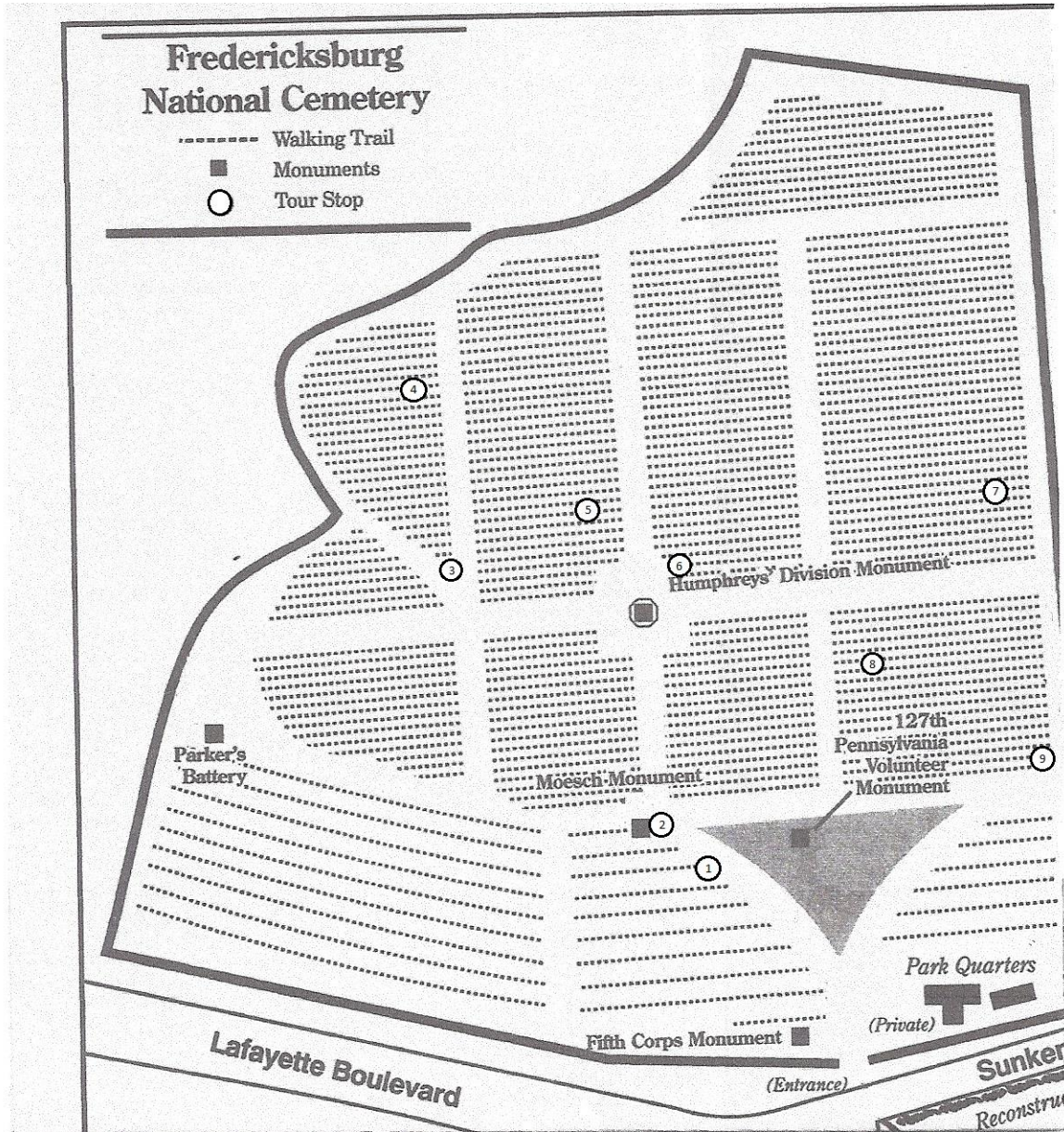


# 1864 Burials Tour

The Overland Campaign of 1864 brought a new, continuous style of fighting to Virginia and produced an increased number of casualties. Casualties from the Battles of the Wilderness, Spotsylvania, and North Anna, along with smaller engagements, rest in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery. Because of longer periods of occupation and the proximity of these battles to the end of the war, more soldiers were buried in known graves from these battles than those of 1862 and 1863.



