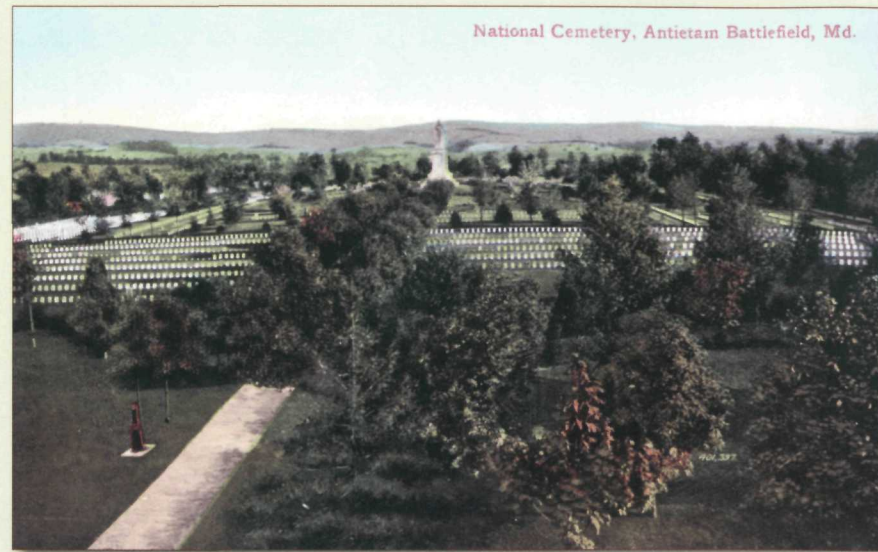




# Antietam National Cemetery



National Cemetery, Antietam Battlefield, Md.

