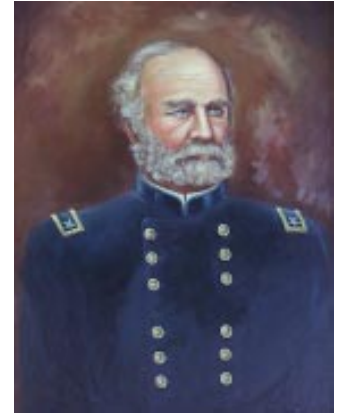


EARLY NATIONAL CEMETERY DEVELOPMENT

From the earliest times, those who died in defense of their people or nation have been deemed worthy of special commemoration of their service on the field of battle. In the United States, development of national cemeteries came about during the Civil War.

On May 15, 1861, Montgomery C. Meigs was made Quartermaster General of the United States Army with the rank of Brigadier General. He had attended the University of Pennsylvania before entering West Point on July 1, 1832. He served as head of the department, providing the armies in the field with all kinds of supplies, except those with which they ate or fought. His responsibilities also included transportation by railroad, wagon, and ship of both the army and its supplies, including army clothing, camp and garrison equipment, cavalry and artillery horses, fuel, forage, straw, material for bedding, and stationery. His department also oversaw the operations of the Military Telegraph Corps.



It was also the duty of the Quartermaster's Department to provide for interments of soldiers who died in battle. Burial grounds had been opened at troop concentration points where mortalities in general hospitals first posed the problem of military burial, and cemeteries were established in the combat zones as memorials to those Union soldiers who gave their lives in battle. The establishment of procedures of making and preserving records of deceased soldiers and of their places of burial was a problem that faced the War Department early in the conflict. War Department General Orders No. 75, dated September 11, 1861, delegated to commanding officers of military corps and departments the responsibility for the burial of officers and soldiers who died within their jurisdictions. It also directed that in performance of this duty, they would properly execute the regulations and forms provided by the Quartermaster General for this purpose, in order to preserve accurate and permanent records of deceased soldiers and their place of burial. The Quartermaster General was also directed to provide means for a registered headboard to be placed at each soldier's grave.

It soon became obvious that the authors of the new burial policy had ignored an all-important aspect of their problem. Burial of the dead became a command responsibility of tactical officers, but no provision was made for the acquisition of burial lands. Partial solutions were sought by acquiring soldiers' plots in cemeteries near large general hospitals, where a far greater number of men were destined to die than fell on the battlefield. Many cemeterial associations performed a patriotic service by donating plots for Army burials. Wherever Army posts, such as Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, were used as concentration points, the existing cemetery met immediate needs. The problem in Washington, D. C., which became the base and training area of the Army of the Potomac, was temporarily solved. The Board of Governors of the Soldiers' Home agreed to permit a portion of their land to be used for cemeterial purposes.

On April 3, 1862, the War Department attempted, in Section II of General Orders No. 33, to include all zones of active hostilities in the new burial program. Commanding generals were now assigned the responsibility "to lay off lots of ground in some suitable spot near every

battlefield, as soon as it was in their power, and to cause the remains of those killed to be interred, with headboards to the graves bearing numbers, and when practicable, the names of the persons buried in them. A register of each burial ground was to be preserved, in which would be noted the marks corresponding with the headboards."

Subsequently, initial legislation looking to the establishment of what was to become a National Cemetery System was enacted by the 37th Congress. Legislation on a variety of subjects was approved by President Abraham Lincoln on July 17, 1862. Section 18 of the Act provided: "That the President of the United States shall have power, 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 cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."



Pursuant to the Act of July 17, 1862, fourteen national cemeteries were created in the latter half of that year. One cemetery was established at Alexandria, Virginia, which was included in the vast encampment surrounding the national capital. The City of Alexandria was the site of one of the principal concentration camps for northern troops sent to defend Washington at the outbreak of hostilities between the North and South. The cemetery at the Soldiers' Home in Washington, D.C.¹ was made a national cemetery for purposes of administration. The old post cemetery at Fort Leavenworth and a new military cemetery at Fort Scott, both in Kansas, were incorporated into the system. Seven national cemeteries were established at troop concentration points, including Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; New Albany, Indiana; Danville, Kentucky; Camp Butler, Illinois; Keokuk, Iowa; Loudon Park, Maryland; and Annapolis, Maryland. One was opened at Cypress Hills, New York, for burial of the remains of Confederate prisoners and guards who perished in a train wreck. A unique feature of this program was the decision to transform the burial sites on battlefields of the war into national cemeteries. One was established near Sharpsburg, Maryland, as a memorial to the dead who fell in the Battle of Antietam.² Another was located on the battlefield at Mill Springs, Kentucky.

