaying, the Timber beginn[ing] to rot; the Roof is leaking on [sic] several places, and Windows are broken."³

Miller's reports apparently stimulated Lt. Colonel Moore to seek the advice of his superior, for on March 17, 1868, he penned the following letter to Major General D. H. Rucker:

. . . . Also that the church be preserved as a memento as long as practicable.

In reference to the latter subject I would respectfully inquire whether it is the intension of the Quartermaster General to authorize the necessary expenditures to carry out those instructions.

The church alluded to is a rude log structure, erected by the 50th N. Y. Eng. [Incorp.] during the siege of Petersburg. The logs are entirely worm-eaten, and the whole building is in an advanced state of decay. Even the most thorough repairs will not preserve it for a longer period than one or two years.

. . . . In view of these facts I would respectfully suggest, that no further repairs be made in the premises, but that the church be torn down and the ground appropriated [for a flower garden].⁴

Major General Rucker apparently sanctioned Lt. Colonel Moore's

²August Miller to Lt. Colonel James M. Moore, *ibid.*

³August Miller to Major General D. H. Rucker, February 29, 1868; *ibid.*

⁴Records Group 92 (O.R.G.), War Records Office, National Archives.

suggestion that the church be torn down, primarily on grounds of economy:

As to the church it was not intended that any expense of consequence should be incurred.

It was desired to . . . leave it as a well known object of interest to all soldiers & officers who were at Petersburg; and that it should not be destroyed until the effects of time had rendered it ruinous & unsightly; as it was thought to be almost the only relic of the Siege now standing in the vicinity.

The space of ground it covers is supposed to be small, & therefore not very useful for any other purpose; but it is not worth any great outlay to preserve the church; and, therefore, whenever such expense is needed to preserve it - it must be torn down.⁵

In the light of the above correspondence, it seems certain that Lt. Colonel Moore accepted Major General Archer's reply as sufficient authority to order the church torn down.

That the church was torn down and removed from the cemetery by April 28, 1863, seems clear from a careful analysis of the burial records. This analysis also establishes the location of the church, within narrow limits, on the cemetery grounds.

It is known that the church was located "north of and near the Flag-Staff,"⁶ and that the present flagpole remains on the same

⁵Ibid. This is a penciled memorandum dated 4/29/63. It is not known whether this note formed the basis of an official order to Lt. Colonel Moore or whether it was simply forwarded to the latter in its original form. It was found together with Lt. Colonel Moore's letter of March 17, 1863.

⁶August Miller to Major General D. H. Buckner, February 29, 1863; Records, PGMG.

site as the one originally erected by the Union burial corps in 1866.⁷

To the north of the flagpole was laid out Division C, containing eight sections ranging from A to G inclusive. Of the six divisions into which the cemetery was divided, it was only in Division C that burial did not begin in Section A of that division and proceed in alphabetical order through the remaining sections in that division.⁸

In Division C, burials were first begun in Section C, and it was not until April 28, 1868, that the first interments were made in Sections A and B.⁹ From April 28, 1868, to June 30, 1869, when the Union burial corps ceased its concentration and reburial efforts at Poplar Grove, 275 new graves were opened in Division C as follows: Section A, 55 graves; Section B, 68 graves; Section C, 72 graves; and Section D, 80 graves.¹⁰ A careful plotting of these graves reveals that only the new graves in Sections A and B of Division C are of major significance from the standpoint of the location of the church.¹¹ The 55 graves in Section A and the 68 graves in Section B opened during this period filled all of the burial space comprised in these two sections of Division C.

⁷Records, F&O.

⁸Burial Records, F&O.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid. A list of these graves by numbers appears on p. 80 of this Appendix.

¹¹See map accompanying this Appendix.

Together with the fifteen foot wide drive lying immediately behind them, these two sections form a broad wedge-shaped area about 63 feet long and 135 feet wide and 40 feet wide at its maximum and minimum widths respectively.¹² While no verbal descriptions of the exterior dimensions of the church are to be found, available pictures would seem to indicate that it was certainly not any larger than this plot of ground and probably was even somewhat smaller.¹³

The conclusion, then, is that the church stood north of and between the flagpole and the row of graves in Division C bearing grave numbers 2634 to 2663, inclusive;¹⁴ and that it was torn down and removed from the cemetery, because it was in an advanced stage of decay, between March 20 and April 28, 1863. Subsequently, the ground which the church had occupied was used for burial purposes and not for a flower garden, as Lt. Colonel Moore had suggested. Undoubtedly this use was prompted by the finding of more remains of Union soldiers than had been expected, at a time when burial space in the cemetery had almost been exhausted.¹⁵

¹²ibid. The average distance between graves is 4'6" and between rows of graves is 8'

¹³See the two photographs of the church accompanying this Appendix on pp. 61f.

¹⁴As indicated by the shaded area on the map accompanying this Appendix.

¹⁵Records, 1863.

The conclusions arrived at in the above would appear to be confirmed by at least one other fact. While the subject of the condition of the church was an important part of the reports and correspondence relating to the cemetery between September 30, 1867, and March 30, 1868, there is an absence of any reference to the church in such reports and correspondence after the latter date.¹⁶

It is known with certainty that the church had been torn down and removed from the cemetery by the fall of 1868. Major General L. Thomas, in his capacity of Inspector of National Cemeteries, inspected the cemetery on October 27, 1868, and subsequently reported that the church had been "taken down."¹⁷

¹⁶Ibid; and Records Group 92, (O, 40), War Records Office, National Archives.