Antique postcard of the Antietam National Cemetery

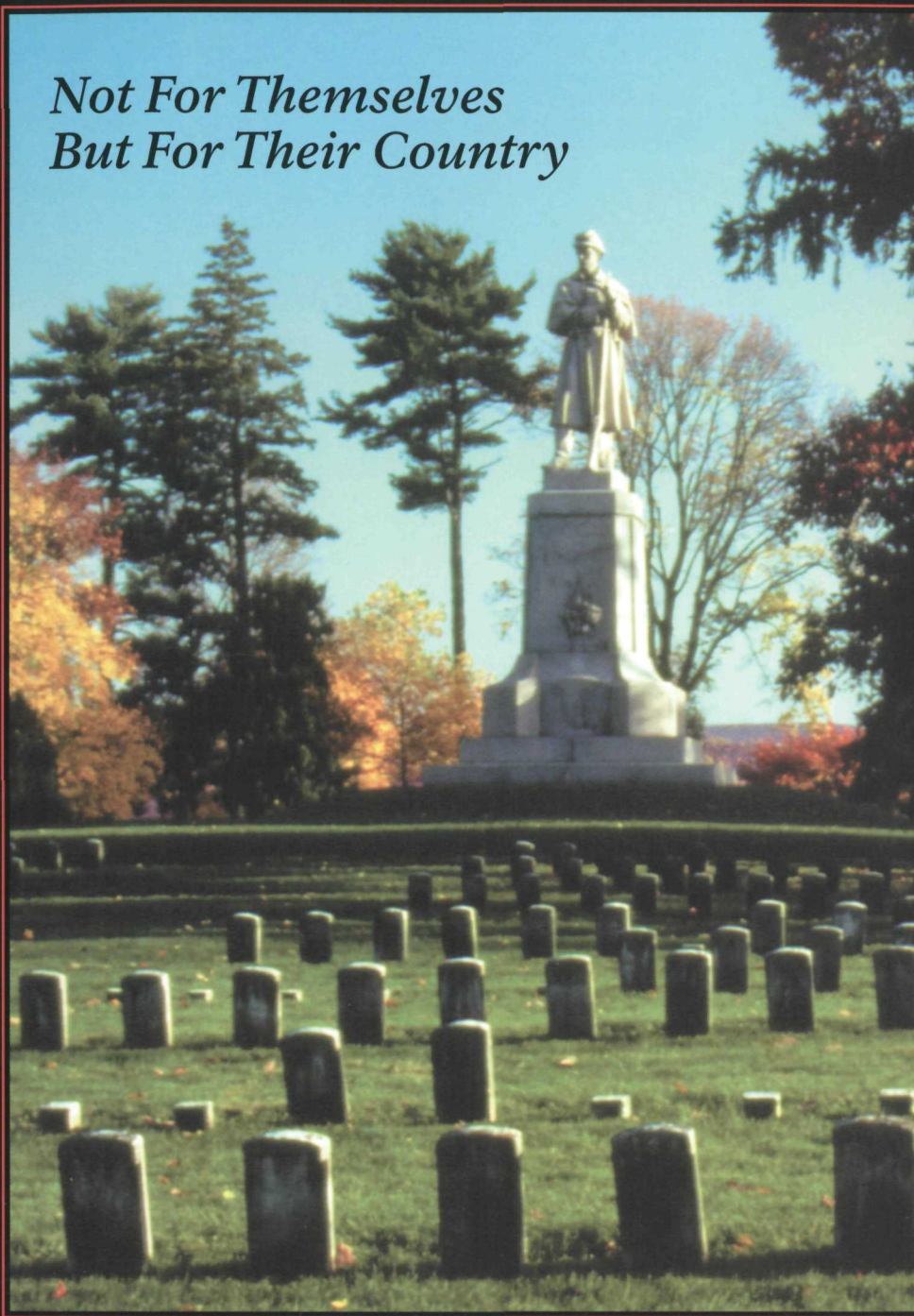


Veterans of the Blue and Gray meet at the Cemetery on the 75th Anniversary of the battle.

*"When we look on yon battlefield, I think of these brave men who fell in the fierce struggle of battle, and who sleep silent in their graves. Yes many of them sleep in silence and peace within this beautiful enclosure after the earnest conflict has ceased."*

President Andrew Johnson speaking at the Dedication, September 17, 1867

Published by the Western Maryland Interpretive Association ([www.AntietamPartner.com](http://www.AntietamPartner.com)), the nonprofit partner of Antietam National Battlefield ([www.nps.gov](http://www.nps.gov)) in partnership with the National Park Service. Designed and written by Park Ranger Eric Long. photo by Eric Long.

