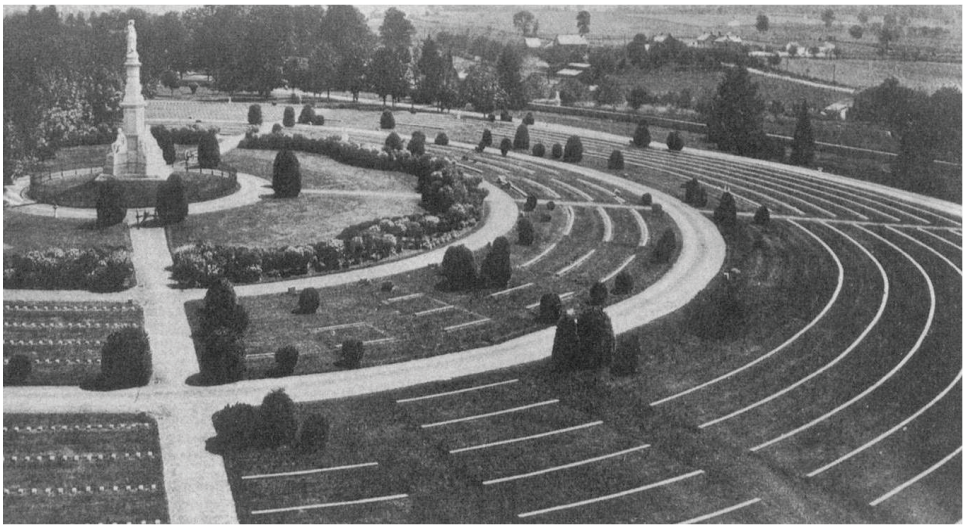
NATIONAL CEMETERY
Walking Tour

For Score and Seven Years Ago...

Abraham Lincoln, November 19, 1863
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania



To Begin Your Walk

This walking tour of the Soldiers' National Cemetery starts at the Taneytown Road entrance. You may follow the path from the Visitor Center to this point or park at the Cemetery parking area adjacent to the Taneytown Road. From the parking lot follow the short walking path up the hill and carefully cross the road to enter the Cemetery. Please be wary of vehicular traffic. The principal tour consists of five main stops (although you are encouraged to explore other elements of the cemetery at your leisure) and should take approximately 30-45 minutes.

Note: The tour stops are not marked by signs. Instead use the stop landmark descriptions, and the map on the inside of this brochure, for guidance.

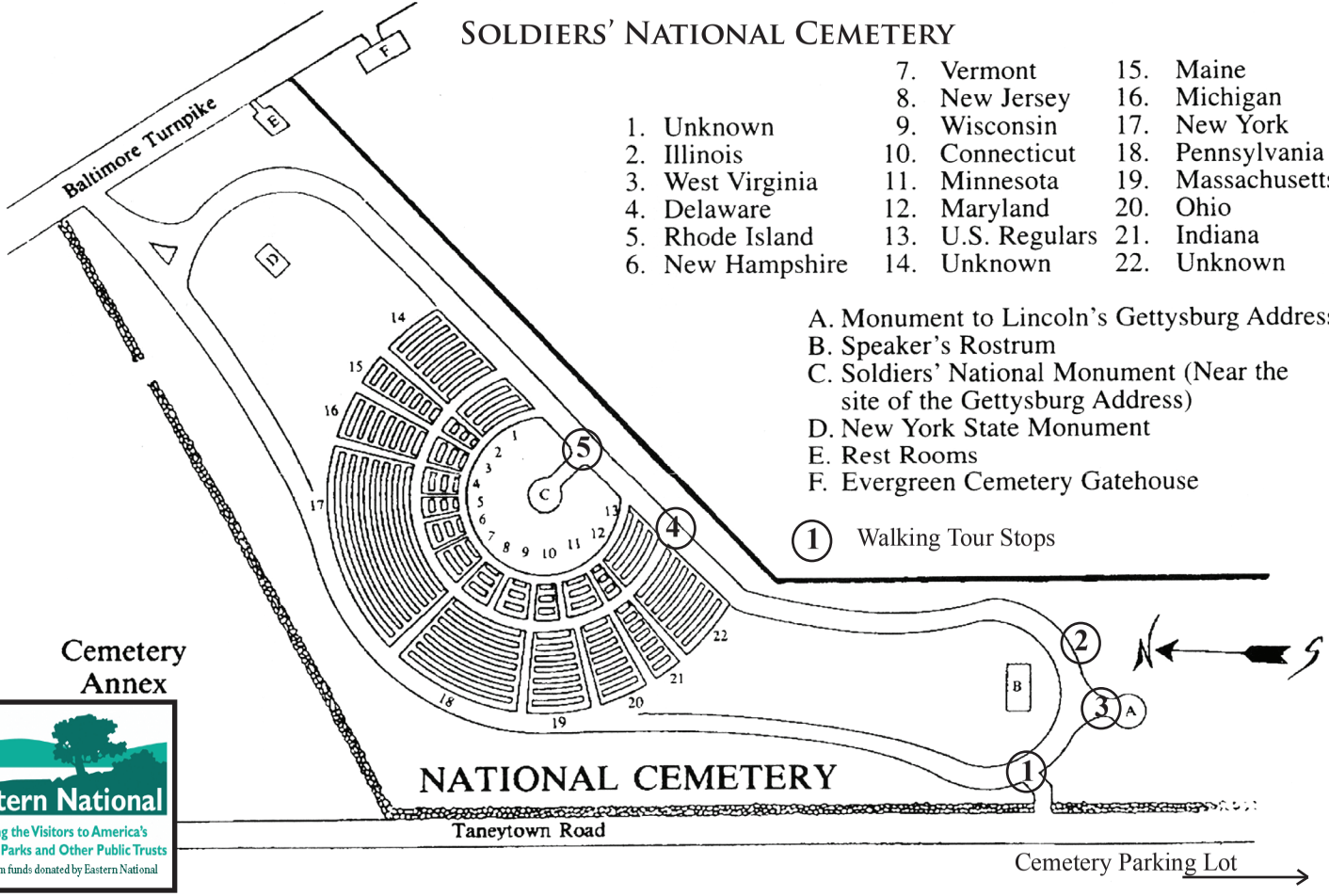
Silence and Respect: While visiting the National Cemetery, we ask that you respect this hallowed ground. Please, ***do not climb or sit*** on the graves, monuments, markers, or cannons. Please do not run or shout in the cemetery. Group leaders, teachers and parents: please supervise your members/students/children throughout the cemetery grounds.

