

RALEIGH NATIONAL CEMETERY



North Carolina State Capitol, 1861. Courtesy of the State Archives of North Carolina.

Civil War Raleigh

After President Abraham Lincoln called for troops to put down the Confederate rebellion in April 1861, North Carolina seceded from the Union. Raleigh became a hub of Confederate activity as recruiting and training camps sprang up in the city. A bayonet factory and powder mill opened, and warehouses for military supplies and equipment were established. Later the Confederates built a hospital at the old fairgrounds.

After the Battle of Bentonville in March 1865, Union troops began approaching the city. Gov. Zebulon Vance sent representatives to meet with Union Gen. William T. Sherman, who promised no harm would come to the city if his troops met no resistance. Union soldiers occupied Raleigh on April 13, 1865, and Sherman set up his headquarters in the governor's mansion. More than 100,000 Union soldiers camped in and near the city. They buried their dead here, too.

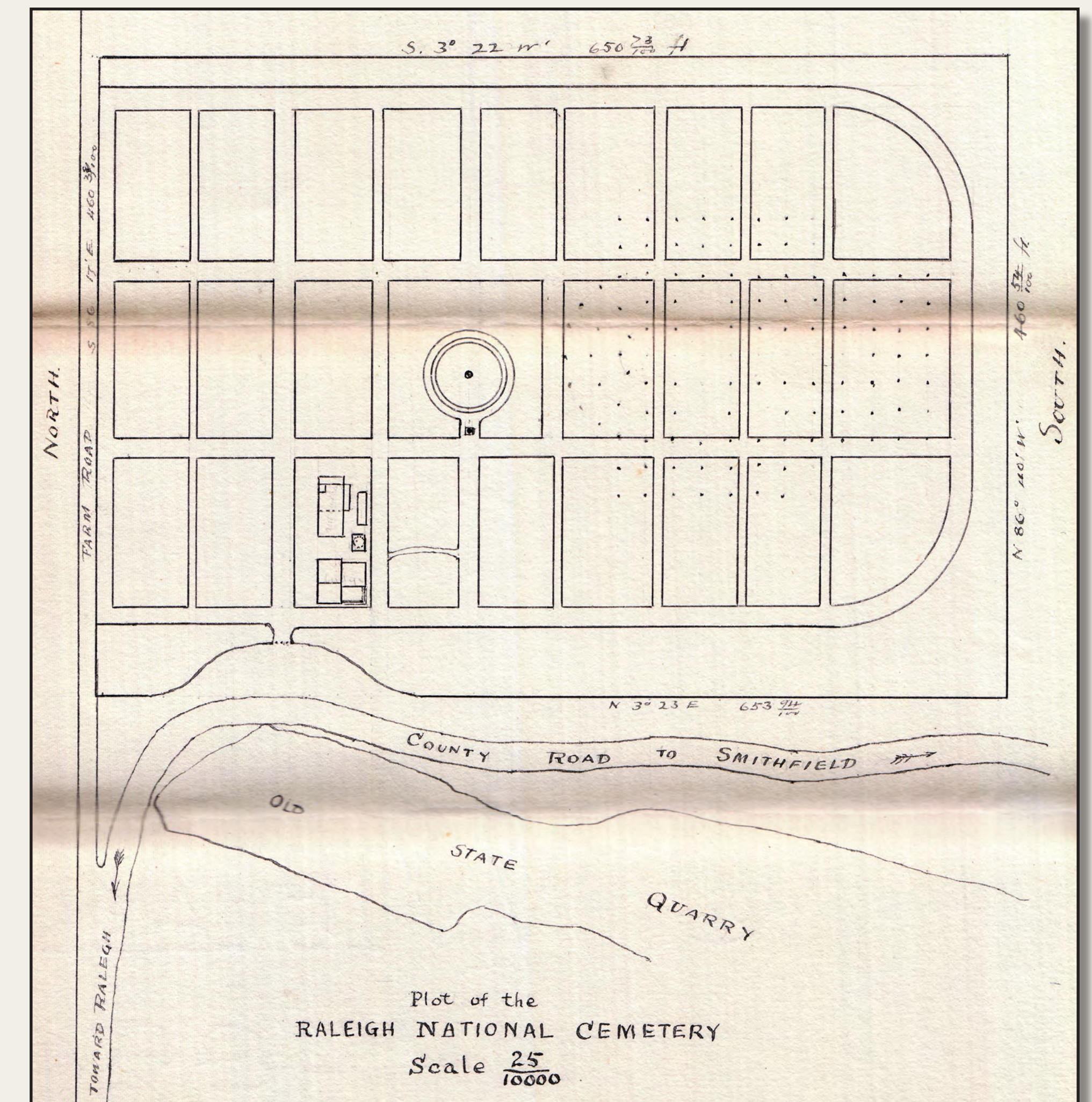
National Cemetery

The State of North Carolina donated land to the federal government for a Union cemetery. It was designated Raleigh National Cemetery in 1865. The rectangular tract was divided into twenty-two sections with a central flagstaff and gun monument.

The remains of 1,173 soldiers were reinterred here from other locations in Raleigh; the Averasboro, Bentonville and Goldsboro battlefields; and elsewhere in the state. Volunteer regiments from thirteen states are represented, and were buried together. Other sections were set aside for U.S. Army Regulars and U.S. Colored Troops. Four sections contain 547 unknown soldiers.



View into cemetery, 1904. Visible on right is the original wood-frame lodge, reused as a kitchen and tool-house after the new brick lodge was built in 1874. National Archives and Records Administration.



Plan of cemetery, 1881. National Archives and Records Administration.

An 1867 law directed the secretary of war to appoint a “meritorious and trustworthy” superintendent to manage each national cemetery. To qualify for the position, an individual must have been an army enlisted man disabled in service. A later change to the law allowed any honorably mustered out or discharged commissioned officer or enlisted man to serve as a cemetery superintendent. George A. Dichtl, formerly a second lieutenant in the 1st Oregon Cavalry, was appointed to this post at Raleigh in June 1868.

A Second Empire-style lodge was constructed for the superintendent and his family to live in. The current Colonial-Revival building replaced that lodge in 1938.