CROWN HILL NATIONAL CEMETERY

City Hospital in Indianapolis, also known as the Military Hospital, treated Union soldiers during the Civil War, 1908. W. H. Bass Photo Company Collection, Indiana Historical Society.

Civil War Indianapolis

Indiana Governor Oliver Morton responded quickly to President Abraham Lincoln's 1861 call for 75,000 volunteers to help suppress the southern rebellion. Thousands of Hoosiers assembled in Indianapolis. Camp Morton, named for the governor, was established at the old fairgrounds. Indiana troops served in every theater of action. As the war progressed, Camp Morton became a prisoner-of-war camp, housing thousands of Confederates. City Hospital treated both Confederate prisoners and Union soldiers.

Citizens of Indianapolis celebrated when the Confederate capital at Richmond, Virginia, fell on April 3, 1865, and when Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee surrendered on April 9. Despair replaced joy when Lincoln was assassinated six days later. The president's body lay in state for eighteen hours at the Indianapolis capitol building on April 30.
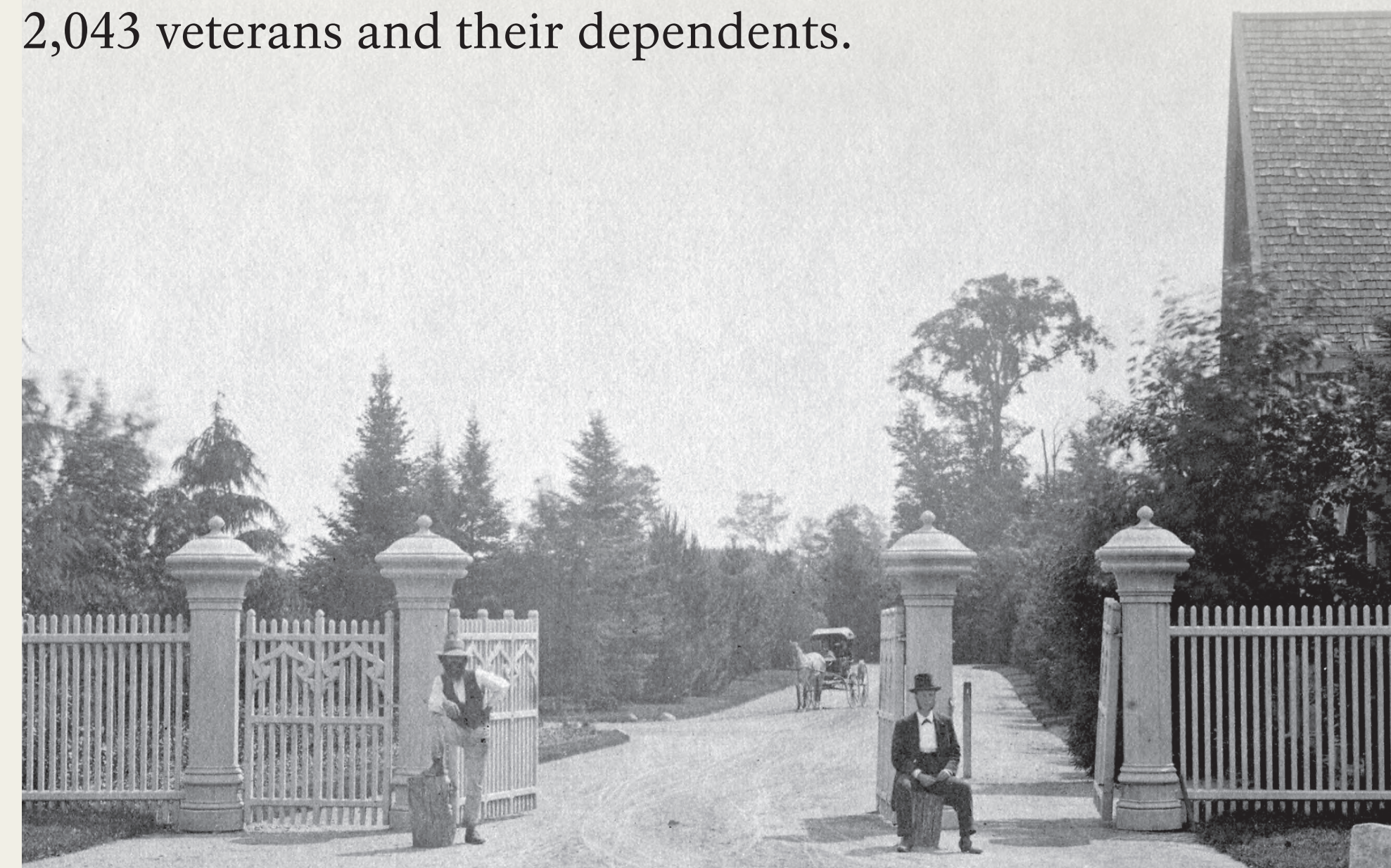
National Cemetery