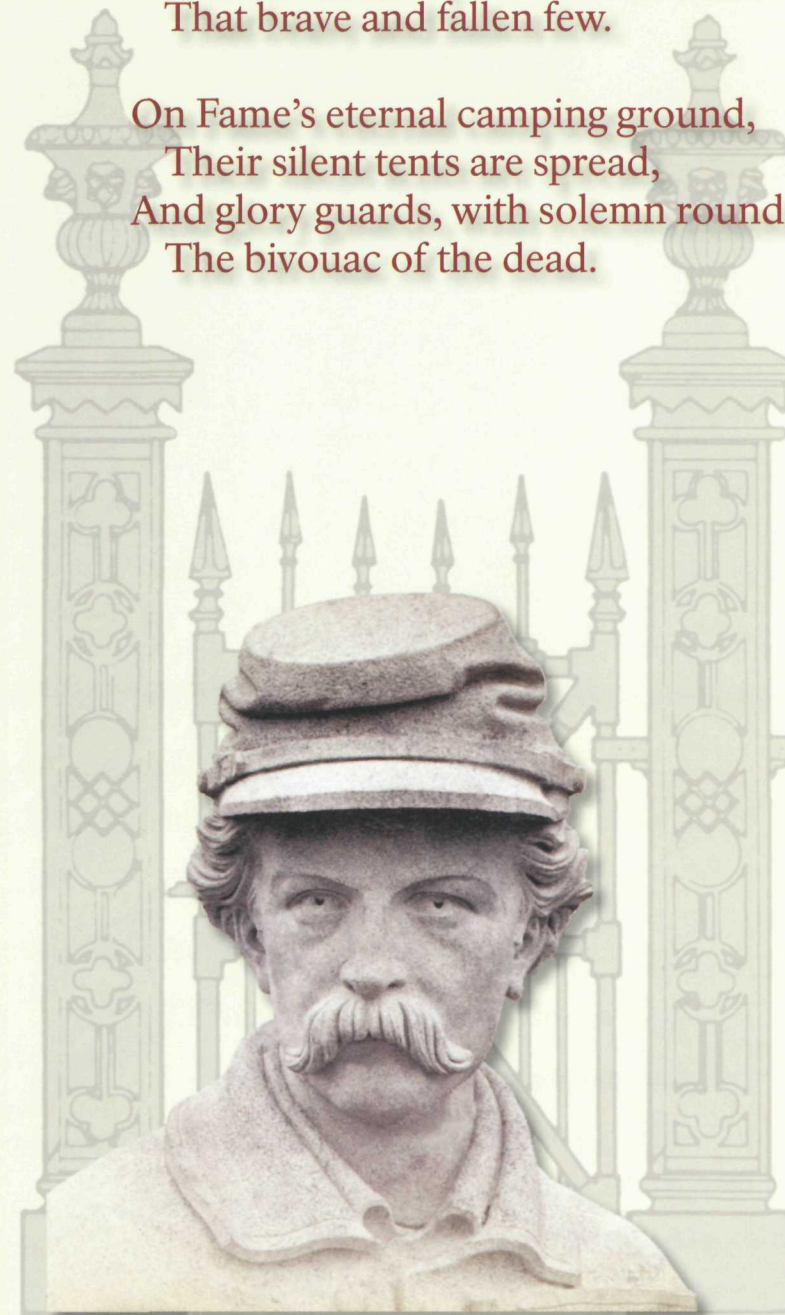


*Not For Themselves  
But For Their Country*

Dedicated September 17, 1867

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat  
The soldier's last tattoo;  
No more on life's parade shall meet  
That brave and fallen few.

On Fame's eternal camping ground,  
Their silent tents are spread,  
And glory guards, with solemn round,  
The bivouac of the dead.



Clockwise from top left: Poem "Bivouacs of the Dead," by Theodore O'Hara is located in the center of the National Cemetery; photo from Memorial Day, 2002; Antique postcard of the entrance to the Cemetery and the Lodge Building; closeup of the Private Soldier Monument.

## The Battle of Antietam

The Battle of Antietam, or Sharpsburg, on September 17th, 1862 was the tragic culmination of Robert E. Lee's first invasion of the north. That one fateful day, over 23,000 men were killed, wounded or listed as missing. Approximately 4,000 were killed, and in the days and weeks that followed many more died of wounds or disease. The peaceful village of Sharpsburg was turned into a huge hospital and burial ground extending for miles in all directions. Burial details performed their grisly task with speed, but not great care. Graves ranged from single burials to long shallow trenches which held dozens. Soldiers were buried on the fields where they fought. For example, William Roulette, whose farm still stands behind the visitor center today, had over

700 soldiers buried on his property. Grave markings were somewhat haphazard, from stone piles to rough hewn crosses and wooden headboards. A few soldiers were buried in local church cemeteries. In other cases, friends or relatives removed bodies from the area for transport home. By March of 1864, no effort had been made to find a suitable final resting place for those buried in the fields surrounding Sharpsburg. Many graves had become exposed. Something had to be done about this horrible eyesore and potential health hazard.



