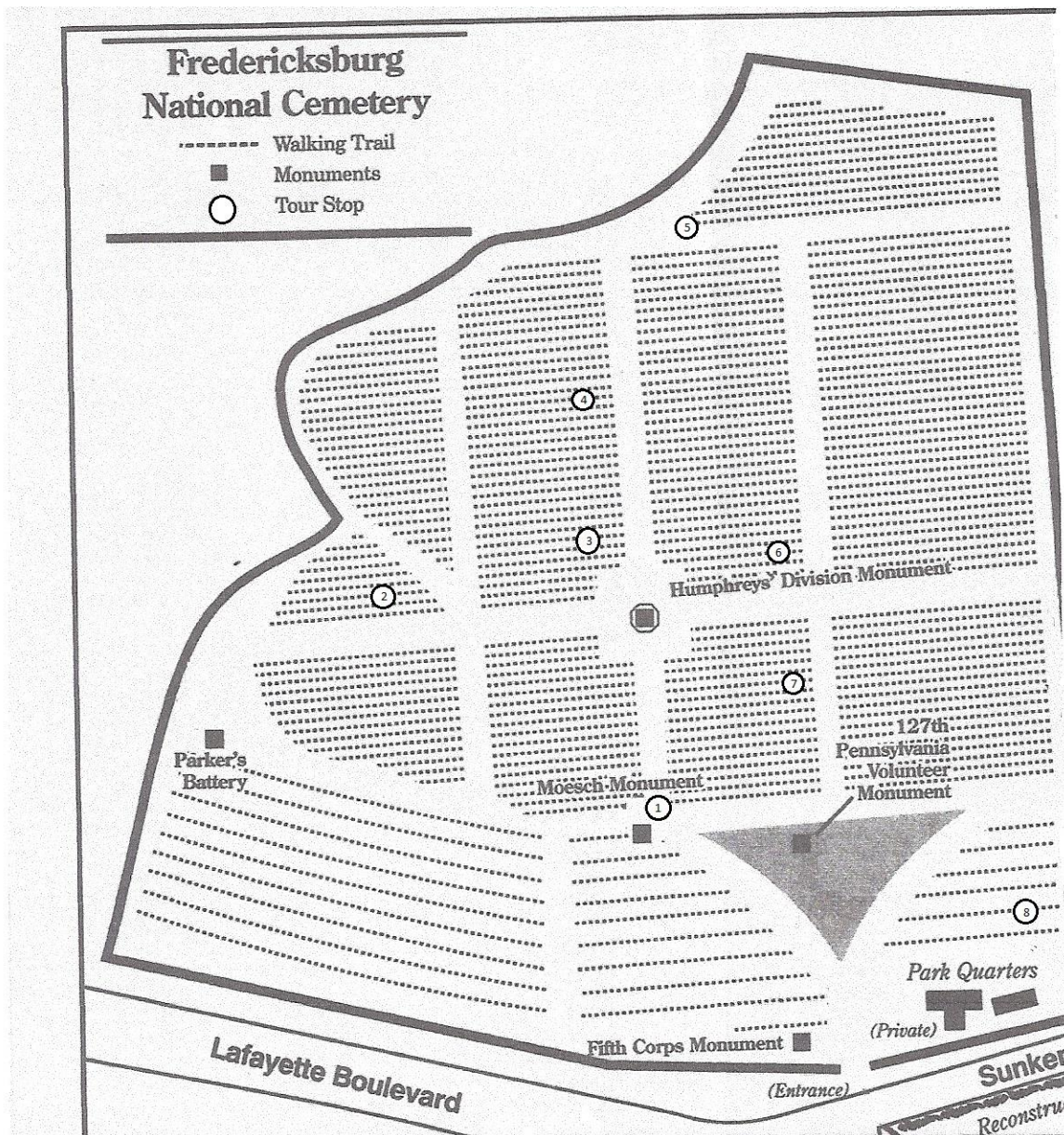


# Stories of the Homefront Tour

Every grave in the national cemetery represents a story of service and struggle, but they also represent the impact of loss on a wide scale. Like a pebble in the water, the impact of a single story here spreads outward. A soldier is one person, but think of the web of connections each had in their lives. Every grave also represents loss for a mother, a father, sisters, brothers, sons, daughters, wives, extended family, and friends. At a time when news did not travel at the split-second pace of today and travel was far less easy, families might not hear of a loved one's death until weeks or months had gone by. Even then, the reports might be false or wrong. Worse still, many families never found out what happened to loved ones, they just never came home. Most were buried in unknown graves scattered across the southern states.