Stop 1: Oscar Angell  
Grave #772

Captain Oscar Angell of Co. D, 10<sup>th</sup> New York had an adventurous time as a soldier:

*He had enlisted as a private in Company A, of the National Zouaves, in April 1861, and served as orderly-sergeant until the Battle of Gaines' Mill, where he was taken prisoner. Escaping from Belle Isle soon after by swimming the James River, he reached the Union lines and was given a position in the secret service corps, where he experienced a series of adventures and hair-breadth escapes in the performance of the duties devolving upon him. In the winter of 1862 he was commissioned second-lieutenant in his regiment, and again, in April following as first-lieutenant. He received his last commission of captain a few weeks before his death. From the first he had been popular with the regiment, sharing its privations and hardships without murmuring. Always the impersonation of enthusiasm upon the battlefield, in his last battle he acted with daring, until two wounds put a final end to his patriotism. His nature was truly "generous to a fault.*

Angell was killed at Spotsylvania, although the regimental history and other records disagree on whether he died On May 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, or 14<sup>th</sup>. According to the regimental account, he was wounded on May 6<sup>th</sup> but remained in command, then was hit in the left arm on May 10<sup>th</sup> and shortly after mortally wounded. He was taken to a field hospital where he died, presumably on one of the disputed dates.

Stop 2: Joseph A. Moesch  
Grave #6618

Fredericksburg is a soldier's cemetery. There are no generals buried here and only a few field officers. The vast majority of the soldiers interred here are enlisted men or company-grade officers whose memories are honored by a simple stone marker of which you will mainly see two types. Those shaped like a headstone mark the gravesites of identified soldiers. The smaller, square stones mark the graves of the unknown. These stones carry two numbers: the top number identifies the plot, the bottom number tells the number of bodies in that plot. Of the 15,000 Union soldiers buried here, 85%--17 out of every 20—are unknown.

A few soldiers are honored by larger headstones erected at private expense, such as this one to Joseph Moesch. Colonel Moesch commanded the 83<sup>rd</sup> New York, and is the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest ranking officer buried in the cemetery. The thirty-two year old officer was killed at the Wilderness May 6, 1864 while leading his regiment. His body was carried to the division hospital, placed in a rude coffin, and originally buried in the cemetery at Ellwood. The two men who buried him remembered the location of his grave and he was reinterred in the National Cemetery in 1887.

Stop 3: David Stevens  
Grave #3205A

Corporal in the 41PA, David Stevens served in the war with his two younger brothers. He was killed on May 8, 1864 at Laurel Hill when he stopped to help a squad of men who were having

trouble with a prisoner. When he ordered the man to behave himself, the prisoner picked up a rifle and shot him. In response, the rest of the guard wrenched the rifle away and beat the man to death with it. They then carried Stevens to the rear on a blanket and laid him under a pine tree. His brothers found his body there the next day and attended to his burial. Fortunately they had the opportunity to bury him properly, for when they next visited the grave a shell had ploughed into it and exploded, but did not harm the body.

David left behind a widow and five children. His brothers both survived the war. William, the chaplain of the 148PA, became a member of the state legislature. Frank did not pass through unscathed, he was wounded twice at Fredericksburg and captured twice, but survived and was one of the soldiers who stood guard over President Lincoln's casket.

Stop 4: Thomas Hewitt and Morris Ritter  
Graves #5076 and 5079

Not all battle casualties come from direct fighting or charging the enemy line.

25 year old Thomas Hewitt was killed on May 10, 1864 at Laurel Hill while serving coffee. He had been acting as cook for MajorvStarks, and after Starks' death he continued those duties for other officers. After making coffee in the shelter of the woods behind the lines he brought it out to the entrenchments and while pouring it for the officers he stood erect which put his head above the breastworks. He was shot in the head and fell at the feet of the surprised officers; he quickly died.

Nineteen year old Morris Ritter perished on May 8, 1864 at Spotsylvania. His regiment, the 140<sup>th</sup> NY, attacked at Laurel Hill led by their Colonel, George Ryan, who rode ahead and advanced to within three rods of the Confederate line before taking a bullet in the chest. The attack broke so quickly that most of the dead and wounded were left on the field, including the still-breathing Ryan. Ritter was one of five men who volunteered to retrieve their colonel. All five were shot down before they completed their mission; Ritter made it to Ryan but was killed while attempting to carry him back. Ryan also did not survive.

Hewitt is buried in grave #5076; Ritter is buried in grave #5079.

Stop 5: Peter Froeligh  
Grave #3834

Froeligh originally mustered in and served for three years with the 5<sup>th</sup> New York; that unit was transferred to the 146<sup>th</sup> New York on May 4, 1863 and Peter served as lieutenant of Co. D. Before the Battle of the Wilderness Peter had a premonition of his own death. He asked the regimental barber to trim his hair as he expected to be shot in the head during the next engagement and he believed the trim would allow the surgeon to better treat the wound. He was killed in action on May 5, 1864 and buried on the field.