More than 700 Union soldiers who died in city hospitals were originally buried in Greenlawn Cemetery. In November 1866, the federal government hired local undertaker William Weaver to supervise removal of the dead. Weaver's men relocated the remains of 712 soldiers from Greenlawn to this cemetery. All but thirty-six were identified.
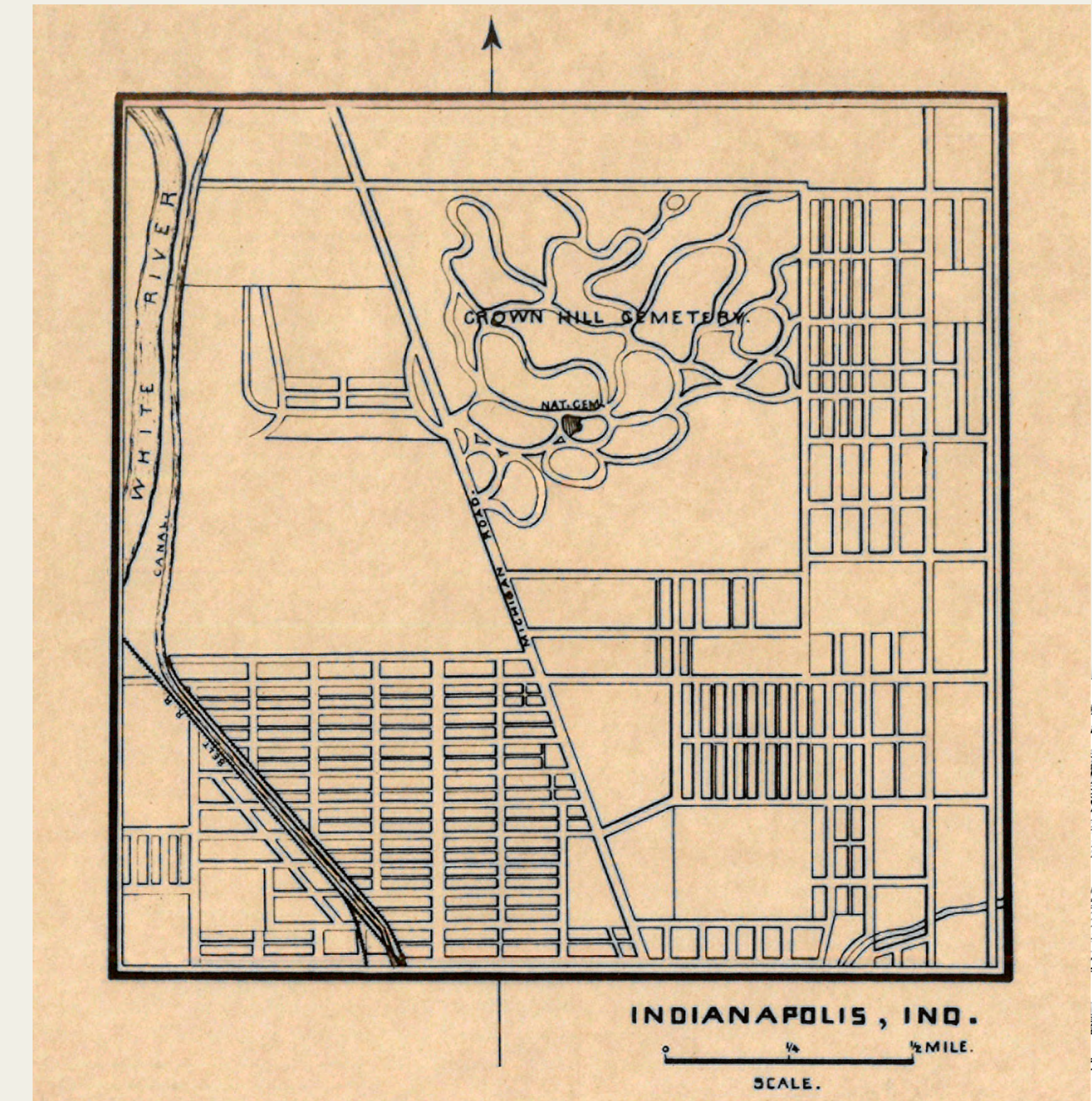
The new national cemetery occupied 1.4 acres (now Section 10) within Crown Hill Cemetery. The government paid $5,000 for the lot. On May 30, 1868, the first Decoration (Memorial) Day observance at Crown Hill National Cemetery was held. Some 1,000 people participated in a program that featured speeches, music, and decorating graves.

The U.S. Army installed two gun monuments and a flagstaff in the early 1870s, and plaques featuring stanzas from the poem "Bivouac of the Dead" in the 1880s.

In 2011, land adjacent to the national cemetery that contains many Civil War dead (Section 9), was donated to the federal government. Combined, these 2.5 acres hold the graves of 2,043 veterans and their dependents.

Crown Hill Cemetery west entrance in 1901, D. R. Clark, photographer. Courtesy of Crown Hill Cemetery.

Detail of Crown Hill National Cemetery layout, 1893, showing location of the federal cemetery within the private cemetery. National Archives and Records Administration.

Woman's Relief Corps Monument

The Woman's Relief Corps, auxiliary of the Maj. Robert Anderson Post No. 369, Grand Army of the Republic, received permission to erect a monument here in November 1888. Local stonecutter James F. Needler produced the eagle-topped limestone pedestal. It was dedicated on Memorial Day 1889.

Drawing of Woman's Relief Corps Monument, 1888. National Archives and Records Administration.