This tour focuses on the personal effects of the Civil War and the impact the deaths of these men had on their friends and family.



### Stop 1: Unknown Graves

Of the 15,000 Union soldiers buried here, 85%—17 out of every 20—are unknown. Unknown burials are marked with the smaller, square stones while those shaped like a headstone mark the gravesites of identified soldiers. Unknown stones carry two numbers: the top number identifies the plot, the bottom number tells the number of bodies in that plot. Even when casualties were identified, it was very likely that families would not be able to collect the body. Whether because of distance, money, or the proximity to ongoing combat, most families had to leave their loved one buried in graves far away from home. For the families of men buried under unknown markers, the wait for information would be endless; many would never know what happened to their loved ones.

Stop 2: Hiram Lare  
Grave #3247

This is a story of two brothers, not brothers by blood, but brothers through war. The bonds forged between comrades were as strong as family, sometimes even stronger.

On Memorial Day 1931, a single rose was laid on the grave of Hiram Lare in honor of this bond. John B. Cooke, a 90 year old veteran in 1931, had been a messmate of Lare's. John was smaller, younger, and weaker than Hiram, so Hiram looked out for him like an older brother would. During the May 12<sup>th</sup> fight at Spotsylvania Hiram was killed and John wounded in the leg. John sat by the body of his friend begging for some of the boys to bury it. They did the best they could and John never heard another word about what happened to Hiram. For 67 years John wondered what happened to the body, then Major Arthur E. Wilborn, secretary of the US Memorial Park Commission, heard the story and contacted Cooke with information about his friend's grave. The 90 year old Cooke could not travel to Fredericksburg, but he expressed his gratitude for the information and said "I wish it was possible for me to lay a rose on his grave on May 30 as a token of love and gratitude for him that has never died." The rose laid here in 1931 represents how one death can resonate through the years.

Stop 3: Peter Froeligh  
Grave #3834

Lieutenant Peter D. Froeligh of the 146<sup>th</sup> NY was not the support of his parents, but of his orphaned siblings. Their father died in October 1860 when he fell from a building. Twenty-one year old Peter enlisted in July 1861 and sent the money back to support his mother and five siblings. After their mother's death in November 10, 1862 Peter's pay was the main support for his sisters. His siblings sought a pension and younger sister Helen, still a minor, received \$15 a month.

Stop 4: John Warner  
Grave #4913

The death of Corporal John Warner at the Battle of Fredericksburg hit his parents hard. Despite having three siblings John was the main support of his parents. His mother Magdalena was 54 years old and his 71 year old father, George, was feeble, deaf, blind in one eye and hard of sight in the other. Troubled with tremors and rheumatism, George had not been able to work as a shoemaker for 10 years, except for making slippers from scraps of cloth for \$1 a week. Magdalena filed for and received a pension, but they had lost their support with the death of their son.

Stop 5: Alexander Allison  
Grave #6145A

Many families experienced at least one death in their family, some experienced several. There is a well-known story of Lydia Bixby, who reportedly lost five sons during the war and received a letter of condolence from Abraham Lincoln. While the letter is real, Mrs. Bixby did not actually lose all five of her sons in the war. Alexander Allison, buried here, however, is part of a true

