

LOS ANGELES NATIONAL CEMETERY



President William McKinley addresses veterans at the Pacific Branch-National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, May 9, 1901. Los Angeles Public Library.

National Home

In 1887, the U.S. Congress approved funding for the Pacific Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS). Three individuals donated land for the 640-acre site located 14 miles west of Los Angeles. The first barracks opened in December 1888 and filled quickly with Civil War and other veterans. Many pitched tents on the unfinished grounds awaiting a bed.

Desperate for space, the early construction was more functional than aesthetic. Over time, Mission Revival became the predominate architectural style. The National Home built a 1-million-gallon reservoir to supply the facility and its agricultural operations. This water allowed the home to profit from selling its produce. Its location on an interurban railway made the National Home a tourist attraction, too.

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. The Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System-West Los Angeles Healthcare Center continues to care for veterans today.

Cemetery

The 20-acre National Home cemetery was established in 1889. The first interment was Mexican War veteran Abner Prather, formerly of the 4th Indiana Infantry. The cemetery was designated Los Angeles National Cemetery in 1973.

There are two monuments from the National Home's early years. The 27-foot-tall, three-tier granite obelisk memorializes all veterans. Similar obelisks are found at other NHDVS branches. The second is a Union soldier mounted on a boulder. The painted, cast-zinc figure originally stood atop a campus water fountain that was dedicated in 1896. When the fountain was razed in the 1940s, the zinc figure was relocated to the cemetery.



Postcard view of funeral at Pacific Branch, c. 1915. National Cemetery Administration.



Postcard view of National Home water fountain c. 1910. National Cemetery Administration. Below, Civil War Army Medal of Honor. Gettysburg National Military Park.

Five Civil War Medal of Honor recipients, later NHDVS residents, are buried here.

Corp. Luther Kaltenbach, 12th Iowa Infantry, captured a 44th Mississippi Infantry flag at Nashville, Tennessee, December 16, 1864 (Section 43, Grave A-15).

Color Sgt. George McKee, 89th New York Infantry, for gallantry in the assault on Fort Gregg at Petersburg, Virginia, April 2, 1865 (Section 1, Grave G-2).

Pvt. Charles W. Rundle, 116th Illinois Infantry, led a "volunteer storming party" at Vicksburg, Mississippi, May 22, 1863 (Section 34, Grave I-11).

Coxswain Timothy Sullivan, U.S.S. *Louisville*, for attention to duty, bravery, and coolness in action (Section 18, Grave H-2).

Pvt. James Sweeney, 1st Vermont Cavalry, captured a North Carolina flag, ambulance, and three officers at Cedar Creek, Virginia, October 19, 1864 (Section 78, Grave P-3).

