

POINT LOOKOUT CONFEDERATE CEMETERY

Camp Hoffman Prison

The Union prison at Camp Hoffman, Maryland—called Point Lookout—opened in 1863. A 15-foot-high plank fence surrounded the 40-acre prison compound. The first prisoners arrived in July 1863—Confederates captured at the Battle of Gettysburg. By year's end, the population reached 9,000. All prisoners lived in tents, including the sick. When the war ended in April 1865, the prison housed 22,000 men.

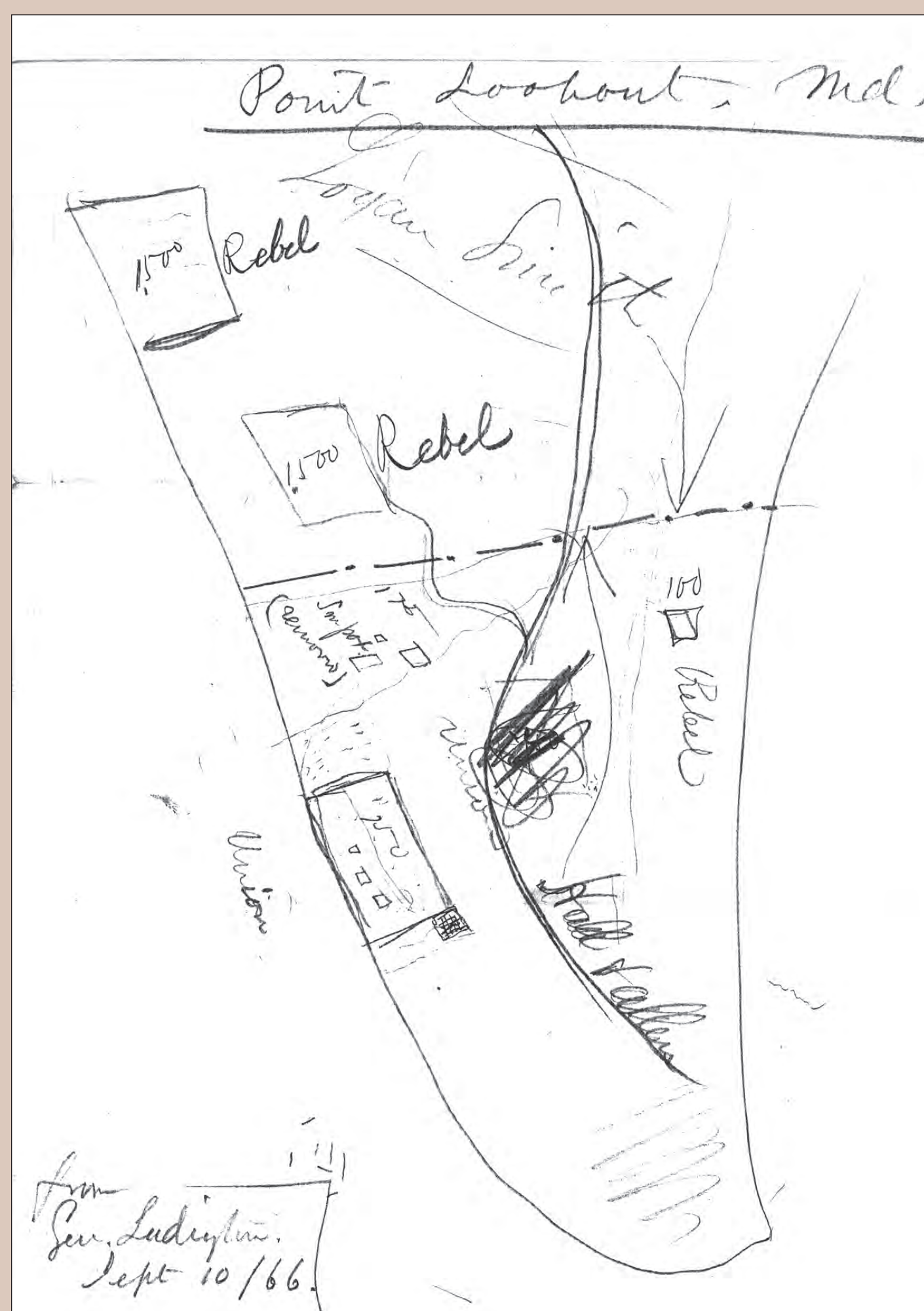
The Confederate Dead

Between July 1863 and June 1865, when it closed, more than 52,000 prisoners had been held at Point Lookout. More than 3,000 died and were interred in three prison cemeteries. All graves

were marked with wooden headboards.

After the war, some bodies were removed from the cemeteries at Point Lookout. However, no record was made of who was removed. One unauthorized business removed bodies, at the request of friends or family, for a fee.

Sketch map of Point Lookout cemeteries, including one Union and three Confederate, "from Gen. Ludington, Sept. 10 / 66." National Archives and Records Administration.



