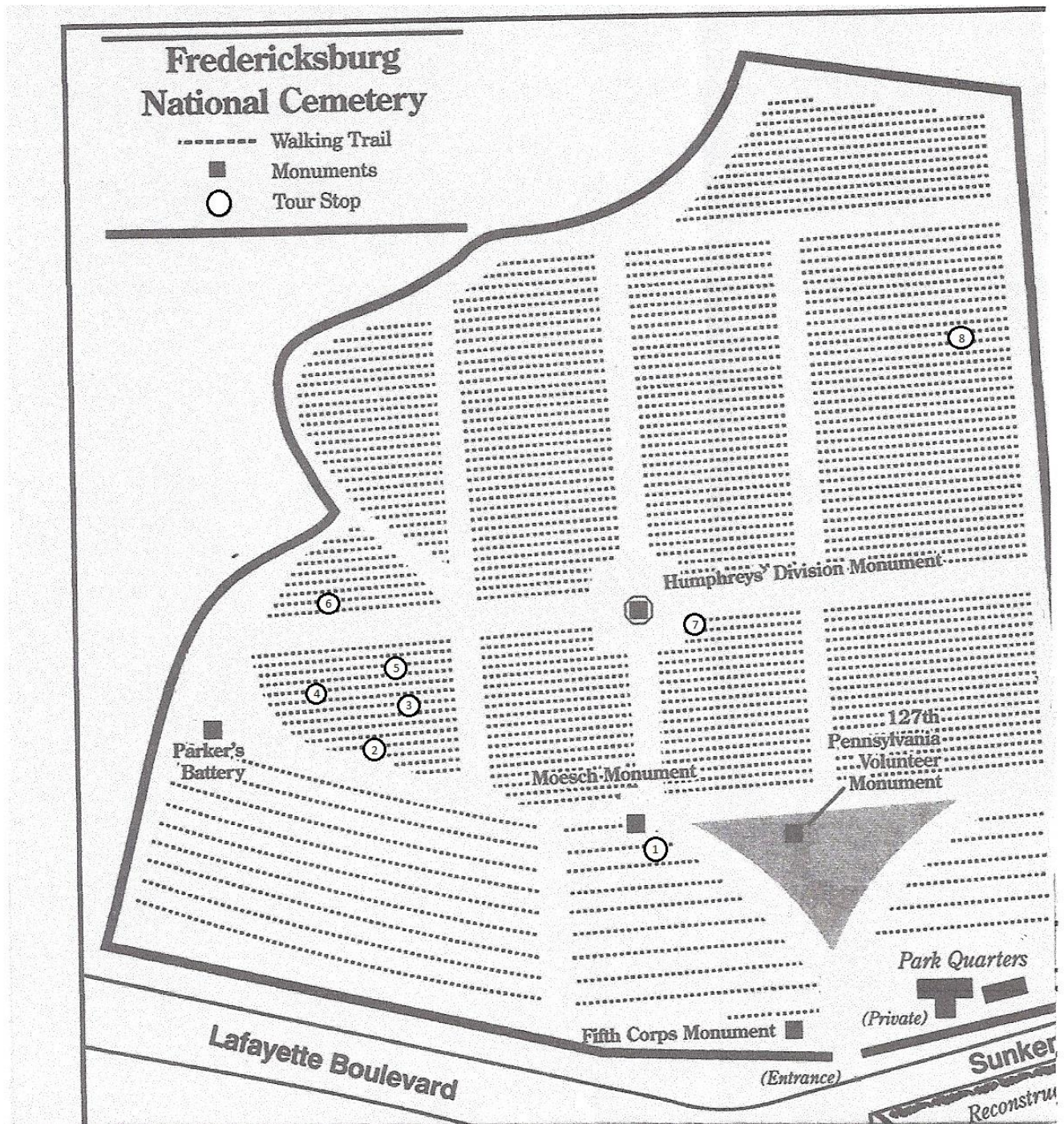


1862 Burials

The first burials in the National Cemetery largely come from 1862 when the Union army first came to Fredericksburg. The army spent many months in the area, occupying the town during the summer of that year, fighting the Battle of Fredericksburg in December, and then settling into winter encampment across the Rappahannock River from the town.