¹⁷Report of the Inspector of the National Cemeteries of the U. S. for the year 1869, in U. S. Senate Executive Documents, 41st Congress, 2nd Session, 1869-70 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1870), II, No. 62, 30.

List of the Graves Opened
in Division C from
April 28, 1868, to June 30, 1869

Sections A & B (combined)

Grave Nos. 2512 to 2633 inclusive

Section C

Grave Nos. 2641-2647 inclusive

"	"	2641-2648	"
"	"	2706-2713	"
"	"	2752-2761	"
"	"	2781-2788	"
"	"	2831-2838	"
"	"	2862-2868	"
"	"	2911-2917	"
"	"	2942-2945	"
"	"	2986-2989	"

Section D

Grave Nos. 2648-2654 inclusive

"	"	2674-2680	"
"	"	2714-2721	"
"	"	2744-2752	"
"	"	2790-2798	"
"	"	2821-2830	"
"	"	2869-2876	"
"	"	2905-2910	"
"	"	2946-2951	"
"	"	2981-2985	"
"	"	3014-3015	"
"	"	3047	"
"	"	3066	"

POPLAR GROVE CHURCH, FEBRUARY 1865

Captain Michael H. McGrath, who designed the church, is standing in the left foreground with his hand in his coat.

(Courtesy National Archives)

POPLAR GROVE CHURCH, c. APRIL 1865

(Courtesy National Archives)

APPENDIX III

DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE CAMP
OF THE 50th NEW YORK VOLUNTEER ENGINEERS IN
THE PHOTOGRAPHIC DIVISION
LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

<u>Negative Number</u>	<u>Description</u>
LC-B311-345	Views in the camp of the 50th New York Engineers in front of Petersburg, Virginia.
LC-B311-3340	Engineers in front of Petersburg, Virginia.
LC-B317-7060	Commissary Department, 50th New York Engineers in front of Petersburg, Virginia, March 1865.
LC-B317-7059	Headquarters, 50th New York Engineers in front of Petersburg, Virginia, November 1864.
LC-B317-7213	Officers' Quarters and Church, Camp of the 50th New York Engineers in front of Petersburg, Virginia, March 1865.
LC-B317-7167	Headquarters (Officers' quarters on left of church), 50th New York Engineers, March 1865.
No negative number	Surgeon's Quarters, Camp of the 50th New York Engineers in front of Petersburg, Virginia, November 1864.

APPENDIX IV

A PICTORIAL CONTRAST BETWEEN THE BURIAL PRACTICES
OF THE ARMY OF THE POTOMAC IN THE COMBAT
AND NEAR ZONES OF THE
PETERSBURG CAMPAIGN

PLATE III

Burial Practices in the Combat Zone: Some Graves at Warren
Station, Petersburg Lines, c. 1864-65. (Courtesy National Archives).

PLATE IV

Burial Practices in the Rear Zone: Some Graves near City
Point, Virginia, c. 1864-65. (Courtesy National Archives)

APPENDIX V

A LIST OF THE SUPERINTENDENTS
OF POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY

<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>On Duty</u>	
	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
1. Miller, August ¹	August 20, 1867	- October 5, 1876
2. Lacy, H. C.	October 6, 1876	- April 30, 1890
3. Grant, E. L.	May 1, 1890	- January 31, 1893
4. Baldwin, B. S. (Acting)	February 1, 1893	- April 6, 1893
5. Sullivan, A. D. (Acting)	April 7, 1893	- December 11, 1893
6. Hill, Richard B.	December 12, 1893	- November 5, 1895
7. Laun, John	November 5, 1895	- July 31, 1903
8. Savage, T. H.	August 1, 1903	- July 26, 1904
9. Osbourne, J. H.	July 27, 1904	- November 30, 1904
10. Hill, Richard B.	December 1, 1904	- April 16, 1908
11. Perkinson, H. L. (Acting)	April 17, 1908	- May 17, 1908
12. Hass, George	May 18, 1908	- June 11, 1910
13. Brist, F. H. (Acting)	June 12, 1910	- August 3, 1910
14. Dye, Robert E.	August 4, 1910	- May 29, 1913
15. Brake, Theodore W. B.	May 30, 1913	- December 13, 1914
16. Bodlay, James W.	December 14, 1914	- June 21, 1917

¹Miller acted as clerk to the superintendent of the burial corps from April 1868 to July 1869.