Union burial detail at Antietam

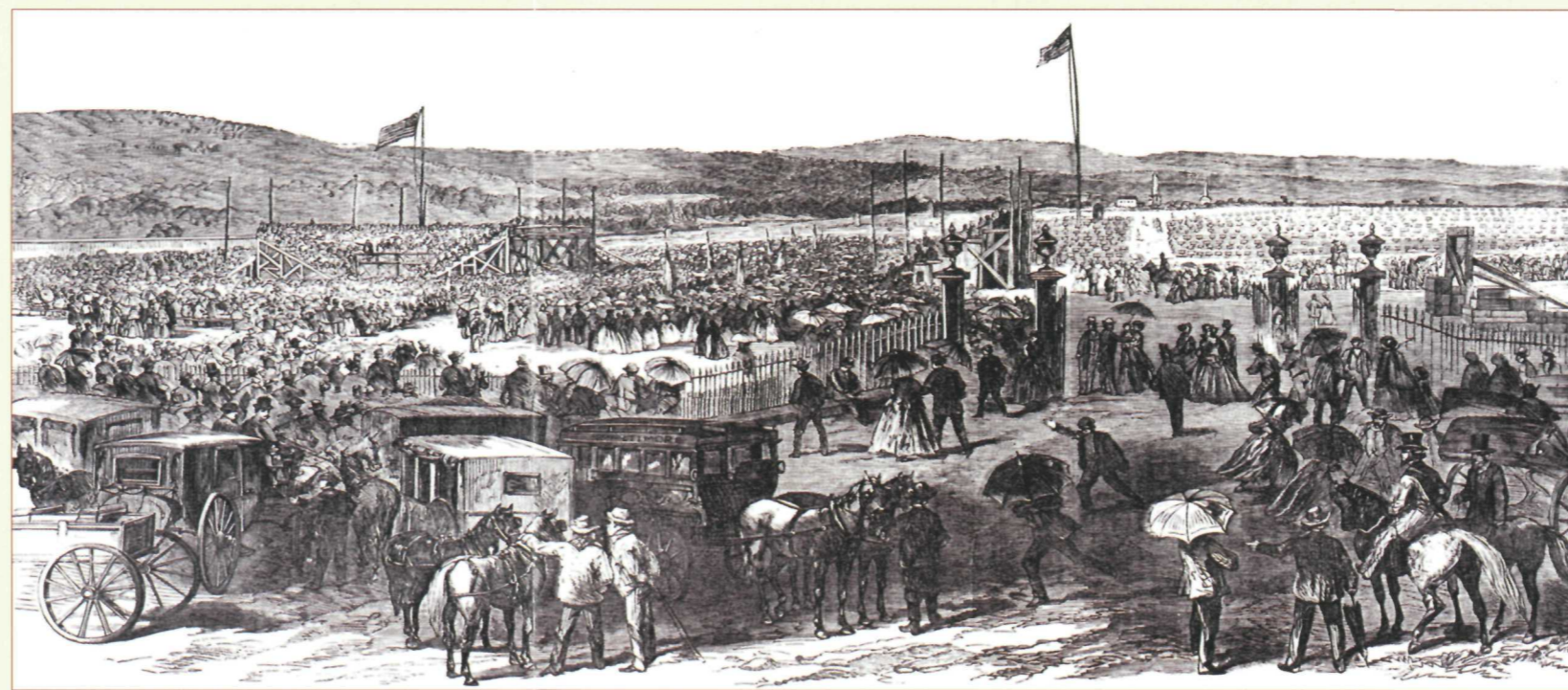
## The National Cemetery

### Establishing a Plan

In 1864, State Senator Lewis P. Firey introduced to the Maryland Senate a plan to establish a state or national cemetery for the men who died in the Maryland Campaign of 1862. On March 23, 1865, the state established a burial site by purchasing 11¼ acres for \$1,161.75. The original Cemetery Commission's plan allowed for burial of soldiers from both sides. However, the rancor and bitterness over the recently concluded conflict and the devastated South's inability to raise funds to join in such a venture persuaded Maryland to recant. Contributions totaling over \$70,000 were submitted from eighteen northern states to the administrators of the Antietam National Cemetery Board. Consequently, only Union dead are interred here. Confederate remains are buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Frederick, Maryland, Rose Hill Cemetery in Hagerstown, Maryland, and Elmwood Cemetery in Shepherdstown, West Virginia.

### An Arduous Task

In an effort to locate grave sites and identify the occupants, no one was of more value than two area men: Aaron Good and Joseph Gill. In the days, months and years following the battle, these men freely gave of their time and gathered a large number of names and burial locations. The valuable service provided by these men cannot be overstated. The dead were identified by letters, receipts, diaries, photographs, marks on belts or cartridge boxes, and by interviewing relatives and survivors.



Dedication of the National Cemetery brought thousands of visitors to Sharpsburg.

### Dedication

On September 17, 1867, on the fifth anniversary of the battle, the cemetery was ready for the dedication ceremonies. The dedication was important enough to bring President of the United States Andrew Johnson and other dignitaries to the cemetery. President Johnson proclaimed, *"When we look on yon battlefield, I think of the brave men who fell in the fierce struggle of battle, and who sleep silent in their graves. Yes, many of them sleep in silence and peace within this beautiful enclosure*

*after the earnest conflict has ceased."* The ceremonies concluded with the dedication of the cornerstone for the Private Soldier monument in the center of the cemetery.