tragedy. His mother, Agnes Allison, began the war as a widow with six sons and sent four of those sons to war. All four died. Twenty-three year old Alexander, serving as second lieutenant in the 96<sup>th</sup> PA, was shot in the stomach at Salem Church on May 3, 1863 and died at the hospital. Nineteen year old John, serving under Alexander as a corporal, was also killed at Salem Church. His body was never recovered and may lie in the cemetery as an unknown. Older brother George was shot in the hip at the Bloody Angle on May 12, 1864 while serving with the 56<sup>th</sup> PA and died in a hospital in Washington DC. Their other brother James served with the 1<sup>st</sup> PA Cavalry until November 1862 when he was injured after his horse threw him and discharged. In 1864 he reenlisted with the 48<sup>th</sup> PA Infantry and was killed at Bethesda Church near Richmond. Agnes Allison lost perhaps more sons than any other mother in the North, ending the war as a widow with only two of her six sons still alive.

Stop 6: William C. Morgan  
Grave #3615

The inability to transport soldiers' bodies meant that they remained far away from home. Many families were unable to bury their loved ones or visit their graves. For some, locating and visiting the graves remained a hope long after the war. For M. E. Andrews, the dream of finally visiting the grave of her only brother, Major William C. Morgan (grave #3615), who died at the North Anna River in 1864 was fulfilled twenty-eight years after his death. In the fall of 1892 she traveled to Fredericksburg and enlisted the help of the cemetery staff to find William's final resting spot among the thousands of graves. Finally, she stood before the headstone of her only brother:

*I wish my dear sister, that you could see it, it is one of the most beautiful spots I ever saw, at the head of the grave there is a beautiful Japonica tree which shades it, I was pretty well overcome, and the tears dropped fast [.] I felt and know that he was beside me, I knelt down on the grave and sobbed, as I knelt there, there was a little Japonica Apple fell right into my lap, from the tree, the man picked it up and gave it to me saying that it was a message to you Mrs Andrews, he was very kind and gave me several shoots from the tree. I brought them home, and am trying to root them, if they root you shall have one.*

Andrews continued on to talk about providing funds to decorate William's grave on a regular basis.

Stop 7: Samuel and Ira Allen  
Graves #2194 and #541

The Civil War did not only see brother fighting together, but other family members as well. The Vermont troops fighting at the Brock and Plank Roads during the Battle of the Wilderness contained a father and two sons. The father, Samuel Allen of the 17<sup>th</sup> Vermont, was shot in the leg and died several days later. One son, Ethan Allen, survived, but his brother, eighteen year old Ira, was struck in the chest and also died after the battle. You can imagine how Ethan felt, losing both father and brother in the same battle.

Samuel is buried in grave #2194; Ira is buried in grave #541 (next to Jerome Pierce).

## Stop 8: Jerome Pierce

Grave #540

Note: Ira Allen is buried in Grave #541, right next to Pierce.

Jerome Pierce left behind a wife, Albina (he called her Allie), and a two year old daughter, Lucy, when he joined the 36<sup>th</sup> MA in 1862. On May 12, 1864 Jerome was struck in the heart with a bullet, killed instantly during the Battle of Spotsylvania. Like most soldiers, he was buried on the battlefield and was later re-interred here in Fredericksburg.

News of his death devastated his wife, a widow at the age of 29. After the war, she sent a check for 100 dollars to Andrew Birdsall, the cemetery superintendent, with a request that he put the money in a bank and use the interest to decorate the grave regularly. Birdsall did so, and his family passed the responsibility down the generations until the 1990s. Allie Pierce never remarried, dying in 1920 at the age of 85. Lucy also never married, thus Jerome has no direct descendants to remember his story. In a sense, the American people have become the family of these men, coming together to remember them and make sure their stories never die. Today we still decorate Jerome's grave, a remembrance to the tragedy of war and the families affected by it.

Before you leave Jerome's grave, reflect on the fact that you are doing something his family was never able to do: visit a loved one's last resting place. The Fredericksburg National Cemetery is a place of national mourning, where visitors can learn about the national past and those who fought in America's military. On a more personal note, however, visitors to our national cemeteries act as surrogate families mourning these soldiers, particularly those whose family never learned their fate. The impact of these deaths, the ripples from the single pebble thrown in the water, resonate even today.