<u>Superintendent</u>	<u>On Duty</u>	
	<u>From</u>	<u>To</u>
17. Blaha, J. J., Jr. (Acting)	June 22, 1917	- July 16, 1917
18. Kinter, W. P.	July 17, 1917	- December 15, 1918
19. Hill, Robert (Acting)	December 16, 1918	- January 31, 1919
20. Davis, William	February 1, 1919	- September 2, 1919
21. Lovelace, J. B.	September 3, 1919	- September 7, 1922
22. Blaha, J. J., Jr. (Acting)	September 8, 1922	- January 26, 1923
23. Tallman, John F.	January 27, 1923	- April 10, 1926
24. Bobber, Joseph A.	April 11, 1926	- August 5, 1927
25. Blaha, J. J., Jr. (Acting)	August 6, 1927	- November 16, 1927
26. Jackson, Charles E.	November 17, 1927	- December 11, 1931
27. Green, William H. (Acting)	December 12, 1931	- January 6, 1932
28. Pearce, Walter J.	January 7, 1932	- August 3, 1933
29. Kavanagh, Felix E. (In charge)	August 4, 1933	- August 9, 1933
30. Green, William H. (Acting) ²	August 10, 1933	- September 4, 1933
31. Moore, Benjamin F. ³	September 5, 1933	- September 30, 1949

²On August 10, 1933 Poplar Grove National Cemetery was transferred from the War Department to the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

³The position of superintendent at Poplar Grove was abolished upon the retirement of Mr. Moore.

APPENDIX VI

A LIST OF THE KNOWN CONFEDERATE DEAD INTERRED IN POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Rank</u>	<u>Co.</u>	<u>Regiment</u>	<u>Grove No.</u>
1.	Boyce, J.	Pvt.	B	1st Va. Inf.	4765
2.	Burdatt, H. F.	Pvt.	D	11th Va. Inf.	4972
3.	Dacon, John	Pvt.	C	12th Va. Inf.	4625
4.	Dowling, Patrick	Pvt.	B	1st Va. Art.	4726
5.	Flower, Thomas	Pvt.	A	15th Va. Inf.	4962
6.	Frier, Joseph	Pvt.	A	1st Va. Inf.	4604
7.	Getton, George	Pvt.	-	1st Va. Cav.	4592
8.	Green, W. H.	Pvt.	I	7th Va. Inf.	4774
9.	Johnson, James M.	Pvt.	H	5th Va. Inf.	4943
10.	Kelly, J.	Pvt.	H	3rd Va. Inf.	4794
11.	Parker, James	Pvt.	I	5th Va. Inf.	4778
12.	Rand, J.	Pvt.	B	11th Va. Inf.	4617
13.	Wallace, William C.	Capt.	-	61st Va. Inf.	5217

In addition to the above, there are twenty-three unknown Confederate dead interred in Poplar Grove National Cemetery.

APPENDIX VII

LAND STATUS OF

POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY

Deed of April 3, 1868¹

This Deed made this third day of April in the year, eighteen hundred & sixty eight, by Bradley T. Johnson, Special Commissioner of one part, to the United States of America of the other part.

Witnesseth:

Whereas the Rev. Thomas B. Flower heretofore in his life time was seized and possessed of a certain tract of land in Dinwiddie County Virginia, which tract was conveyed to him by Deed of John Flower and wife, dated April 25, 1856, and duly recorded among the Land Records of Dinwiddie County: And whereas the said Thomas B. departed this life intestate leaving a widow Rebecca T. Flower - and James T. Flower - Archibald Flower - and Joseph Flower, heirs at Law and who are infants:

And whereas the Secretary of War did enter upon and take possession of a portion of said tract for a National Cemetery, according to the provisions of an act of Congress, entitled An Act to establish & protect National Cemeteries, approved Febry 22, 1867, he being unable to agree with the said owners of said Land upon the price to be paid therefor, which parcel of Land lies near Petersburg, Virginia and is now occupied and known as Poplar Grove Cemetery.

And whereas the said Rebecca T. Flower and the said Infant heirs at Law by George Vickers their Guardian did apply to the District Court of the United States for the District of Virginia, to have the said land so appropriated appraised, according to the provisions of said Act of Congress. Which the said Court then and there did. And whereas the appraisers so appointed did appraise said property so taken & appropriated to be worth fifteen hundred Dollars, which appraisement was duly ratified by the Court on the third day of April 1868.

And whereas the said Court by its decree passed on the said third day of April 1868 - - did appoint Bradley T. Johnson Special Commissioner to convey all the right title and interest of the said Rebecca T. Flower, James T. Flower, Archibald Flower, and Joseph L. Flower, of in or out of said parcel of Land, so taken, appropriated and appraised to the United States of America, to be used for a National Cemetery and that their Secretary of War should pay over to said Bradley T. Johnson the sum of fifteen hundred Dollars, the appraised value of said parcel of land, which sum said Johnson should bring

¹Book No. 111, 129, Dinwiddie County Records, Dinwiddie County Courthouse, Dinwiddie, Virginia.

into Court to be distributed according to the orders of said Court,

Now therefore the said Bradley T. Johnson, in consideration of the promises, and the payment to him of said sum of Fifteen Hundred Dollars as aforesaid doth grant unto the United States of America all that piece or parcel of Land near Petersburg Virginia, being part of the tract conveyed by John Flower to Thomas B. Flower lying in Dinwiddie County, occupied as a National Cemetery, and known as "Poplar Grove Cemetery" as described marked out and surveyed on a Flat of the same, filed as part of the report of the appraisers in the District Court of the United States, in the Petition of Rebecca T. Flower & others for Appraisers, as by reference thereto will fully appear, and which is to be considered part of this instrument of writing.