As the civil conflict continued to rage, the number of national cemeteries continued to increase. Six cemeteries were created in 1863, including Gettysburg, Pennsylvania², Beaufort, South Carolina; Cave Hill in Louisville, Kentucky; Knoxville, Tennessee; Lexington, Kentucky; and Rock Island, Illinois. In 1864, national cemeteries were established at Beverly, New Jersey, and Mound City, Illinois. Also established that year were the Battleground National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.,² and Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia.¹

Following the close of the Civil War in 1865, there was increased activity in the development of existing national cemeteries and the need to establish new burial grounds. National cemeteries were established that year at Balls Bluff, Virginia; Florence, South Carolina; Mobile, Alabama; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Salisbury, North Carolina. The Stones River National Cemetery in Murfreesboro, Tennessee,² Andersonville National Cemetery in Andersonville, Georgia² and the Fredericksburg National Cemetery in Fredericksburg, Virginia,² were also established that year.

¹ Presently operated and maintained by the Department of the Army

² Presently operated and maintained by the Department of the Interior

On April 13, 1866, by Joint Resolution of the Senate and House of Representatives, the establishment of new burial grounds and development of existing national cemeteries was initiated. The following national cemeteries were established that year:

Camp Nelson, Nicholasville, Kentucky	Nashville, Tennessee
City Point, Hopewell, Virginia	Natchez, Mississippi
Cold Harbor, Richmond, Virginia	Poplar Grove, Petersburg, Virginia ²
Corinth, Mississippi	Port Hudson, Zachary, Louisiana
Crown Hill, Indiana	Richmond, Virginia
Danville, Virginia	Seven Pines, Richmond, Virginia
Fort Harrison, Richmond, Virginia	Staunton, Virginia
Glendale, Richmond, Virginia	Vicksburg, Mississippi ²
Hampton, Virginia	Winchester, Virginia
Jefferson Barracks, St. Louis, Missouri	Yorktown, Virginia ²
Marietta, Georgia	

In 1867, the following new national cemeteries (17) were established:

Alexandria, Louisiana	Jefferson City, Missouri
Baton Rouge, Louisiana	Lebanon, Kentucky
Brownsville, Texas ³	Memphis, Tennessee
Chattanooga, Tennessee	New Bern, North Carolina
Culpeper, Virginia	San Antonio, Texas
Fayetteville, Arkansas	Shiloh, Tennessee ²
Fort Donelson, Tennessee ²	Springfield, Illinois
Fort Smith, Arkansas	Wilmington, North Carolina
Grafton, West Virginia	

In 1868, national cemeteries were established at Barrancas, Florida; Fort Gibson, Oklahoma; and Little Rock, Arkansas, as well as at Chalmette, Louisiana.²

By 1870, virtually all the remains of Union dead, those killed in battle or dead of wounds and sickness in hospitals during the war had been interred in private cemeteries or in national cemeteries.

The Army appropriations Act of 1870 included in the general and incidental expenses of the Quartermaster's Department an allowance "for expenses of the interment of officers killed in action or who may die when in the field, or at posts on the frontier, or at posts and other places when ordered by the Secretary of War, and of non-commissioned officers and soldiers." An Act approved June 1, 1872, provided that "All soldiers and sailors of the United States, who may die in destitute circumstances, shall be allowed burial in the national cemeteries of the United States."

² Presently operated and maintained by the Department of the Interior

³ The Brownsville National Cemetery, established in 1867, was located within the confines of Fort Brown, Texas. In 1909, the Army post was abandoned. The Army contracted with a private firm to have the remains that were buried in the Brownsville National Cemetery transferred to the Alexandria National Cemetery in Pineville, Louisiana.

After a storm of criticism that denounced an attempt to transform the national cemeteries into potter's fields, Congress hastened to approve this act on March 3, 1873, providing that "honorably discharged soldiers, sailors or marines, who have served during the late war either in the regular or volunteer forces, dying subsequent to the passage of this Act, may be buried in any national cemetery of the United States free of cost, and their graves shall receive the same care and attention of those already buried. The production of the honorable discharge of the deceased shall be authority for the superintendent of the cemetery to permit the interment." Thus, national cemeteries became burying grounds for all veterans who served during the Civil War, not merely for those who gave their lives in battle.