

BALTIMORE NATIONAL CEMETERY

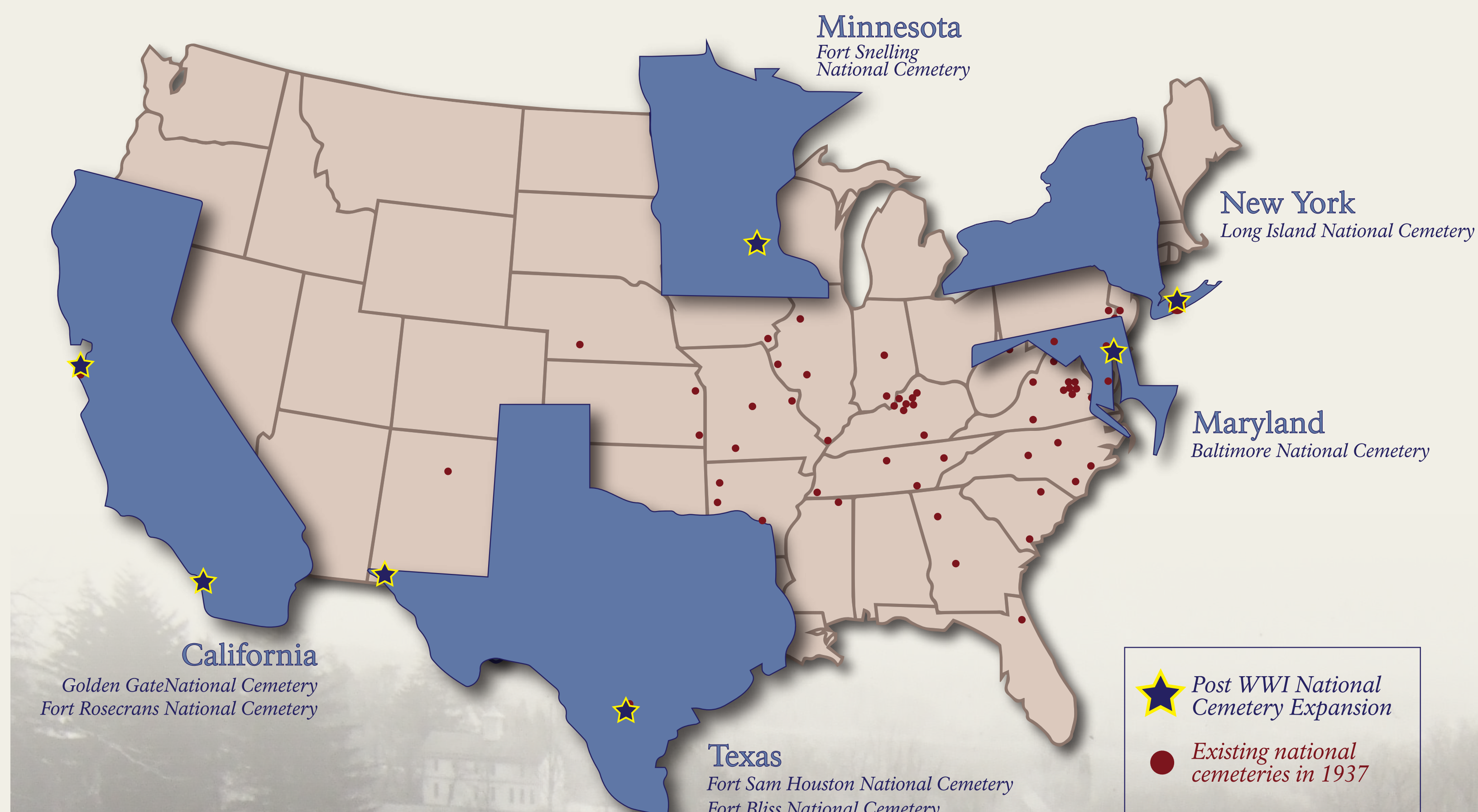
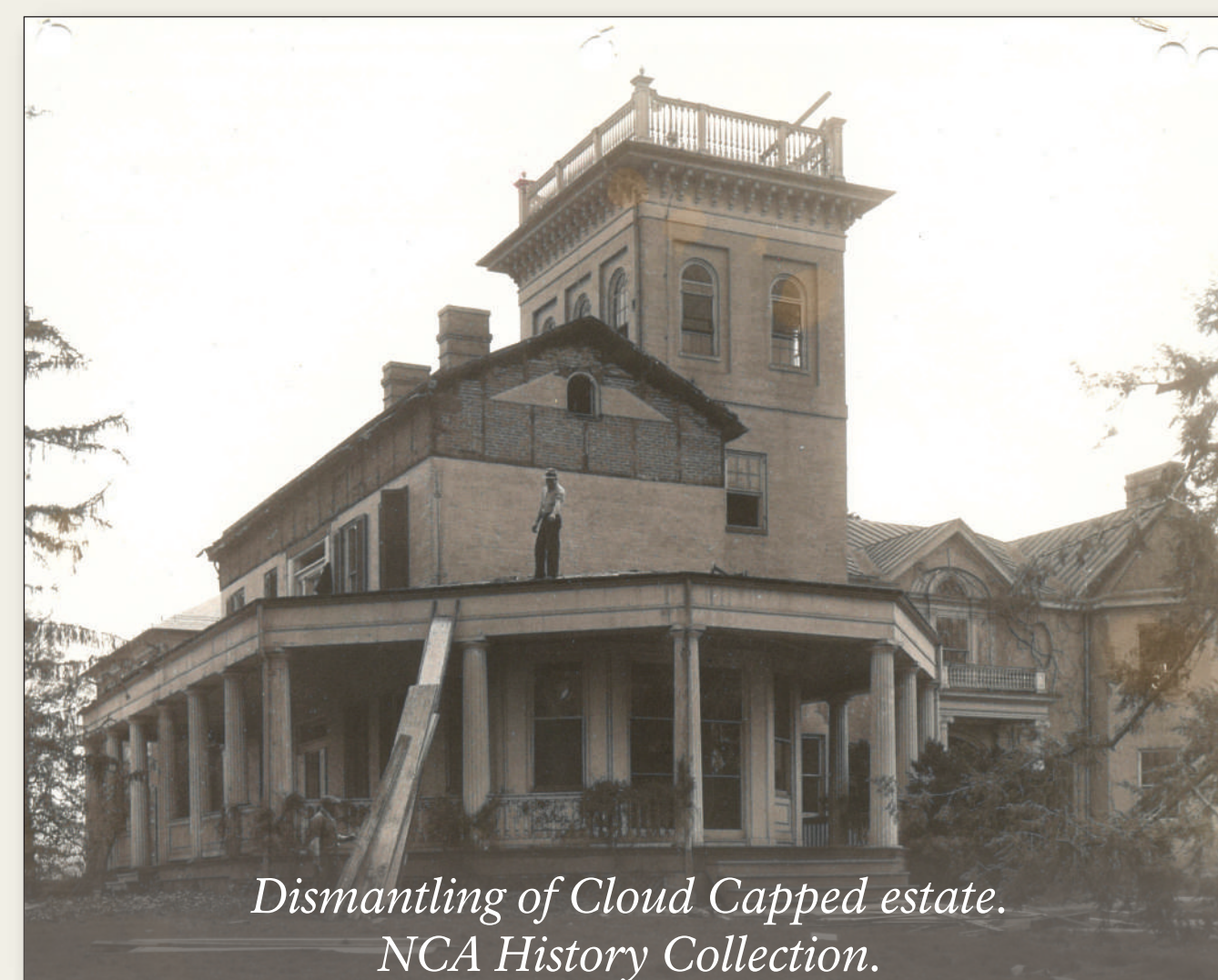
National Cemeteries for World War Veterans