Beginning at a point A, and running South, Twenty one degrees ten minutes west, one Hundred & ten & three tenth feet; Thence North seventy six degrees, twenty four minutes west, Two hundred and ninety four and one half feet. thence North, seventeen degrees twenty minutes East, two Hundred and ten feet; thence South Seventy six degrees twenty four minutes East, a distance of one Hundred feet; thence North seventeen degrees twenty minutes East, three Hundred and seventy two and six tenths feet. thence South Seventy five degrees fifty minutes East, six Hundred and fifty nine, and six tenths feet; Thence South, sixteen degrees thirty three minutes West, four Hundred and seventy eight feet; thence North, seventy six degrees, twenty four minutes west, a distance of four Hundred and fifty one and seven tenth feet to the place of beginning. Enclosing eight acres and thirteen hundredths of an acre.

And the said Bradley T. Johnson as Special Commissioner appointed by above recited decree doth hereby grant all the rights title and interest of the said parties of in account of said parcel of Land to the United States of America to be used as a National Cemetery forever.

Witness my hand & seal
this third day of April 1868.

(sig) Bradley T. Johnson.

(seal)

Witness

(sig) Geo M. Dewey.

State of Virginia

City of Richmond

Set on this third day of April 1868 before me, a Notary Public of said City & State personally appeared said Bradley T. Johnson in my said City and whose name is signed to the writing above bearing date of April third 1868 - and acknowledged the same before me in my City aforesaid.

Certified & given under my hand this day & year above written.

(sig) John Johns, Sr. *
Notary Public

In the Clerks Office of Dinwiddie County Court.

Dec 15 1868.

This Deed from Bradley T. Johnson Special Comm. to the United States was this day lodged in said office and with the certificate annexed admitted to record.

Test,
(signed) A. Milligan, Clk.

Deed of April 30, 1877²
(Farley Purchase)

This deed made this 30th day of April in the year Eighteen Hundred and Seventy seven, between J. Wesley Friend, Commissioner, appointed for the purpose hereinafter mentioned, of the one part, and the United States of America of the other part,

WITNESSETH, that whereas at the April term of the Circuit Court of Dinwiddie County in the State of Virginia in the year 1877, it was among other things adjudged ordered and decreed in the suit in Chancery therein pending styled "Friend, guardian &c vs Farleys & others," that J. Wesley Friend who was thereby appointed a Special Commissioner for the purpose, &c, and thereby was authorized to make sale of the tract of land in the bill in said suit mentioned (which is the same hereinafter described and mentioned) at the price of thirty dollars, and upon receipt of the purchase money to make a deed with Special Warranty conveying the said tract of land to the purchaser, and

²Deed Book, 137, 428, Dinwiddie County Records, Dinwiddie Court House, Dinwiddie, Virginia.

WHEREAS the United States of America has become the purchaser thereof at the said sum of Thirty Dollars,

NOW THEREFORE in consideration of the premises, and of the said sum of Thirty Dollars cash in hand paid by the said United States of America, to the said J. Wesley Friend, Special Commissioner as aforesaid, doth grant and convey with special warranty unto the said United States of America the following property, to wit:

A certain tract, piece or parcel of land lying and being in the County of Dinwiddie in the State of Virginia adjoining the Poplar Grove National Cemetery, being a part of the lands whereof Francis B. Farley died seized and possessed, and bounded as follows, to wit: -

Beginning at a gum tree, a proved and marked corner to this and the Flowers tract; thence with the dividing line between this and the Flowers tract S 21°30' N 10 feet to a stake, a corner to the land to be conveyed; thence S 68°45' E, 475 feet to a stake; thence N 18°30' E, 10 feet to a stake in the dividing line between this and the Flower's tract; thence with the said dividing line and with the South West side of the National Cemetery N 68°45' W, 475 feet to the place of beginning and containing 0.0919 of an acre.

WITNES: the following signature and seal.

(sgd) J. Wesley Friend (seal)
Special Commissioner

STATE OF VIRGINIA) to wit:
City of Petersburg)

I, Ro. Gilliam Jr. a Notary Public in and for the City of Petersburg in the State of Virginia do hereby certify that J. Wesley Friend Special Commissioner whose name is signed to the foregoing writing bearing date on the 30th day of April 1877, has acknowledged the same before me in my City aforesaid.

Given under my hand this 30th day of April 1877.

(sgd) Ro. Gilliam, Jr.
Notary Public

Deed of April 30, 1877³
(Flower Purchase)

This Deed made this 30th day of April in the year Eighteen hundred and seventy seven between J. Wesley Friend, Commissioner appointed for the purposes hereinafter mentioned of the one part, and the United States of America of the other part,

WITNESSETH, that whereas, at the October term of the Circuit Court of the County of Dinwiddie in the State of Virginia, in the year 1876, it was among other things adjudged, ordered and decreed, in the suit in Chancery, therein pending styled, Friend, guardian & others vs., Flowers & others, that said J. Wesley Friend, who was thereby appointed a special Commissioner for the purpose, make sale of the portion of land in the Bill in said suit mentioned (which is the same hereinafter described and conveyed) at the price of seventy dollars, to the said United States of America, and upon receipt of the purchase money make a deed with special warranty, conveying the said tract of land by metes and bounds, as in the Bill specified to the purchaser thereof,