Soldiers' National Cemetery

1. Unknown
2. Illinois
3. West Virginia
4. Delaware
5. Rhode Island
6. New Hampshire
7. Vermont
8. New Jersey
9. Wisconsin
10. Connecticut
11. Minnesota
12. Maryland
13. U.S. Regulars
14. Unknown
15. Maine
16. Michigan
17. New York
18. Pennsylvania
19. Massachusetts
20. Ohio
21. Indiana
22. Unknown

A. Monument to Lincoln's Gettysburg Address
B. Speaker's Rostrum
C. Soldiers' National Monument (Near the site of the Gettysburg Address)
D. New York State Monument
E. Rest Rooms
F. Evergreen Cemetery Gatehouse

(1) Walking Tour Stops



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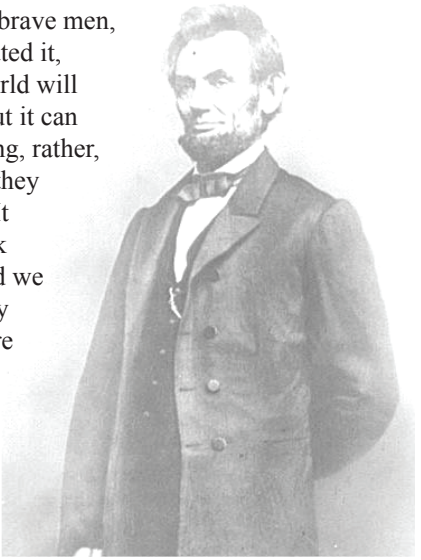
The Gettysburg Address

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate—we can not consecrate—we can not hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Abraham Lincoln



Stop 1 – Cemetery Entrance

The Soldiers' National Cemetery is famous throughout the world today as the site of Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, delivered at the cemetery's dedication ceremonies four and a half months after the battle. The monument to your right, the Lincoln Speech Memorial, honors that moment and the 16th president's words. This memorial will be discussed in more detail at Stop 3.

Behind the Lincoln Speech Memorial are some of the 3,307 post Civil-War burials in the National Cemetery. The Cemetery contains the remains of American soldiers and dependents from the Civil War through Vietnam. Officially closed in 1972, family plots remain for dependents of veterans already interred.

To your left is a brick speaker's stand built in 1879, known as The Rostrum. Although Lincoln did not speak from this platform, world leaders and other dignitaries, including six United States presidents (Rutherford B. Hayes-1878, Theodore Roosevelt-1904, Calvin Coolidge-1928, Herbert Hoover-1930, Franklin D. Roosevelt-1934, and Dwight D. Eisenhower-1955) have used it during Memorial Day services and other ceremonies. **Stop 2** is located by the cannons and monument to the 1st Massachusetts Battery, just beyond and to the left of the Lincoln Speech Memorial.

Stop 2 – The Battle (1st Massachusetts Battery Monument)

"Now we are engaged in a great civil war…."

