

# Arlington National Cemetery Facts

## Commissioner Boice -- Arlington National Cemetery Facts

All Americans owe a tribute ...

A.N.C. 624 Acres -- They say If you walk close to the middle of the Cemetery -- you'll view lines of Graves as far as you can see

in every direction.

Over 400,000 grave sites -- every war since the Civil War is represented -- those that died in the Service of their Country.

Two Years ago -- Veterans Groups put an American flag at every one of the grave sites.

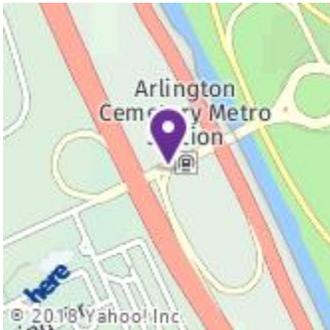
Yesterday another Group placed a Christmas Wreath at every single grave.site. Y

Yes -- 400,000 Flags and then 400,000 Wreaths ...

I hope I will have an opportunity to visit there someday .... !!!

8 Interesting Facts after the photos -- Short Read ...





## Arlington National Cemetery

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The Arlington National Cemetery is the final resting place of the brave souls who gave their lives in service to the country. Two of America's former presidents, John F. Kennedy and William Howard Taft are buried here. The crew of the Challenger space shuttle, civil rights leader Medgar Evers and film star Audie Murphy are among the many honored here. The Tomb of the Unknown Soldiers, containing remains of unidentified soldiers from World Wars I, II, and the Korean War, are protected by the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment or the Old Guard 24 hours a day. The changing of the guard ceremony is a moving tribute to them.

- **Website:** [arlingtoncemetery.mil](http://arlingtoncemetery.mil)

8 Facts ...

### **1. Arlington National Cemetery is located on Confederate General Robert E. Lee's confiscated estate.**

Days after resigning from the U.S. Army on April 20, 1861, to take command of Virginian forces in the Civil War, Robert E. Lee left the Arlington estate where he had married Mary Lee and lived for 30 years. He would never return. After Virginia seceded from the Union on May 23, 1861, Union troops crossed the Potomac River from the national capital

and occupied the 200-acre property and house that been built by George Washington Parke Custis, Mary's father and the step-grandson of George Washington. After Mary Lee, confined to a wheelchair, sent a representative instead of appearing personally to pay a \$92.07 tax bill, the government seized the property in 1864. With Washington, D.C., teeming with dead soldiers and out of burial space, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs formally proposed Arlington as the location of a new military cemetery. On May 13, 1864, 21-year-old Private William Christman of Pennsylvania, who had died of peritonitis, became the first military man buried at Arlington. To ensure the house would forever be uninhabitable for the Lees, Meigs directed graves to be placed as close to the mansion as possible, and in 1866 he ordered the remains of 2,111 unknown Civil War soldiers killed on battlefields near Washington, D.C., to be placed inside a vault in the Lees' rose garden.

## **2. A Supreme Court ruling in 1882 could have resulted in the exhumation of 17,000 graves.**

More than a decade after Lee's death, the Supreme Court ruled that the U.S. government had seized his estate without due process and ordered it returned to his family in the same condition as when it was illegally confiscated. If followed, the ruling could have required the exhumation of all of Arlington's dead, but instead Lee's son officially sold the property to Congress for \$150,000 in 1883.

## **3. The cemetery hosted the first national Memorial Day**

**commemoration in 1868.** In 1868, General John A. Logan, commander-in-chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, officially proclaimed May 30 as Decoration Day "for the purpose of strewing with flowers or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion." The first national commemoration took place at Arlington on May 30, 1868, with General Ulysses S. Grant in attendance and General James Garfield as the featured speaker. Decoration Day was eventually renamed Memorial Day.

## **4. Arlington is the only national cemetery to hold servicemen from every war in U.S. history.**

Although the first military burial at Arlington National Cemetery didn't occur until 1864, the burial ground holds the remains of those who fought in every war since the Revolution. In 1892, soldiers killed in the

Revolutionary War were re interred from a Georgetown cemetery, and casualties from the War of 1812 have been reburied at Arlington as well.

### **5. Three World War II enemy combatants are buried at Arlington National Cemetery.**

Scattered among America's honored dead are two Italian prisoners of war and one German prisoner of war captured during World War II. The three enemy combatants died in captivity in the Washington, D.C., area, and the Geneva Conventions required proper burials. With Arlington being the closest national cemetery, the men were buried there. In total, there are approximately 60 foreign nationals interred in Arlington, most being allied servicemen who perished in air disasters that included American soldiers.

### **6. Nearly 4,000 former slaves are buried at Arlington National Cemetery.**

After seizing Lee's estate, the federal government set aside acreage to be a model community for emancipated, freed and fugitive slaves. Freedman's Village included farmland, homes, a hospital, a school and a mess hall before shuttering in 1900. African-Americans who lived at the village were buried on the property, and their graves were incorporated into Section 27 of Arlington National Cemetery. Their headstones are inscribed with "citizen" or "civilian."

### **7. There may never be another addition to the Tomb of the Unknowns.**

Among the 5,000 unknowns entombed at Arlington are the unidentified remains of World War I, World War II and Korean War servicemen buried at the Tomb of the Unknowns. An unknown from the Vietnam War was entombed in 1984, but the remains were exhumed in 1998, positively identified by DNA testing as those of Air Force First Lieutenant Michael Joseph Blassie and reinterred at a military cemetery in Missouri. Advancements in DNA testing may mean that all future remains will be able to be positively identified and no future interments at the Tomb of the Unknowns will occur.

### **8. Soldiers plant flags in front of every tombstone on Memorial Day weekend.**

On every Memorial Day weekend since 1948, troops in the 3rd U.S. Infantry Regiment—the

Army's official ceremonial unit known as the "Old Guard"—have placed small American flags in front of all of Arlington's tombstones. Each flag is planted precisely one foot in front of a grave marker and perfectly centered. This year, 1,700 soldiers participated in the tradition known as "Flags-In." They planted approximately 220,000 flags on the Thursday evening before Memorial Day, and they will be removed at the holiday's conclusion

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