

UNKNOWN BUT NOT FORGOTTEN



**First Memorial Day Celebration**

LOOKING back through the vista of 38 years we recall the grand spectacle of the first observance of the ceremonies of Memorial day, under Order No. 11, of Gen. John A. Logan, then commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic. May 30, 1868, dawned gloriously, as if heaven had smiled propitiously for the day.

Unexpectedly to Gen. Logan the order elicited the heartiest co-operation of all loyal citizens with the Grand Army of the Republic in honoring the memory of the heroic dead, whose bodies lay "in almost every city, village churchyard in the land."

The survivors of the civil war were then a large part of the population in all communities. They seized with great enthusiasm the suggestion of commemoration of the names and deeds of their departed comrades. Generously assisted by patriotic people, the heaven-born ceremony was inaugurated with so much reverential eclat as to make an indelible impression on the whole nation and establish its permanency forevermore. So interesting were the ceremonies that congress made an appropriation for the publication of the reports of the proceedings at many places in almost every state and territory, as also in Old and New Mexico.

The most imposing and impressive exercises were those at Arlington, where then slept more than 22,000 heroic dead. Two thousand one hundred of that number are in the catacombs of the granite mausoleum upon which is inscribed "Unknown."

It may be of interest to many who have not visited this Valhalla of American patriots to read the inscription chiseled on this tomb:

"Beneath this stone repose the bones of two thousand one hundred and eleven unknown soldiers, gathered after the war from the fields of Bull Run and the route to Rappahannock. Their remains could not be identified, but their names and deeds are recorded in the archives of their country; and its grateful citizens honor them as of their noble army of martyrs. May they rest in peace!"

"September, A. D. 1866."  
Surmounting the tomb are four rifled field pieces, one at each corner, and a stack of cannon balls. On Decoration day, 1868, floral shields formed the center of each side, and upon them were appropriate inscriptions.

On the north side:  
"On Fame's eternal camping ground  
Their silent tents are spread,  
And Glory guards with solemn round  
The bivouac of the dead."

On the west side:  
"Whether on tented field  
Or in the battle's van,  
The fittest place for man to die  
Is where he dies for man."

On the east side:  
"Here rest the brave who sunk to rest,  
By all their country's wishes blest."

On the south side:  
"The grave should be surrounded by everything that might inspire tenderness and veneration for the dead, or that might win the erring to virtue. It is not the place of disgust and dismay, but of sorrow and meditation."

In addition to the thousands in the mausoleum there are hundreds of graves in the grounds marked "Unknown." But few of the present generation know that the hallowed bones in the mausoleum and those in the graves whose headstones bear the melancholy word "Unknown," were, through the efforts of that incomparable, patriotic woman, Clara Barton, gathered from the many battlefields of Virginia and from isolated places in the forests around them, whither wounded soldiers had crawled and died, and whose bodies were undiscovered by the burial corps, who at best could do little more than cover over their fallen comrades with a few spadefuls of earth after the sanguinary struggle of many hours, before they were obliged to press forward to hold advanced positions. The springtime rains, the summer suns, the winter snows beat upon the hastily made mounds or trenches and laid bare the sacred forms which were soon naught save whitened skeletons.

Clara Barton conceived the idea of gathering them together and placing them in scientific hands so as to classify and inter them in Arlington. Congress adopted her suggestion and ordered the secretary of war to furnish transportation and detail men to accompany her on her mission of rescuing the remains of heroes from obliteration by further exposure to the elements.

This sacred spot is full of historic interest. Once the property of the family of Washington, from whom it was inherited by Robert E. Lee—and when he deserted it to cast his lot with the confederacy—it curiously became the last resting place of those who had sacrificed their lives in the defense of the union, which Lee and his cohorts had tried to dismember.

The program of May 30, 1868, for the decoration of the graves in Arlington was perfect. The president, his cabinet, the great captains of the army and navy and distinguished representatives of foreign countries in the persons of members of the diplomatic corps, many of the supreme court, the senate and house of representatives were present to participate in honoring the fallen braves, with the troops of the different branches of the service in and about Washington and the long line of ex-union soldiers who composed the Department of the Potomac of the Grand Army of the Republic. Under the direction of Prof. Scala, the marine and other bands played the Miserere, funeral dirges and appropriate patriotic airs at intervals.

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