

CROWN HILL CONFEDERATE CEMETERY



Confederate prisoners at Camp Morton, c. 1864. Library of Congress.

Camp Morton

Camp Morton, a training camp, was established on the Indiana State Fairgrounds in Indianapolis after President Abraham Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers to suppress the Southern rebellion. Thousands of Indiana volunteers trained at the camp in 1861 before leaving for active duty.

On February 16, 1862, Fort Donelson, a Confederate stronghold on the Cumberland River west of Clarksville, Tennessee, surrendered. Suddenly, the Union army had 15,000 Confederate prisoners and no place to house them. Indiana Governor Oliver Morton offered to take 3,000 prisoners at Camp Morton; from this time, it functioned as a prison.

In preparation for the prisoners' arrival, soldiers constructed a tall fence around barracks buildings, built stout gates, and dug latrines. When the Confederates arrived without winter clothing or blankets, the women of Indianapolis donated both.

A prisoner exchange emptied the camp in summer 1862, but it was repopulated in January 1863. The population fluctuated until the camp closed in June 1865. But more than 1,600 Confederates remained in Indianapolis's Greenlawn Cemetery.

Greenlawn Cemetery

The State of Indiana purchased five lots in Greenlawn Cemetery in 1862 for prisoner burials. A local undertaker charged \$3.50 for each wooden coffin. Prisoners dug burial trenches and placed the coffins side-by-side. Numbered headboards marked graves. After the war, some remains were removed by friends or relatives. In 1870, some unclaimed remains were moved to a different cemetery lot owned by the federal government.

In 1906, when the Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead visited Greenlawn Cemetery, it discovered some burials had been moved and the land converted into a city park. As individual graves could not be identified, a single monument was authorized for the site. Van Amringe Granite Company of Boston, Massachusetts, completed the impressive monument in 1909. Bronze plaques listed the names of 1,616 Confederate dead.



Monument at Greenlawn Cemetery, 1910. National Archives and Records Administration.

The area around the government lot continued to develop. The United Daughters of the Confederacy and Southern Club of Indianapolis petitioned the federal government to move the Confederate monument to Garfield Park. The monument moved in 1928, but the graves remained. In 1931, the Confederate remains were disinterred and moved to Crown Hill Cemetery. Here they were marked by a modest monument. Ten bronze name plaques, and a bronze inscription plaque affixed to the monument, were installed in 1993.

