

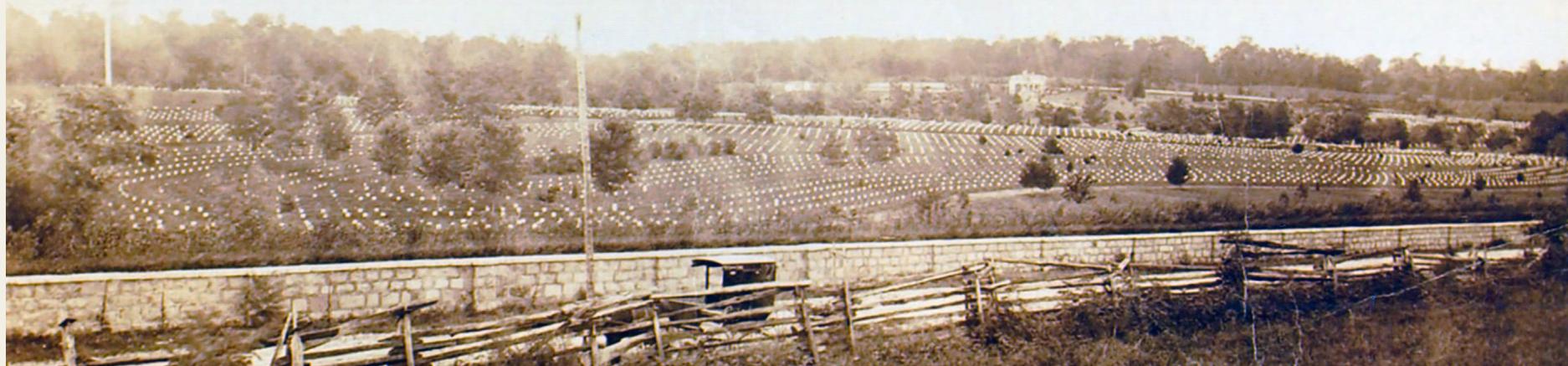
NASHVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY



An 1891 depiction of the U.S. Colored Troops charging Overton Hill. Library of Congress.

Civil War Nashville

Tennessee was among the last states to secede from the Union, and one of the first reoccupied by U.S. forces. After the Union Army took Nashville on February 24, 1862, the city became a vital supply depot and hospital center. In December 1864, Confederate Gen. John Bell Hood attempted to retake the city. Union commander Gen. George H. Thomas prepared and waited as Hood encircled the city. On December 15, Thomas attacked, but darkness ended the fighting. The next day, Union soldiers assaulted Overton and Shy's hills, routing the Confederates and ending the Battle of Nashville.



The cemetery in 1873, with road and limestone wall in foreground. National Archives and Records Administration.

National Cemetery

General Thomas chose a site on the battlefield, marked by a hill, to bury the more than 2,000 Union dead. He said:

No one could come to Nashville from the north and not be reminded of the sacrifices that had been made for the preservation of the Union.

The War Department renamed the 64-acre Union burial ground Nashville National Cemetery in 1866. Remains were moved here from city hospital grounds, battlegrounds, sites along the Cumberland River, and forts, blockhouses, and engagement sites along the three railroads that converged in Nashville.

Because two years had elapsed between the original burials and the reinterments, many dead could not be identified. However, the *Roll of Honor No. XXII* (1869), published by the War Department, lists soldiers likely buried here in graves marked “unknown.”

In 1870 the army built a 32-foot-high monumental Neoclassical archway facing Gallatin Pike as the cemetery entrance. It is the oldest of five such arches erected in southern national cemeteries. By 1874, an estimated 16,538 individuals were buried here, with approximately one-quarter unknown.



Cemetery lodge, 1873. The superintendent and his family lived in this Second Empire-style lodge built on the grounds. The current Dutch Colonial-style lodge replaced it in 1931. National Archives and Records Administration.

Monuments

Two monuments honor Civil War soldiers here. In 1913, the Minnesota Monument Commission selected St. Paul sculptor John K. Daniels to create monuments for five national cemeteries. His design reflected Minnesotans' perception of the noble character of their fallen soldiers, and the cause for which they fought. This monument was dedicated May 18, 1921.

The Tennessee U.S. Colored Troops (USCT) Monument, a 9-foot-tall bronze figure of a black soldier, honors the 1,910 USCT buried here. Many were members of the 1st and 2nd Colored Brigades who fought and died in the Battle of Nashville. Sculpted by Roy Butler, the monument was dedicated in 2006.