### Private Soldier Monument

The colossal structure of granite that stands in the center of the cemetery reaches skyward 44 feet- 7 inches, weighs 250 tons and is made up of twenty seven pieces. The soldier, made of two pieces joined at the waist, depicts a Union infantryman standing "in place rest" facing homeward to the north. The soldier itself is 21½ feet tall, and weighs about thirty tons. Designed by James G. Batterson of Hartford, CT, and sculpted by James Poletto of Westerly, RI, for a cost of over \$32,000, the "Private Soldier" first stood at the gateway of the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia, PA in 1876. It was disassembled again for the long journey to Sharpsburg.

*Sculptor James W. Poletto puts the finishing touches on the Private Soldier Monument at his studio in Westerly, Rhode Island.*



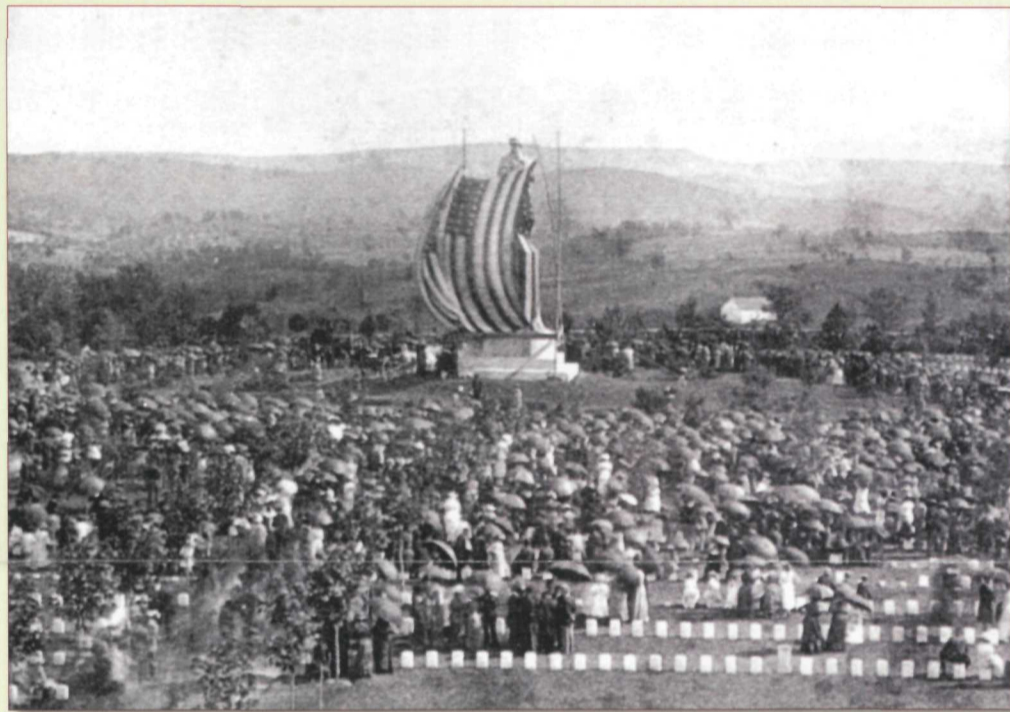
On September 17, 1880, the statue was finally in place where it was formally dedicated. The journey of "Old Simon," as he is known locally, had been delayed for several months when the section from the waist up fell into the river at Washington, D.C. When retrieved, it was transported on the C&O Canal, and dragged by using huge, wooden rollers through Sharpsburg to the cemetery.

## The Cemetery Today

Antietam National Cemetery is one of the 130 cemeteries of the National Cemetery System. There are 4,776 Union remains (1,835 unknown) buried here from the Battle of Antietam, South Mountain, Monocacy, and other Maryland battles. In addition, more than two hundred non-Civil War soldiers are also buried here from the Spanish-American War, World War I and II, and Korea. Although the cemetery closed in 1953, a recent exception to the closure was made for the burial of former Keedysville resident Patrick Howard Roy, United States Navy. Fireman Roy was killed during the attack on the USS Cole and was buried in the Cemetery on October 29, 2000.