Stop 1: Andrew Courtright
Grave #1000

Every soldier buried in this cemetery was a casualty of war, but not all of them were casualties of battle. Disease took the lives of more men than did the ravages of combat, becoming the leading cause of death during the Civil War. This toll began early in the war, earlier even than battle for many of these men. The process of bringing thousands of men together into close contact, men who had been exposed to different diseases back home allowed sickness to spread quickly through the camps. Some of the first casualties suffered by a regiment were often before the men had even seen battle.

Private Andrew Courtright was the first man to die in the 15th New Jersey, perishing of typhoid fever at a regimental hospital at Stafford Court House on November 23, 1862. Being their first casualty, the regiment buried Courtright with reverence. Boards were foraged for a coffin and the recently arrived regimental band proceeded with the body to its final resting spot where the chaplain gave a benediction and oversaw the firing of three volleys:

On November 23, after Chaplain Alanson Haines conducted services for the brigade, he was summoned to the Fifteenth's hospital tent. There, amid the suffering soldiers laying on the hard ground with no comfort save their blankets, Private Andrew Courtright was dying of Typhoid Fever. As the chaplain told Courtright to trust in Christ, the private's throat rattled and he was gone. Courtright was the first man to die on active service with the Fifteenth, and the regiment buried him with a reverence born of unfamiliarity. Boards were forages for a rough coffin and Courtright was marched to his grave to the strains of "Yankee Doodle," played by the recently arrived brigade band. He was interred with the Chaplain's benediction and three volleys of musketry.

As the war continued, there would be no time for funeral ceremonies; Courtright benefited with his comrade's unfamiliarity with war.

Stop 2: Jophanus Lowell
Grave #1634

After the Battle of Fredericksburg, the Federals and Confederates settled into winter encampment across the Rappahannock River from each other. As the armies managed through the cold months and prepared for the spring campaigning season, disease continued to ravage the camps. One such casualty was Jophanus J. Lowell, a private in the 17th Maine. A farmer before the war Lowell enlisted in August 1862 at the age of 18 years old. He would survive the engagement of Fredericksburg, but just narrowly. While engaged on the southern end of the battlefield, a shell fragment tore through his knapsack scattering his personal belongings but leaving him unscathed. He was charged \$4.54 for the destroyed articles. His near miss during battle would not stop death from finding him two months later. He would contract typhoid fever and die on February 11, 1863 at a regimental hospital near Falmouth, another casualty of camp life. While not the glorious death most soldiers preferred, death from disease was an ever-present reality to the Civil War soldier.

Stop 3: Ira Whitaker
Grave #2986

The 13th New Hampshire experienced their first regimental death in the passing of sixteen year old Ira Whitaker. He died in Falmouth on January 15, 1863 from the measles. His death and burial was described in the unit's regimental history:

Jan. 15. Thurs. Rainy at night. Burial of Ira M. Whitaker of Co. G at 3 p.m. Died of the measles. The excitement in camp is now worse and worse indeed. Capt. Stoodley and Private John B. Stevens of G make for Whitaker a coffin of three cracker-boxes placed end to end, and nailed to a couple of saplings. The simple burial of a private soldier is one of the saddest scenes on earth at any time, but here departs a mere boy but sixteen years old. Whitaker's is the first death in Company G. A man's own company forms the usual procession on such occasions, any friends joining who may choose to do so. A bottle well corked and sealed, and containing the man's man, regiment, home address, etc., is usually laid in the grave with his body. The burial is not prolonged: the slow march, the arms reversed, the muffled drum, the piercing fife, the dirge—often the Portuguese Hymn, but more often the Dead March in Saul—the platoon fire over the grave, the quickstep march back to camp, two men left to close the grave, and all is done.

Whitaker benefited from his comrades freshness as soldiers; he not only received a coffin and funeral procession, but a sealed bottle containing his information was buried with him. It was most likely this identification that prevented him from an unknown grave when he was reinterred in the National Cemetery. As the war dragged on, these scenes would become more and more rare as the burial of the dead became hasty and anonymous out of necessity.

Stop 4: George Annable
Grave #2345

24 year old George Annable died on January 20, 1862, his death highlighted in the regimental history of the 12th New Hampshire:

Little is known of the birth and parentage of this higher type of manhood and true Christian, except he was born in Canada East, in 1838, his father and family moving into the states some time after. At the age of seven, then weighing only forty pounds, he went to live with Capt. Parker Howe, of Holderness, where he remained most of the time until his enlistment, and is remembered by the family as a "good boy and a good Christian." He was in the battle of Fredericksburg, although taken prisoner before on the march to Falmouth, but soon exchanged. He died from the effect of measles, closing his own eyes, and lay dead on his cot with his fingers on his eye lids, and a beautiful smile on his countenance; a complete victory of the Christian soldier over a worse than rebel foe.