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the premises and of the said sum of seventy dollars, cash in hand paid by the said United States of America, to the said J. Wesley Friend, special Commissioner as aforesaid, the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged, the said J. Wesley Friend, special Commissioner as aforesaid, doth grant and convey with special warranty, unto the said United States of America, the following property, to wit: a certain tract, piece or parcel of land lying and being in the County of Dinwiddie, in the State of Virginia, adjoining the Poplar Grove National Cemetery, being a part of the land whereof Thomas B. Flower, died, seized and possessed, and bounded as follows to wit, Beginning at a stake in the dividing line between this and the Farley's tract, and bearing N 21 30' E, 120.3 feet from a Gum tree, it being the original corner to the two tracts of land owned by Flower's and Farley's, and running thence N 68° 45' W 308 feet to a stake, thence N 17° 45' E 230 feet to a stake, thence S 68° 45' E 109 feet to a stake, thence N 17° 45' E 374 feet to a stake, thence S 69° E 673.5 feet to a stake, thence S 18° 30' W 490.3 feet to a stake in the dividing line between this and the Farley's tract, thence with the said dividing line N 68° 45' W 10 feet to a stake, it being the South east corner of the enclosing fence of the National Cemetery, thence with the several sides of the National Cemetery designated by the enclosing picket fence, the bearings and distances being as follows: N 18° 30' E 490.3 feet, N 69° W 673.5 feet, S 17° 45' W 374.3 feet, N 68° 45' W

³Deed Book, XIV, 429, Dinwiddie County Records, Dinwiddie Court House, Dinwiddie, Virginia.

100 feet, S 17°45' W 210 feet, S 63°45' E 296.5 feet to the place of beginning, and containing 0.5019 of an acre, together with a right of way over and along the road as at present used from the public road to the said National Cemetery, and running over the land belonging to the said Flowers.

Witness the following signature and seal.

J. Wesley Friend (seal)
Special Commissioner

STATE OF VIRGINIA
City of Petersburg, to wit:

I, Ro. Gilliam, Jr., a Notary Public, in and for the City of Petersburg, in the State of Virginia, do hereby certify that J. Wesley Friend, Special Commissioner, whose name is signed to the foregoing writing, bears date on the 30th day of April 1877, has acknowledged the same before me in my city aforesaid.

Given under my hand this 30th day of April 1877.

(sgd) Ro. Gilliam, Jr.
Notary Public

Virginia: In the clerk's office of Dinwiddie County Court, October 19th 1877.

This deed of bargain and sale from J. Wesley Friend, Special Commissioner &c, to the United States of America, was this day lodged in the said office and with the certificate and plat annexed admitted to record.

Teste: A. M. Orgain, C.C.

MAP

Describing the Outlines of the Land Obtained
by the U. S. for the Poplar Grove
National Cemetery by Three
several deeds of conveyance.⁴

⁴The Map described appears as the "Final Boundary 1877" on the Historical Land Status Map accompanying this Appendix.

Beginning at "A" a stone set in the dividing line between the Farley's and the Flower's tracts and 10' from a Gum tree, the acknowledged corner to the two tracts, thence S 21°30' W 110.3' to "B", a stone; thence N 68°45' W 95' to "C" a stone; thence N 76°24' W 195' to "D" a stone; thence N 17°20' E 22' to "E" a stone; thence N 68°45' W 17' to "F" a stone; thence N 17°45' E 230' to "G" a stone; thence S 68°45' E 100' to "H" a stone; thence N 17°45' E 374' to "I" a stone; thence S 69° E 419' to "K" a stone; thence S 75°30' E 258' to "L" a stone; thence S 16°33' W 30' to "M" a stone; thence S 69° E 20' to "N" a stone; thence S 18°30' W 500.3' to "O" a stone; thence N 68°45' W 473.5' to "A", the beginning.

Survey of road. Beginning at a point in the northern boundary line of the Cemetery land distant from the corner post marked "7" 134'; thence N 58° W 106'; thence N 35°30' W 83.7'; thence N 22°50' W 189.5'; thence N 15°30' W 132.8'; thence $\frac{N}{W}$ 11°30' W 86.8'; thence N 5° W 196.4'; thence N 2° E 196.6'; thence N 12° E 138' more or less to the county road.

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WILSON
TROOP MOVEMENTS
HISTORIAN
RCT
10/17/52



MARCH 25, 1865
GORDON'S CORPS
ATTEMPT TO BREAK
UNION LINES AT FORT
STEDMAN BUT ARE
FORCED TO DRAW AFTER CAP-
TURE OF CHURCH, DURING THE FORT

- LEGEND
- | EXISTING | PROPOSED |
|----------------------------|----------|
| NATIONAL PARK BOUNDARY | --- |
| U.S. ARMY RESERVATION | --- |
| CITY PARK BOUNDARY | --- |
| CONTOURS | --- |
| RAILROAD | --- |
| PRIMARY ROAD | --- |
| SECONDARY ROAD | --- |
| STREAMS | --- |
| ISLANDS | --- |
| FORTIFICATIONS | --- |
| UNION | --- |
| CONFEDERATE | --- |
| BATTALIONS | --- |
| UNION | --- |
| CONFEDERATE | --- |
| HEAVY GROWTH 1867 | --- |
| CUT OVER GROWTH 1867 | --- |
| FORTIFICATIONS CONFEDERATE | --- |
| AT USE BY UNION | --- |

25' CONTOUR INTERVAL

0 1000 2000 4000

LOCATION MAP-POPLAR GROVE NATL. CEM.