If you walk to the back right of the cemetery you will notice some separate graves. Ironically, on the battlefield that led directly to Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, African-American soldiers from WW I were segregated. On the way you will notice two types of stones. The larger,

upright stones and the smaller, six inches square stones that mark unknown graves. If you look closely at many of the smaller stones you will see two numbers—one for the plot location, and below that a second number for how many unknowns are buried in that plot. After 1902 it was decided to discontinue the use of the small stones. From that point on, unknowns were marked with the larger upright stones. Take your time and reflect on the sacrifices made by the soldiers buried before you and the words found on the Private Soldier Monument, "Not for themselves, but for their country."

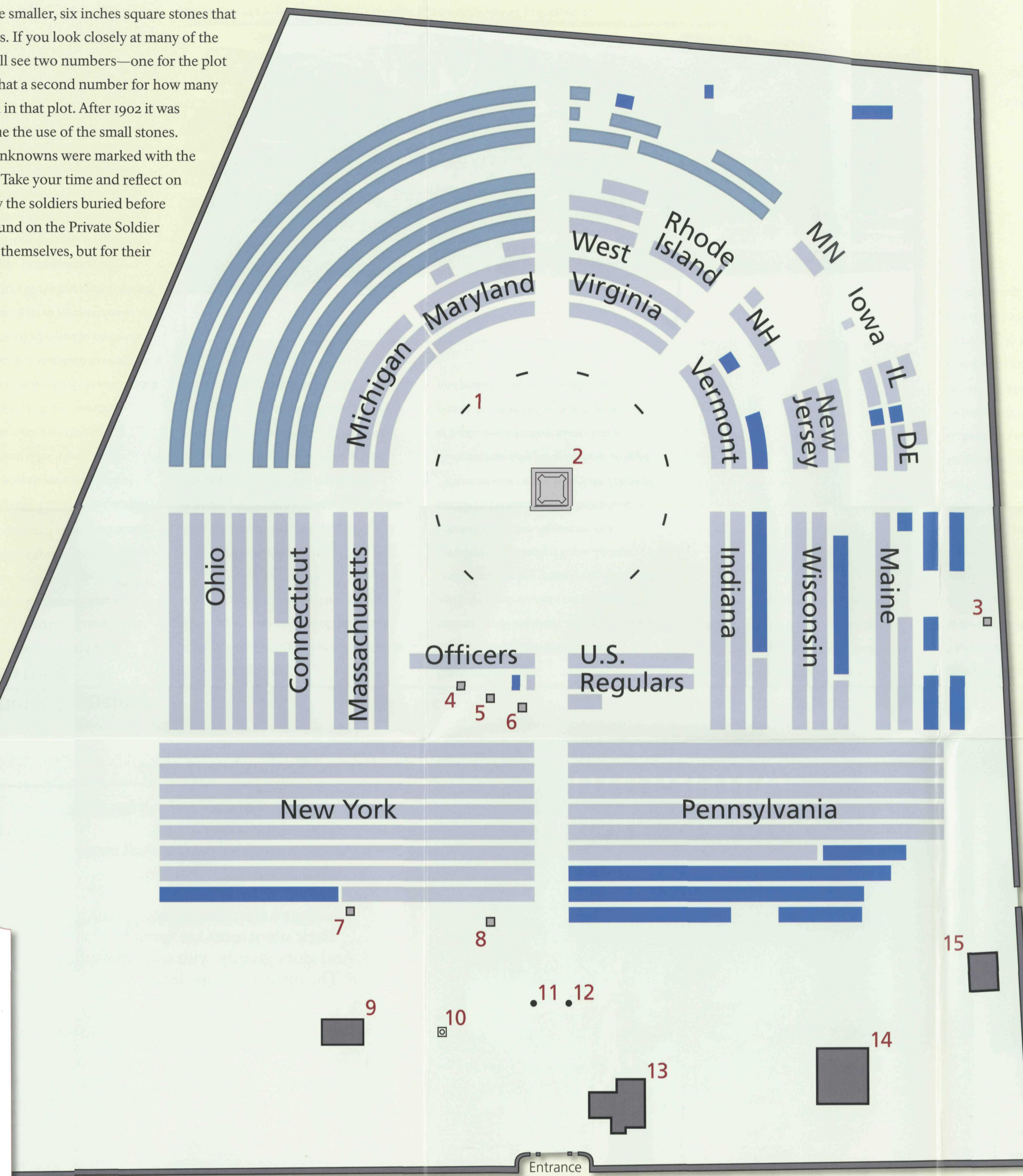


Dedication of the Private Soldier Monument on September 17, 1880

# MAP OF ANTIETAM National Cemetery at SHARPSBURG, MARYLAND.

- Civil War Graves  
 - Unknown Civil War Graves  
 - Post Civil War Graves

0 25 50  
Feet



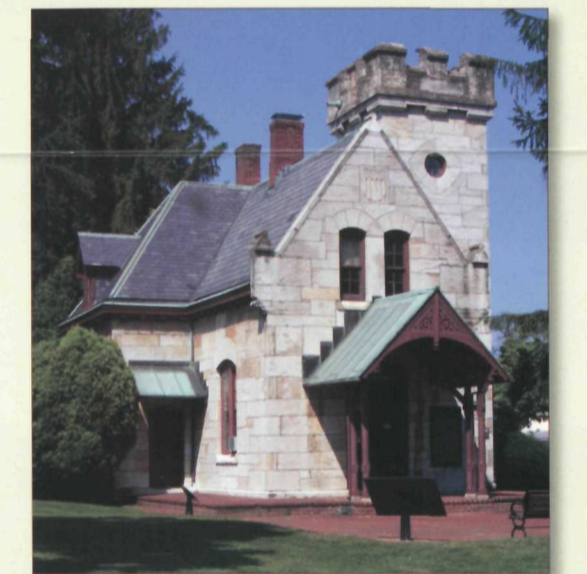
- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1 - Iron Tablets with poem "Bivouacs of the Dead"          | 9 - Rostrum  |
| 2 - Private Soldier Monument                               | 10 - Flag Pole   |
| 3 - Monument to Company F, 1st Regiment U.S. Sharpshooters | 11 - Smoothbore 24-pounder Naval cannon barrel captured at Harpers Ferry |
| 4 - Grave of MD Congressman Goodloe Byron                  | 12 - Rifled 20-pounder cannon barrel found at the base of Elk Ridge      |
| 5 - Monument to 20th N.Y. Infantry                         | 13 - Lodge Building  |
| 6 - Grave of Civil War Brigadier General Jacob Duryee      | 14 - Cemetery Superintendent's quarters, now the Park Headquarters       |