Toward Reconciliation

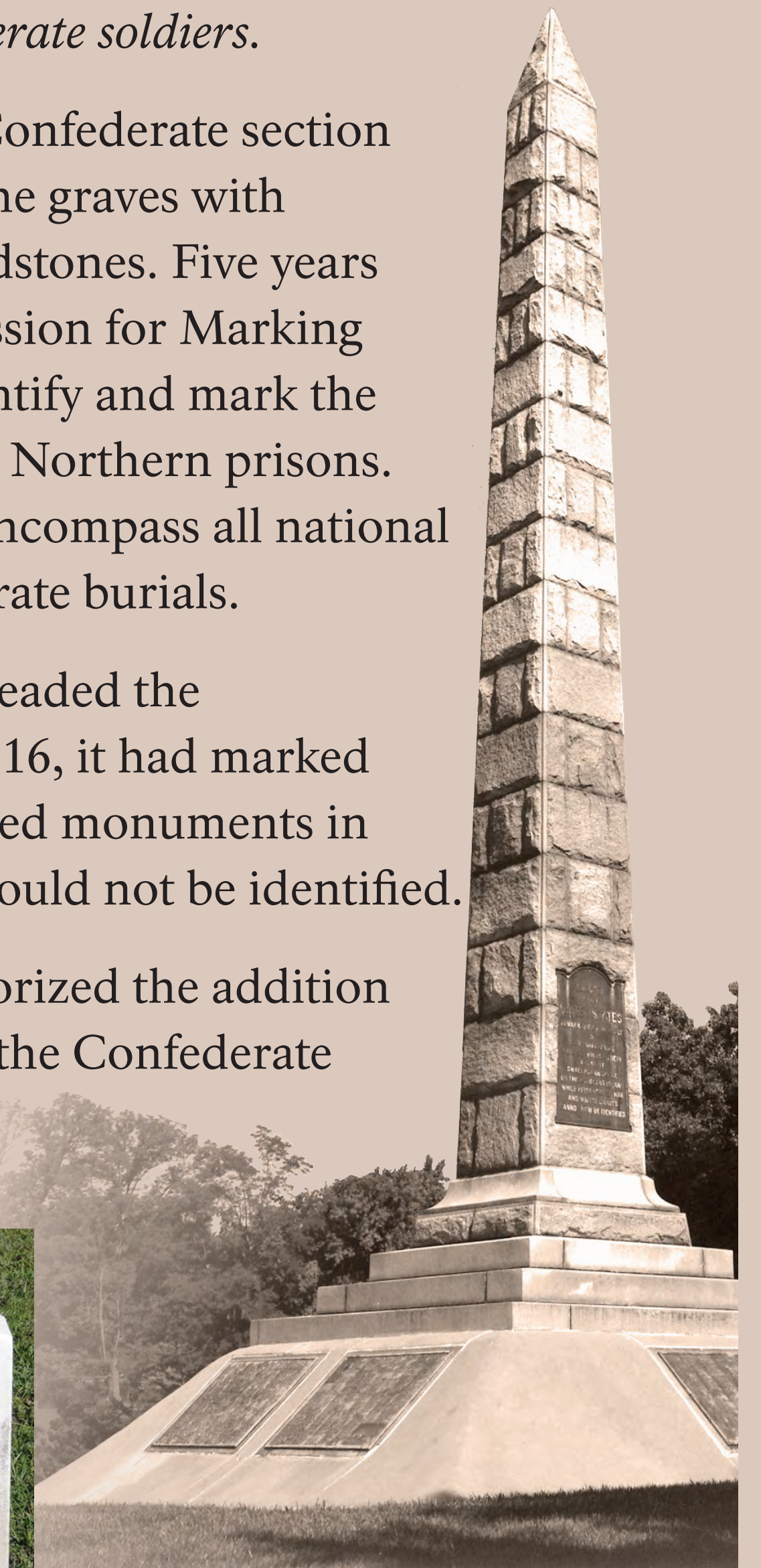
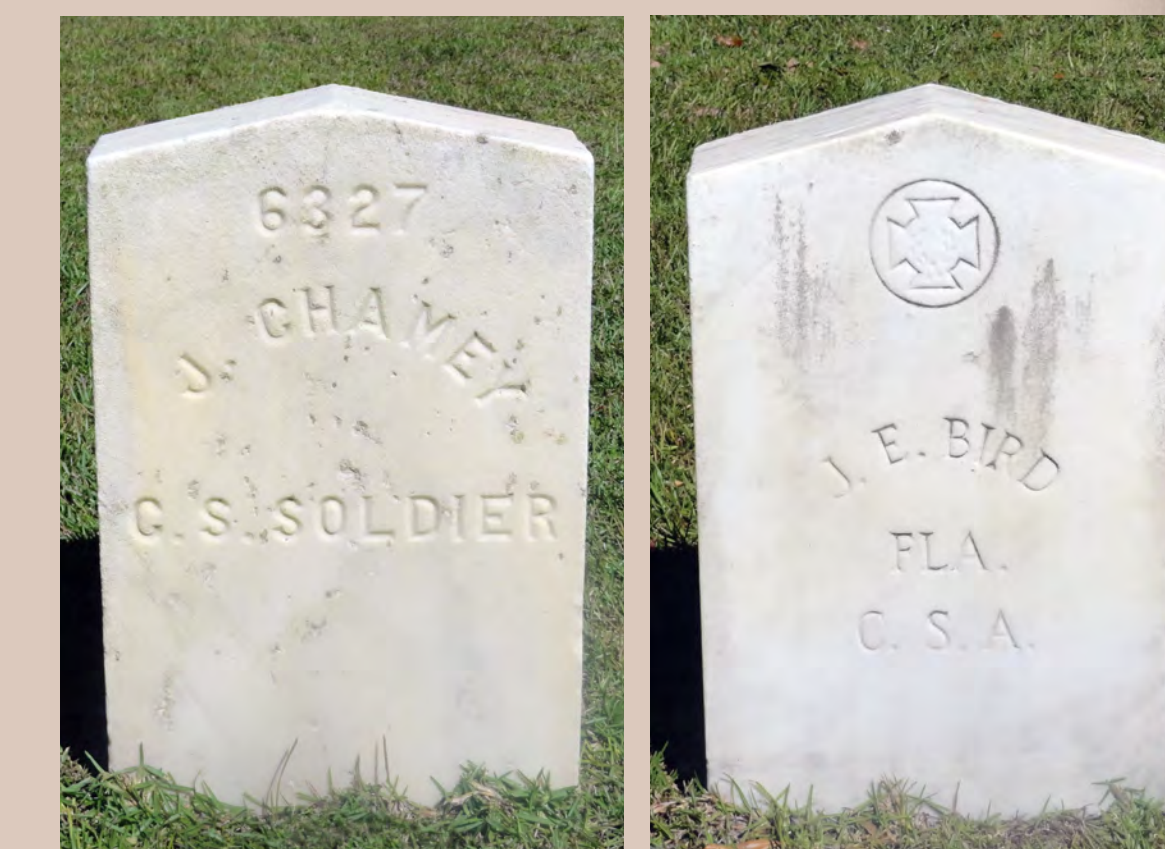
On May 30, 1868, the Grand Army of the Republic decorated Union and Confederate graves at Arlington National Cemetery. Thirty years later President William McKinley proclaimed:

The Union is once more the common altar of our love and loyalty, our devotion and sacrifice . . . Every soldier's grave made during our unfortunate Civil War is a tribute to American valor . . . in the spirit of fraternity we should share with you in the care of the graves of the Confederate soldiers.

The War Department created the Confederate section at Arlington in 1901, and marked the graves with distinctive pointed-top marble headstones. Five years later, Congress created the Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead to identify and mark the graves of Confederates who died in Northern prisons. Its mission was later expanded to encompass all national cemeteries that contained Confederate burials.

Four former Confederate officers headed the Commission over its lifetime. By 1916, it had marked in excess of 25,500 graves and erected monuments in locations where individual graves could not be identified.

In 1930, the War Department authorized the addition of the Southern Cross of Honor to the Confederate headstone.



North Alton Confederate Cemetery Monument, 1909, Alton, Ill.
Original Commission headstone (left) and headstone with Southern Cross of Honor (right).