The U.S. Army managed the National Cemetery System until its transfer to what is now the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 1973. It established cemeteries out of necessity during the Civil War (1861-1865), primarily in the South, usually expanding or supplementing existing cemeteries to provide additional burial space. Cemeteries were concentrated east of the Mississippi River and were relatively small in size. They were inadequate to meet the needs of twentieth-century veterans, whose population spiked with service in the Spanish-American War (1898-1902) and World War I (1917-1918). Internal Army studies, spurred by veterans' groups, led to the first major expansion of the system. Seven national cemeteries were constructed using Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds in 1934-1939 in locations determined by the population of veterans eligible for burial benefits. VA still uses this methodology to guide its cemetery development today. Expansion was timely, as World War II (1941-1945) ushered in a volume of veterans never before seen in the nation's history.

Private Estate to National Cemetery

The site occupied by Baltimore National Cemetery was a historic estate called Cloud Capped, which sat adjacent to Frederick Road as early as 1750. The cemetery was created to supplant nearby Loudon Park National Cemetery, which dated to the Civil War. Twentieth-century wars and the expansion of veterans' burial benefits in 1920 created a dramatic increase in the population eligible for burial in a national cemetery.

When it became apparent that Loudon Park was filling up rapidly and there was no other veteran's cemetery close by, the Baltimore department of the American Legion lobbied for a new national cemetery. The Army selected Cloud Capped due to its proximity to Loudon Park and its ample seventy-two acres and designed a cemetery to accommodate up to 45,000 interments. By 1938, nearly \$400,000 was expended to create Baltimore National Cemetery. Funds were spent on surveys, roads, gates, fences, utilities, out-buildings, preparing gravesites, and the erection of the superintendent's lodge using materials salvaged from Cloud Capped mansion, designed to resemble its oldest wing. Baltimore National Cemetery was dedicated on Memorial Day 1941, with ceremonies commencing at Lafayette Square, led by Black World War I Veterans from American Legion Post No. 14.



WPA Workers raising flagpole, April 14, 1937, near present day Section D. University of Maryland Archives.