This artillery, along with the other cannons and monuments located throughout the cemetery, not only mark the specific locations of Union artillery and infantry during the fighting, but also reflect the importance of Cemetery Hill during all three days of the battle. This high, open hill dominated the surrounding countryside in 1863 and thus, by posting artillery here, the Union army could control a large part of the battlefield. Cemetery Hill therefore became a key feature of the Union army's battle lines and one of the principal reasons for their victory at Gettysburg.

Those first three days of July, 1863 involved not only the largest battle ever fought in the western hemisphere, but also produced the greatest bloodshed: 10,000 killed or mortally wounded, nearly 30,000 wounded and almost 10,000 captured or missing. The town and outlaying areas were devastated by this monumental man-made disaster. It would be this immense loss of life that led to the creation of a new cemetery and President Lincoln's trip to Gettysburg. **Stop 3** is located at the Lincoln Speech Memorial to your right.

Stop 3– The Battle's Aftermath and Creation of the Cemetery (Lincoln Speech Memorial)

"…a great battlefield of that war."

The Lincoln Speech Memorial is unique: it commemorates the speech Lincoln gave here and not the man himself. Thus, it is one of the few memorials in the world dedicated to honor a speech. The bronze bust of Lincoln, by sculptor Henry Bush-Brown, reveals the heavy toll the war and the nation's suffering had upon him. Inscribed in bronze on the right is the Gettysburg Address. On the left is the letter Lincoln received inviting him to speak at Gettysburg.

The recovery efforts began almost immediately following the battle. While relief for the wounded began to trickle in, the dead were hastily buried in shallow graves across the battlefield within one week of the battle. These crude graves were seen as a temporary solution for the disposal of the dead, and were completed quickly for fear that an epidemic might spread in the hot, humid summer conditions. The markings of these burials were also very rough and temporary, typically a wooden board with the soldier's name written in pencil, placed at the head of his grave. Not surprisingly, many of these identifications were lost when exposed to the weather and other elements. It would be the effort to give these men proper and permanent burials that eventually led to the creation of the Soldiers' National Cemetery.

A committee was formed, consisting of representatives from all of the Northern states who lost soldiers here. Headed by David Wills, a Gettysburg attorney and the Pennsylvania state agent, the committee decided upon a plan to create a common burial ground for the Union dead. The natural eminence of this hill, coupled with its importance to the Union victory, led the committee to select this 17 acre site as the location for the new soldiers' cemetery. The land was purchased and the reburial of the Union soldiers began on October 27.

Temporary battlefield graves (Library of Congress)

While this work got underway, Wills and the committee began to plan a suitable dedication ceremony for the new cemetery. They invited Edward Everett of Massachusetts to deliver the main oration. A former governor, congressman, senator and secretary of state, Everett was also one of the most famous orators of the day. While Abraham Lincoln was also invited, his role in the ceremony was to be a secondary one; David Wills' invitation contains perhaps the key to the brevity of the Gettysburg Address, asking the President to deliver, "…a few appropriate remarks."

Proceed to **Stop 4** by walking into the cemetery along the paved avenue's upper walkway. As you walk you will notice a black iron fence to your right, beyond which is Gettysburg's public Evergreen Cemetery. Established in 1853, it was this cemetery that gave the hill its name.

As you continue along the avenue you will observe the first of several metal plaques placed by the War Department in the 1880s. These contain excerpts from Theodore O'Hara's 1847 poem *The Bivouac of the Dead*, originally written to honor Kentuckians who fell at the battle of Buena Vista in the Mexican War, and which appear today in many national cemeteries across the country. Ironically, O'Hara, himself a Kentucky native, later became a Confederate officer. However, his words befit *all* the American soldiers at rest in the National Cemetery.

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo,
No more on life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.

Stop 4 is located at the rows of gravestones to the left of the avenue. Stop at the second poem plaque near the graves.

Stop 4 - The Cemetery (*Bivouac of the Dead* plaque)

"…a final resting place for those who here gave their lives…."

Looking across the slope of the hillside to your left, you see the first of the gravestones, laid out in rows, which mark the final resting place for over 3,500 Union soldiers who died at Gettysburg. It is easy to forget that each grave represents not only a victim of war, but also the unseen victims at home—wives, mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters and children, who all mourned the passing of a loved one. While over 10,000 died at Gettysburg alone, during the four years of the Civil War, over 620,000 Americans perished.

The graves are arranged in a wide semi-circle that radiate out from the Soldiers' National Monument, to your right, which marks the center of the cemetery. The burials were organized around state sections, divided into an inner ring (for smaller states) and outer ring (for larger states). This design was created by William Saunders, a famed "landscape gardener" (and later one of the founders of the National Grange), thus "the position of each lot, and indeed of each interment, is relatively of equal importance." The evenness and equality of the gravestones, where men of differing rank and position rest side-by-side, contrasts sharply with the jumbling diversity visible in the Evergreen Cemetery. The "simple grandeur" of William Saunders' cemetery plan speaks to the underlying theme of equality in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address; and is an eloquent reminder of the ultimate goal of the struggle, and of the costs necessary to achieve it.

