WOODLAND SOLDIERS' LOT

Mourners at Alexandria National Cemetery, Virginia, c. 1865. After 1873, standard marble headstones replaced the wood headboards seen here. Miller, Photographic History of the Civil War *(1910).*

Civil War Dead

An estimated 700,000 Union and Confederate soldiers died in the Civil War (1861-1865). As the death toll rose, the U.S. government struggled with the urgent but unplanned need to bury fallen Union troops. This propelled the creation of a national cemetery system.

On September 11, 1861, the War Department directed officers to keep "accurate and permanent records of deceased soldiers." Federal authority to create military burial grounds came in an Omnibus Act of July 17, 1862. Cemetery sites were chosen where troops were concentrated: camps, hospitals, battlefields, railroad hubs. By 1872, 74 national cemeteries and several soldiers' lots contained 305,492 remains. About 45 percent were unknown.

The U.S. government established soldiers' lots at private cemeteries in northern states. National cemeteries, in contrast, were built throughout the South where most Civil War action occurred. While the army reported dozens of lots containing Union dead in the 1870s, the National Cemetery Administration maintains only fifteen. The number of graves ranges from less than ten to nearly 400 in these lots.

Cleveland at War

The U.S. Army established six recruiting and training camps in Cleveland, Ohio. Camp Cleveland, located in what is now the East Tremont area, was the largest. It opened July 1862 and operated until October 1865. More than 15,000 Union soldiers trained at the camp.

Troops also mustered in at other city facilities—camps Brown, Taylor, Tod, Wade, and Wood—in the first year of the war. Approximately 5 percent of Union soldiers from Ohio mustered in at Cleveland, forming infantry and cavalry regiments, artillery batteries, and several companies of sharpshooters.

City factories were converted to manufacture uniforms, blankets, leather goods, and rifle barrels. Citizens donated bedding and clothing, medical supplies, food, and other items to the Cleveland Soldiers' Aid Society for distribution to Union soldiers. A U.S. General Hospital opened near Camp Cleveland in January 1863. By July 1865, some 3,020 enlisted men and non-commissioned officers had been treated at the hospital.

Undated photograph of Camp Cleveland. Courtesy of Christopher C. Whipple.

Woodland Cemetery plan detail, 1883, with NCA property in green: Section 10, Lots 59-60 (upper left), and Section 14, Lot 48 (bottom center). Blocks inscribed with "U.S." mark lot corners. Inset: Veterans decorate soldiers' graves at Woodland for Memorial Day, c. 1920s. Courtesy of Cleveland Public Library Digital Gallery.

Soldiers' Lot

Civil War soldiers who died in Cleveland were buried in Monroe Street Cemetery, also known as West Side Cemetery. At the time, it was the only public cemetery west of the Cuyahoga River. The soldiers had been interred in "free ground"—the pauper section—mingled among civilian graves.

The 60-acre Woodland Cemetery, dedicated in June 1853, became Cleveland's main public burial ground east of the Cuyahoga River. In September 1868, the federal government purchased about 700 square feet in Section 10. The first interments here were twenty-seven Union dead removed from West Side Cemetery. A city-owned tract, Lot 48 in Section 14, contained the graves of sixteen Union soldiers. Ownership of this land was later transferred to the U.S. government.

Many Union dead are buried elsewhere in Woodland Cemetery, including private plots and Section 72. In addition, two monuments to Union regiments are located in the public cemetery.