NO ORIGINAL
BEST COPY THAT EXISTS AS OF 7/50

POSITION
...
...
...

NOTES

GENERAL:
 THE NUMBERS INDICATE ONLY THE NUMBERS OF THE FIRST AND LAST GRAVES IN EACH ROW. NO ATTEMPT HAS BEEN MADE TO LIST EACH GRAVE SEPARATELY BUT EACH GRAVE HAS BEEN CHECKED INDIVIDUALLY TO INSURE THAT THERE ARE NO OMISSIONS IN ANY ROW EXCEPT AS NOTED. THE DOTS ON THIS MAP DO NOT EACH REPRESENT A GRAVE SINCE FOR THE MOST PART, THERE ARE NOT ENOUGH OF THEM IN A ROW. THE AVERAGE DISTANCE BETWEEN ROWS IS 6 FEET. THE AVERAGE DISTANCE BETWEEN HEADSTONES IS 4 FEET 6 INCHES.

NOTE # 1

THIS WALK HAS BEEN USED FOR BURIALS AND IS COMPLETELY FILLED IN, BEGINNING AT THE FLAGPOLE AND PROCEEDING TOWARD THE NORTH WALL OF THE CEMETERY THEY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

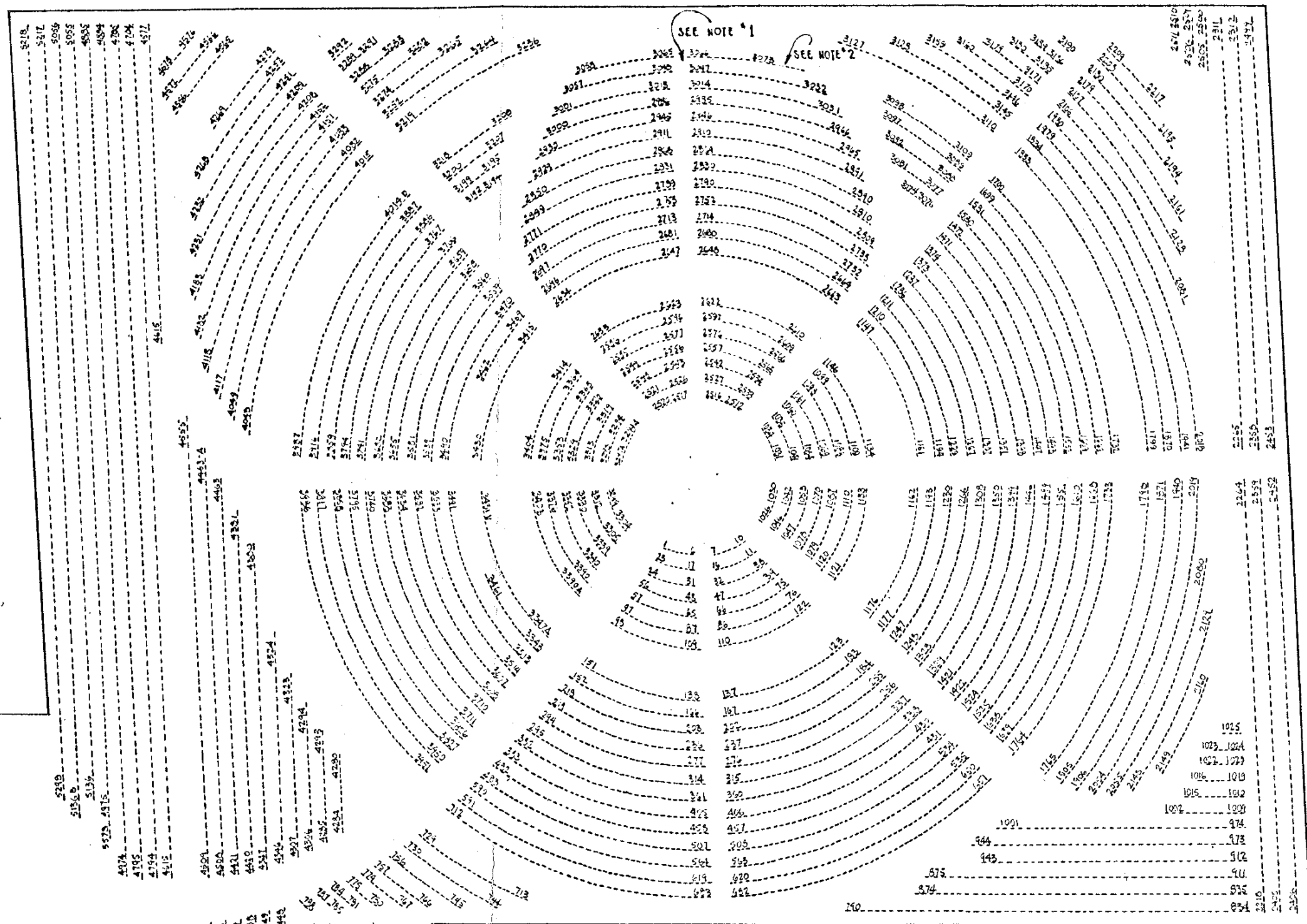
BETWEEN GRAVES NO.	ADDED GRAVE	BETWEEN GRAVES NO.	ADDED GRAVE
2516-2517	2516A	2152-2153	5589
2524-2527	2526A	2789-2790	5590
2541-2543	2543A	2850-2851	5591
2556-2557	2556A	2858-2859	5592
2574-2577	2577A	2910-2911	5593
2596-2597	2596A	2945-2946	5594
2622-2623	2622A	2985-2986	5595
2647-2648	5586	3075-3076	5596
2680-2681	5587	3047-3048	5597
2715-2714	5588	3065-3066	5598