| 7 - Monument to four Union soldiers found in 1988          | 15 - Mule Barn   |
| 8 - Monument to 4th N.Y. Infantry                          |  |

## One Soldier's Story

In July of 1862, Sergeant George Simpson was a twenty-two year old farmer living in Pennsylvania. Less than two months later, Simpson and the rest of the 125th Pennsylvania Infantry charged across the bloody Antietam landscape in their first battle. Simpson carried the National flag for the regiment as they advanced behind the Dunker Church. Almost immediately they were attacked by Confederates and Sergeant Simpson was shot in the right temple. One of his comrades remembered how "he fell, covering the flag with his body and staining it with his life's blood."



After the battle Simpson, like most of the 4,000 men killed at Antietam, was buried on the field and then later reinterred in the National Cemetery. When the veterans of the 125th Pennsylvania returned to the battlefield and built a monument dedicated to their service here, a likeness of Sergeant George Simpson holding the flag was carved into the granite. His grave can be found in the Pennsylvania section, grave number 3953 and the monument is located about one hundred yards behind the Dunker Church.



## Cemetery Lodge Building

Made of native limestone, the lodge has served as the residence for the Superintendent of the Cemetery, administrative offices, and as a visitor contact station. The lodge was designed by architect Paul Pelz who also designed many lighthouses. However, he is best known for his most famous work, the Library of Congress.



## Rostrum

Completed for Memorial Day in 1879, the rostrum has been used every Memorial Day since as a speaker's platform and gathering place to remember the veterans of all American wars.