Stop 6: Paul Kuhl and John Young  
Graves #3077 and #2966

The action at the Bloody Angle on May 12, 1864 is famous for the 22 hours of close combat that occurred over the trenches along the Confederate line, costing the armies 18,000 casualties. In the middle of the melee, individual stories help us understand the horror of the day.

18 year old John L. Young of the 15<sup>th</sup> NJ was serving as color corporal when he was severely wounded. He managed to crawl behind a log and died with “his hands clasped in supplication.”

Even more traumatic is the experience of Paul Kuhl, first sergeant in a different company of the 15<sup>th</sup> NJ. He was shot through the leg and improvised a tourniquet out of his ramrod and handkerchief. The fighting was so severe, however, that he was shot repeatedly and would die on the field. When his friends went to retrieve the body they found he was so riddled with bullets that he was a “veritable sieve.”

Paul Kuhl is buried in grave #3077; John Young is buried in grave #2966.

Stop 7: George Justice and Joseph Seiger  
Graves #3351 and #3778

Like the two men we met at the previous stop, Lieutenant George Justice was a member of the 15<sup>th</sup> NJ killed on May 12, 1864 at Spotsylvania. The thirty-six year old was seen on top of the enemy works waving his sword, then he was shot in the back by a Confederate who had surrendered but then grabbed a musket. George left behind a widow and seven children between the ages of three and sixteen. He was lucky enough to be buried with ten of his comrades, and thus identifiable later; over forty of his regimental dead were left on the field unburied.

Joseph M. Seiger, twenty-two year old sergeant of Company E in the 140NY, was wounded on May 5, 1864 as his regiment attacked the Confederate line in Saunder’s Field. He was wounded in three places: one through the hip and out the groin, one through his stomach and left breast, and one through his left arm. He was found by a conscripted soldier, John McGraw, whom Seiger had looked after in the army. John dressed Joseph’s wounds and helped him walk  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile before he could be placed on a stretcher for the remaining three miles to the hospital. McGraw was “overcome with grief” as he helped his friend to safety, and Seiger would die of his wounds that day.

George Justice is buried in grave #3351; Joseph Seiger is buried in grave #3778.

Stop 8: William Jones  
Grave #2448

Ireland native William Jones of the 73<sup>rd</sup> New York was killed in action May 12, 1864 at Spotsylvania. After his death, he was awarded the Medal of Honor for capturing the flag of the 65<sup>th</sup> Virginia during the Battle of Spotsylvania. He is one of two Medal of Honor recipients buried in the Fredericksburg National Cemetery; the other is Lieutenant Colonel Edward Hill in grave #6640 who was awarded the medal for his actions at Cold Harbor. Interestingly, there was

no 65<sup>th</sup> Virginia present at the Battle of Spotsylvania; it is possible that the regimental number or even the deed was misreported after the battle.

Stop 9: Samuel Wilson and Samuel Rice  
Graves #1161 and #1177

Our final stop involves the story of two young men named Samuel whose military service was tied to their friendships.

Samuel Edward Rice from East Greenwich, Rhode Island is described as “a soldier from a child.” He formed a company of his peers and served as their captain when they were very young and joined the Kentish Guards at the age of 16. When the Civil War erupted nineteen year old Samuel wanted to join the 2<sup>nd</sup> RI with many of his friends, but was dissuaded because of his youth. That did not last long, and he soon joined the 7<sup>th</sup> RI against the wishes of his parents. He was wounded in several places on May 18, 1864 at Spotsylvania and was taken from the field exclaiming “Boys go in! I can’t be with you any more! Tell them at home I die like a man!” He passed away a few hours after he arrived at the hospital.

Samuel B. Wilson was also very young when he mustered into the 100PA in 1864, in fact he was considered “under age” for enlistment. He joined with his best friend Dave Hutchinson, and both of their parents decided not to interfere in their decision despite their youth. The two boys were so close that neighbors said “If Davy gets his feet wet, Sam’s sure to take a cold.” The Battle of Spotsylvania, less than three months after their enlistment would prove disastrous for both families. Sam was killed in action on May 12, 1864 and Davy was captured, later dying of starvation in November.

Samuel Rice is buried in grave #1161; Samuel Wilson is buried in grave #1177.

Known burials from the Battle of Spotsylvania far exceed those from the park’s other three battles. Because the army stayed on the field for two weeks there were more opportunities for soldiers to bury their comrades and mark the graves. The Battle of the Wilderness fared slightly worse because the armies moved immediately to Spotsylvania at the conclusion of that battle, and fires destroyed the identities of many of the dead. In both cases, however, the arrival of the army the following year to begin the process of reintering the Union dead meant that many more identities were saved from 1864 than the previous years.