NOTE # 2

THERE ARE ADDITIONAL GRAVES IN THE ROW BEARING THE NUMBERS, FROM LEFT TO RIGHT 5580, 5582, 5583, 5584, 5585. GRAVE NO. 5581 IS MISSING; THIS WAS THE GRAVE OF SGT. HILLS CHILD, WHO WAS DISINTERRED IN 1900. THERE IS NOT SUFFICIENT ROOM BETWEEN GRAVES 5580 AND 5582 TO REUSE THE NUMBER 5581 IN ITS PROPER ORDER.

NOTE # 3 OMISSIONS

GRAVES 2191 AND 3292 DO NOT APPEAR ON THE MAP; THE BURIAL REGISTER SHOWS THAT THESE NUMBERS WERE SKIPPED OVER, PROBABLY INADVERTENTLY, AND NO GRAVES BEARING THESE NUMBERS EXIST.
 GRAVE NO. 789 HAS NOT BEEN FOUND AS YET; THE BURIAL REGISTER INDICATES THAT THIS GRAVE ACTUALLY EXISTS SOMEWHERE IN THE VICINITY OF GRAVE NO. 788.
 GRAVES NUMBERED 5572-5577 INCLUSIVE AND 5579 HAVE NOT BEEN FOUND. WHILE THE BURIAL REGISTER WOULD SEEM TO INDICATE THAT THESE GRAVES SHOULD EXIST COORDINANCE BETWEEN THE CEMETERY SUPERINTENDENT AND THE QUARTERMASTER OF THE WASHINGTON D.C. DEPOT IN 1911 INDICATES OTHERWISE. THESE GRAVES COULD NOT BE FOUND IN 1911 WHEN THE HEADSTONES WERE STILL UPRIGHT AND CONSEQUENTLY IT MUST BE CONCLUDED THAT THEY DID NOT EXIST. A CLOSE EXAMINATION OF THE BURIAL REGISTER PROVIDES A POSSIBLE ANSWER TO THIS MYSTERY. GRAVE NO. 5571 DOES NOT EXIST ACCORDING TO THE BURIAL REGISTER AND YET A HEADSTONE BEARING THIS NUMBER IS TO BE FOUND IN THE CEMETERY. GRAVE NO. 5571 IS ALSO THE FIRST NUMBER WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN USED FOR THE REMAINS OF THE SEVEN UNKNOWN SOLDIERS BROUGHT TO THE CEMETERY FROM LYNDHURST IN 1880 AND SUPPOSEDLY INTERRED IN GRAVES NUMBERED 5572-5577 AND 5579. IN VIEW OF THESE FACTS IT IS CONCLUDED THAT A MISTAKE HAS BEEN MADE IN THE BURIAL RECORDS; THAT THE REMAINS OF THESE SEVEN SOLDIERS WERE GIVEN A MASS BURIAL IN GRAVE NO. 5571; AND THAT GRAVES NUMBERED 5572-5577 AND 5579 DO NOT AND NEVER DID EXIST.



DESIGNED BY: _____ DATE: _____
 DRAWN BY: _____ DATE: _____
 CHECKED BY: _____ DATE: _____
 REVIEWED BY: _____ DATE: _____
 APPROVED BY: _____ DATE: _____
 PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS: _____
 FOUNDATION: _____
 CONSTRUCTION: _____
 CLEARANCE: _____
 MATERIALS: _____

POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY

HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION

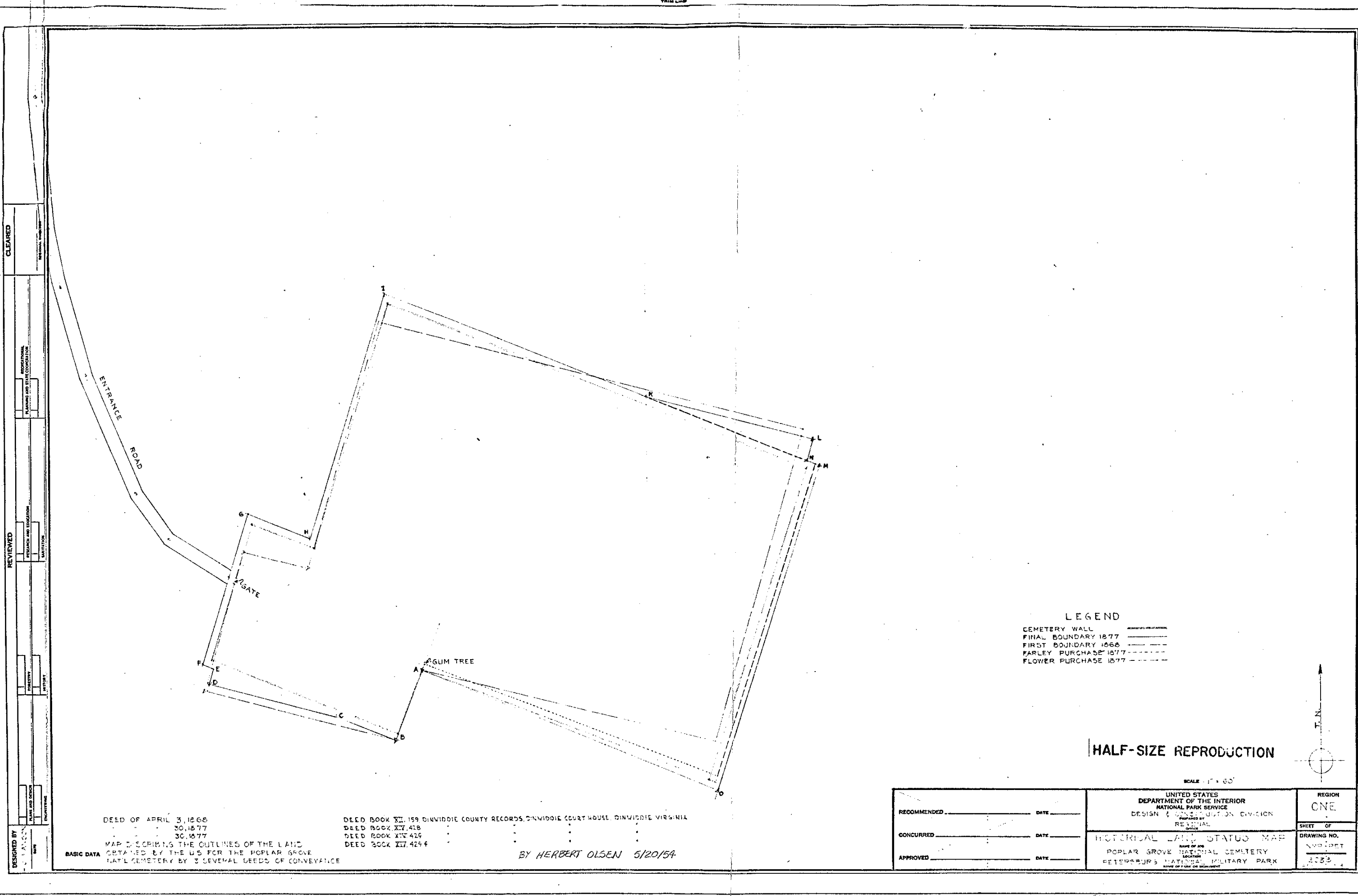
SCALE 1 INCH EQUALS 50 FEET

RECOMMENDED _____ DATE _____ CONCURRED _____ DATE _____ APPROVED _____ DATE _____	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE REGIONAL OFFICE	REGION ONE
	BURIAL LOCATION PLAN NAME OF THE CEMETERY POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY LOCATION PETERSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK NAME OF PARK OR MONUMENT	
	SHEET 1 OF 1 DRAWING NO. N.M.P.-PET 2037	

BASIC DATA



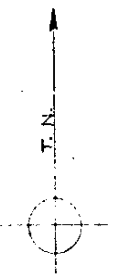
ON MICROFILM



DESIGNED BY
 DRAWN BY
 CHECKED BY
 REVIEWED
 CLEARED
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 REGIONAL OFFICE
 DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION DIVISION
 PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA

LEGEND
 CEMETERY WALL _____
 FINAL BOUNDARY 1877 _____
 FIRST BOUNDARY 1868 _____
 FARLEY PURCHASE 1877 _____
 FLOWER PURCHASE 1877 _____

HALF-SIZE REPRODUCTION
 SCALE: 1" = 60'



BASIC DATA
 DEED OF APRIL 3, 1868
 30, 1877
 30, 1877
 MAP DESCRIBING THE OUTLINES OF THE LAND
 OBTAINED BY THE U.S. FOR THE POPLAR GROVE
 NAT'L CEMETERY BY 3 SEVERAL DEEDS OF CONVEYANCE
 DEED BOOK VII, 159 DINWIDDIE COUNTY RECORDS, DINWIDDIE COURT HOUSE, DINWIDDIE, VIRGINIA
 DEED BOOK XII, 426
 DEED BOOK XIV, 429
 DEED BOOK XII, 429 f
 BY HERBERT OLSEN 5/20/54

RECOMMENDED _____ DATE _____ CONCURRED _____ DATE _____ APPROVED _____ DATE _____	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION DIVISION PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA HISTORICAL LAND STATUS MAP POPLAR GROVE NATIONAL CEMETERY PETERSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK	REGION ONE SHEET OF DRAWING NO. 100102 3033
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ON MICROFILM