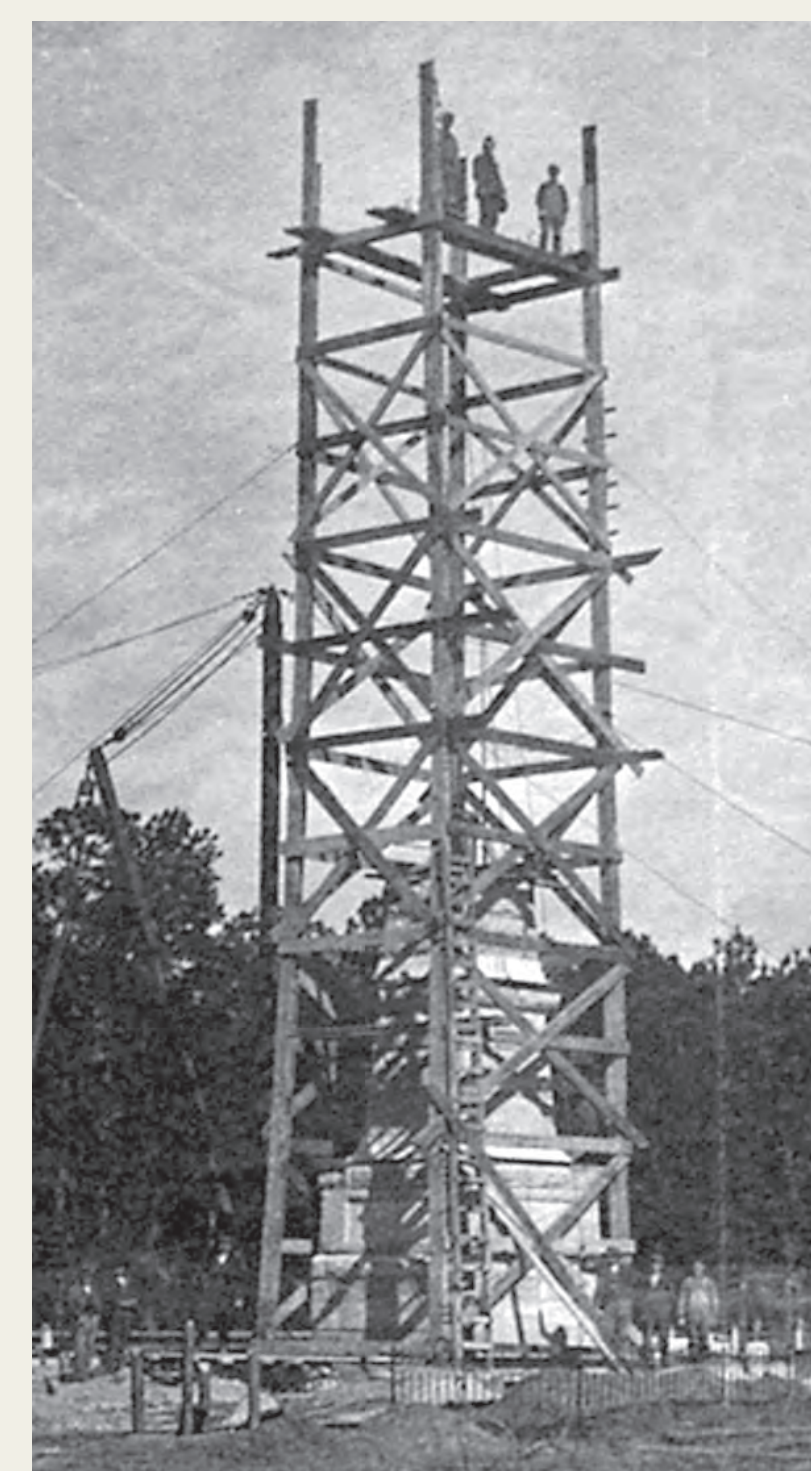
The Commission

In 1867, the War Department purchased the land containing the Union and Confederate cemeteries. Soon, the U.S. Army moved Union remains to Arlington National Cemetery. Confederate remains at Point Lookout were marked with new headboards. Three years later, the State of Maryland purchased this ground and moved 3,404 Confederate dead from the federally-owned cemeteries to this site. In 1876, Maryland erected a modest marble obelisk to mark the graves.

The Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead began documenting interments at Point Lookout in 1906. After the Commissioner determined that the graves could not be marked individually, he received permission to erect a single monument.

Maryland deeded this cemetery to the federal government in 1910. The Van Amringe Granite Company of Boston, Massachusetts, finished the 85-foot granite obelisk the following year. Bronze plaques on the monument base and the mound supporting it contain the names of 3,384 Confederate soldiers and sailors; forty-four civilians identified by the Commission as buried at the site are not listed. However, the exact number of individuals who died at the prison and are buried here may never be determined.