You will notice three types of stones that make up the state sections and individual graves. Larger grey stones serve as state section markers and also indicate the number of fallen from each state. Long, rectangular granite stones, which are set nearly at ground level, serve as gravestones for the remains of soldiers buried in the state sections, and mostly are marked by names. Lastly, you will also see hundreds of small marble squares bearing only numbers. This is one of three such sections in the Civil-War portion of the cemetery, all of whom are UNKNOWN.

As there were no government "dog-tags" issued to soldiers during the war, identification of the dead was usually via friends, or from personal effects or letters that might be found on the body. Upon examination, sometimes a soldier was determined to be 'partially unknown.' If their home state could be determined, the dead soldier was placed within the proper state section, and the word UNKNOWN engraved upon his flat head-stone. If, however, the soldier's home state was not known, he was laid in one of the UNKNOWN sections, his remains marked only by a number. Some 979 unknowns were buried in this way. Of these, twenty men could be identified by name, but not by state affiliation, and therefore were buried as UKNOWN.

In addition to the attempts at identification, each soldier received a proper reburial, with the remains being placed in a pine coffin which was then buried to a depth of four feet. The reburials were not completed until March 1864, nearly five months after the work

An Unknown section marker and unknown grave markers behind it.

Two regular grave markers in the Indiana section.

had begun.

A few Confederate soldiers were mistakenly interred in the cemetery alongside their former foes. Although they fell under different flags, they now rest under one. However, in the bitterness sown by the war, the remainder of the Confederate dead remained buried on the battlefield. Between seven to ten years after the battle, these Southern remains, over 3,200 altogether, were returned home to four primary locations – Richmond, Virginia; Raleigh, North Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and Charleston, South Carolina. Proceed to **Stop 5**, the Soldiers' National Monument.

Stop 5 The Dedication of the Cemetery and the Gettysburg Address (Soldiers' National Monument)

"...we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom...."

The Soldiers' National Monument, long misidentified as the spot from which Lincoln spoke, honors the fallen soldiers. The figures of **War** (the soldier), Clio, the Muse of **History** (represented by the woman writing upon the tablet), **Plenty** (woman holding a sheaf of wheat) and **Peace** (the mechanic) surmount the base, while the figure of **Liberty** Mourning Her Dead appears on the pedestal. It was actually on the crown of this hill, a short distance on the other side of the iron fence and inside the Evergreen Cemetery, where President Lincoln delivered the Gettysburg Address to a crowd of some 15,000 people.

The cemetery was officially dedicated on November 19, 1863 "by appropriate and imposing ceremonies," which included the deliverance of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, following Mr. Everett's sweeping and eloquent two-hour oration. As Lincoln composed his most famous speech in the days leading up the ceremony, both in the White House in Washington, D.C. and at David Will's home the night before, he well understood the difficult task before him.

Facing bitter and mounting opposition to his emancipation policy and the war itself, the

President saw his remarks at Gettysburg as an opportunity to help define for the nation what was at stake in the war and why a Union victory was crucial. He also understood the grief that many felt who had lost sons, fathers and friends in the battle. He struggled with his own personal bereavement, having recently suffered the death of his much-loved 11 year-old son "Willie" in 1862. He hoped his brief remarks might impart a deeper meaning to the nation's enormous sacrifice.

President Lincoln's address that afternoon lasted only about two minutes. Afterward, Edward Everett wrote the President, "I should be glad, if I could flatter myself that I came as near to the central idea of the occasion, in two hours, as you did in two minutes."

In his address Lincoln attempted to make the nation realize the significance of the war, for he saw it not only as the great test of whether democracy could survive (*"a great civil war, testing whether…**any** nation, so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure"*), but also as an opportunity to redeem the ultimate goal of the founding fathers (*"…that all men are created equal"*). Thus, the Gettysburg Address was actually Lincoln's attempt to rededicate the nation to finishing the war (*"to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us"*), and also to define its larger meaning, (*"that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom…."*).

We encourage you to continue your visit to the Soldiers' National Cemetery by exploring the individual graves and other markers, memorials and monuments contained within its grounds. They remind us of the devotion to country and the sacrifice Americans have given, and may be called on to give, to insure the freedoms we enjoy today.

A November 19 photograph. The speaker's stand is on the right (Library of Congress)

Honor and Respect: If you leave the paved avenue or walkways, please do not step on the individual grave stones, both out of respect for the dead and for the stones' preservation.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Department of the Interior