

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL CEMETERY



Aerial view of the Battle Mountain Sanitarium, c. 1955. Hot Springs Public Library.

Battle Mountain Sanitarium

Veterans and politicians began lobbying for a National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) at Hot Springs, South Dakota, in 1890. The U.S. Congress authorized funding in 1902, and construction started the next year. Landscape architect George E. Kessler and architect Thomas Kimball designed the campus and its elegant buildings. A blend of Spanish Colonial Revival and Richardson Romanesque styles, the buildings were constructed using local sandstone.

Unlike other homes established as residential facilities, Battle Mountain Sanitarium was a hospital that offered short-term care. Civil War veteran Charles Wibert transferred here from the Marion, Indiana, home in March 1907. Twenty-five men from the NHDVS at Danville, Illinois, soon followed. Within three years of opening, Battle Mountain began to specialize in the treatment of tuberculosis.

The National Homes merged with the U.S. Veterans Bureau and the Bureau of Pensions to form the Veterans Administration (now U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) in 1930. In 2012, the Hot Springs VA Medical Center campus was designated a National Historic Landmark.

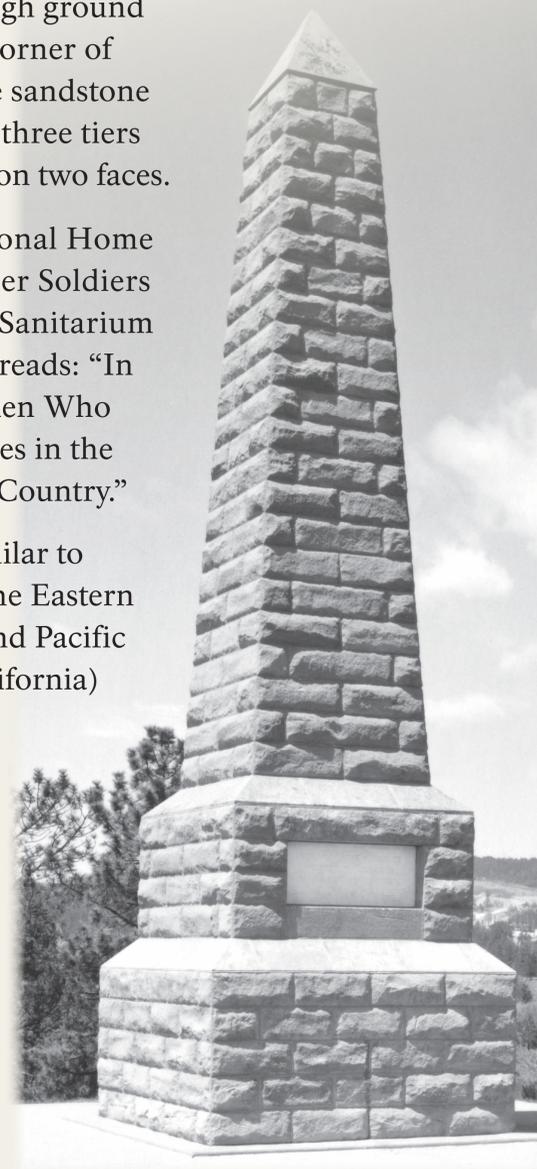
Cemetery and Monument

An 8.65-acre cemetery opened shortly after completion of the Battle Mountain Sanitarium hospital. The first interment on May 5, 1907, was Civil War veteran Elijah F. Williams, formerly of the 1st New Jersey Infantry.

A 32-foot-tall monument was constructed on high ground in the southeast corner of the cemetery. The sandstone obelisk is built in three tiers with inscriptions on two faces.

One reads: “National Home Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Battle Mountain Sanitarium 1914.” The other reads: “In Memory of the Men Who Offered Their Lives in the Defense of Their Country.”

The obelisk is similar to those erected at the Eastern (Togus, Maine) and Pacific (Los Angeles, California) National Homes.



Monument, 2006. Library of Congress, HALS SD-1.



Funeral procession, c. 1914. Hot Springs Public Library.

By 1913, sanitarium protocol called for funerals to start at 8 a.m. Each included an honor guard. Able patients walked to the cemetery behind a caisson carrying the coffin. The service ended with a rifle salute and the playing of “Taps.”

Veterans and their dependents comprise all but two of the nearly 1,500 burials here. The other graves, civilian employees who died on site in 1918, are distinguished by headstones that face a different direction than those of veterans. The cemetery was designated Hot Springs National Cemetery in 1973.

One Civil War Medal of Honor recipient is buried here. Corp. Charles L. Russell, 93rd New York Infantry, captured a regimental Confederate flag at Spotsylvania, Virginia, May 12, 1864 (Section 3, Grave 12).



Civil War Army Medal of Honor. Gettysburg National Military Park.