Monument under construction, c. 1910. National Archives and Records Administration.



Toward Reconciliation

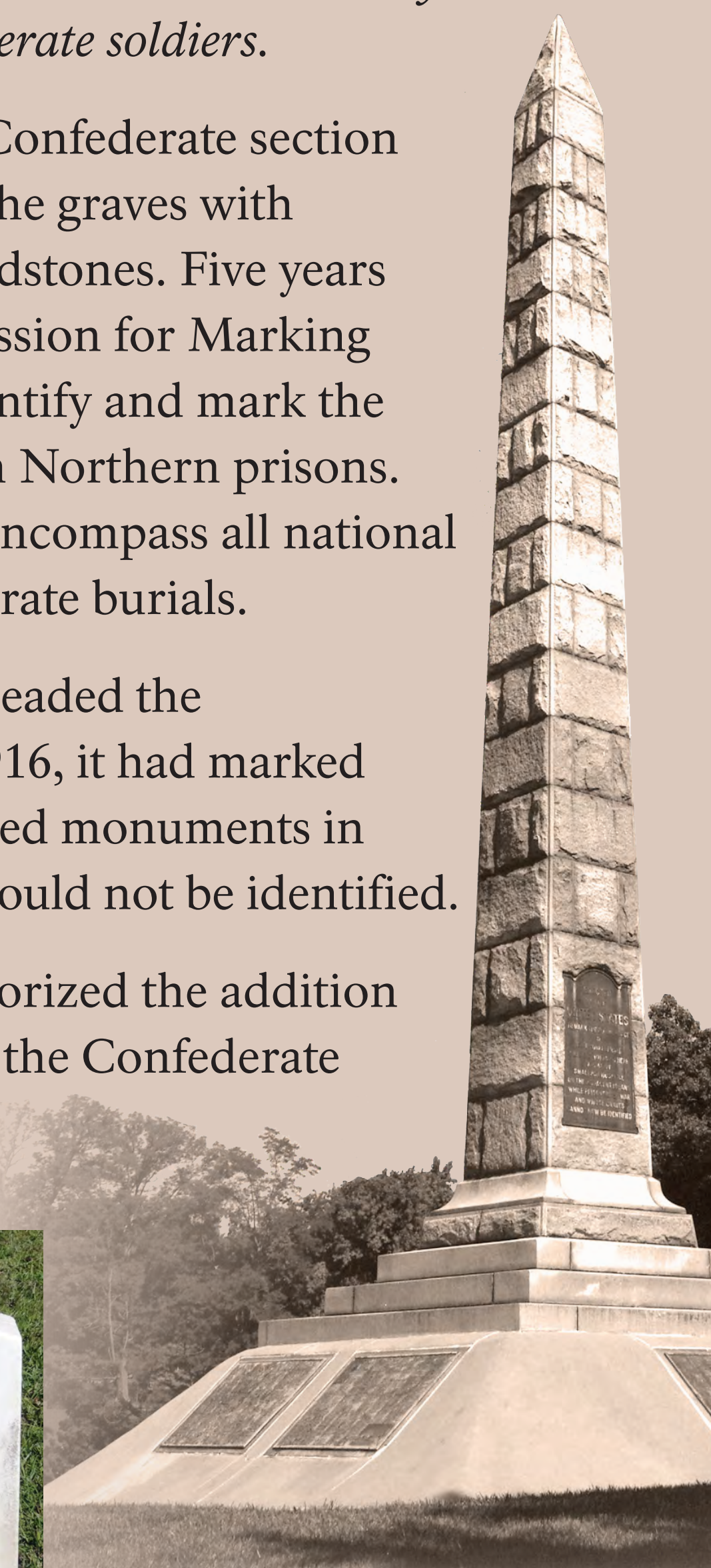
On May 30, 1868, the Grand Army of the Republic decorated Union and Confederate graves at Arlington National Cemetery. Thirty years later President William McKinley proclaimed:

The Union is once more the common altar of our love and loyalty, our devotion and sacrifice . . . Every soldier's grave made during our unfortunate Civil War is a tribute to American valor . . . in the spirit of fraternity we should share with you in the care of the graves of the Confederate soldiers.

The War Department created the Confederate section at Arlington in 1901, and marked the graves with distinctive pointed-top marble headstones. Five years later, Congress created the Commission for Marking Graves of Confederate Dead to identify and mark the graves of Confederates who died in Northern prisons. Its mission was later expanded to encompass all national cemeteries that contained Confederate burials.

Four former Confederate officers headed the Commission over its lifetime. By 1916, it had marked in excess of 25,500 graves and erected monuments in locations where individual graves could not be identified.

In 1930, the War Department authorized the addition of the Southern Cross of Honor to the Confederate headstone.



North Alton Confederate Cemetery Monument, 1909, Alton, Ill.

Original Commission headstone (left) and headstone with Southern Cross of Honor (right).