

DANVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY

National Home

Construction of the Danville Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (NHDVS) began in early 1898. The first resident, Charles Butler, arrived October 13.

The home's sprawling 325-acre campus included every facility that aging veterans might require. The men lived in barracks and dined in a mess hall. Protestant and Catholic chapels served spiritual needs. The sick were treated in a hospital.



National Home barracks under construction, March 1898. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library.

The campus operated a farm and shops devoted to printing, painting, machinery, tinwork, and harness making. Veterans staffed all of them. Entertainment included a library, opera house, amusement hall, and bandstand. The government never envisioned National Homes as charity. They were available to veterans as a reward for military service.

The National Homes merged with the U.S. Veterans Bureau and Bureau of Pensions to form the Veterans Administration (now U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs) in 1930. The facility continues to serve veterans as the VA Illiana Health Care System.



First Decoration (Memorial) Day at the National Home, May 30, 1899. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library.

NHDVS Cemetery

The first cemetery was located northwest of here. Martin Branch, formerly in the 60th U.S. Colored Infantry, who died in January 1899, was the first interment. Two years later, the government acquired 30 acres east of the main NHDVS complex and opened the existing cemetery. It was designed so graves formed concentric circles radiating from the center.



Civil War Army Medal of Honor.
Gettysburg National Military Park.

The remains of ninety-nine veterans were moved from the old Danville burial ground and reinterred here. It was designated a national cemetery in 1973, and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1992.

One Civil War Medal of Honor recipient is buried here. First Lt. Morton A. Read, 8th New York Cavalry, captured the 1st Texas Infantry flag at the Battle of Appomattox Station, Virginia, April 8, 1865 (Section 10, Grave 3033).

Soldiers' Monument

A 20-foot-tall Soldiers' Monument is located at the center of the cemetery. The bronze soldier was created by sculptor W. Noble Clark of Maine.

Clark designed numerous figures for military monuments. This one is also used in the 100th Pennsylvania Veteran Volunteers Monument, erected on Antietam Battlefield in September 1904.

The Danville monument was dedicated on Memorial Day 1917. The inscribed granite base reads, "In memory of the men who offered their life in defense of their country."

"In the private soldier I seem to see typified the union of purpose, the union of valor and the union of probity. . ."

Capt. W. H. Underwood, dedication of the bronze figure at Antietam. Pennsylvania at Antietam (1906).