George's mother, Matilda Moulton, applied for a Mother's Pension after his death. 51 years old and twice widowed, she could request a pension because George left no wife or children behind as dependents.

Stop 5: Newton/Nathan Ames
Grave #2616

Walter Ames of the 147th New York was called to the regimental hospital of the 14th Ohio to claim the body of his brother Nathan. Nathan's health had been failing for several days before he died on January 9, 1863 and he was described as "nothing but skin and bones." Walter intended to receive a furlough so he could take his brother home, but that must have failed because a regimental detail buried him on January 12 and he now lies in grave #2616.

Stop 6: Eli and Stambury Hitchcock
Grave #3028

One of three brothers who all enlisted together, Eli was a lawyer in Millville, Wisconsin before the war. Eli became ill and died on May 16, 1862 at Potomac Creek despite the care of his brother Chant who remained with him the entire time of his illness. His other brother Stanbury wrote somewhat bitterly to his parents about Eli's death saying that he had not received proper care, that he had only a bed of straw to lay on, and that there were men working in the hospital who did not care whether a man lived or died.

There is another element to the story of Eli Hitchcock and his brothers. Eli's name is on this gravestone, but it may be Stanbury who is buried there. After being wounded at South Mountain, Stanbury would die on May 10, 1864 at Laurel Hill during the Battle of Spotsylvania Courthouse. Originally buried on the battlefield, it was reported to his family that Stanbury was reinterred here at the national cemetery. Whether Eli or Stanbury it is likely that one of the brothers is buried here and the other lies somewhere else in the cemetery under a marker that reads unknown. Chant was captured at Gettysburg, released and returned to the regiment, was severely wounded at the Wilderness but survived, the only one of the brothers to return home.

Stop 7: Frederick R. Wildt and James E. Clark
Graves #2863 and #2864

Two casualties of the Battle of Fredericksburg lie side by side, both from the same unit. James Clark and Frederick Wildt were both members of Company D, 4th Michigan. Both had enlisted in 1861 at the age of 19 to serve for three years. Frederick was first corporal of Company D and James was promoted to first lieutenant in the regiment just prior to the Battle of Fredericksburg. Both would be among the over one thousand Union soldiers killed during the battle. While attacking Marye's Heights, James rode up to his old company and encouraged them in their advance leading one of his comrades to admonish him to keep down or he would be hit. Those words were hardly spoken when a bullet hit James on the third button of his overcoat, glanced to the left, and killed him. Frederick was also killed instantly during that attack, shot in nearly the same place as James. Both were taken off the field by their comrades and buried in a lot in Fredericksburg. They were buried side-by-side in separate coffins marked by a carved head board in a service attended by the captain, the company, and the regiment's chaplain. Today they still lie side-by-side, reinterred here in the National Cemetery, comrades in death as well as life.

Frederick Wildt is buried in grave #2863; James Clark is buried in grave #2864.

Stop 8: Robert Sylvester
Grave #5422

Private Robert Sylvester of the 15th New Jersey, along with John Laughton, was known for his antics in camp. The two men would amuse themselves by climbing trees and pulling squirrels out of their holes with their bare hands. Unfortunately, Robert succumbed to Typhoid Fever four months after enlisting, in early December 1862. His comrades did not have enough wood to build a coffin for Robert; instead they shored up the sides of the grave with wood and buried him wrapped in his overcoat.

Many of the casualties from the Battle of Fredericksburg lie under “unknown” markers. After the battle, Robert E. Lee sent a message to Ambrose Burnside to send burial parties across the river to bury the Union dead. By the time, these parties began the process many of the bodies had been stripped of clothing and lain on the field for a period of time. Hastily, and under a flag of truce, Union troops buried their fallen comrades in mass graves, erasing the identities of the dead. When the bodies were reinterred in the National Cemetery, the identities of only a few could be determined.

At the end of 1862, both armies settled down into winter encampment to wait for the next campaign season. Just a few months after the Battle of Fredericksburg, the armies would meet again at Chancellorsville.