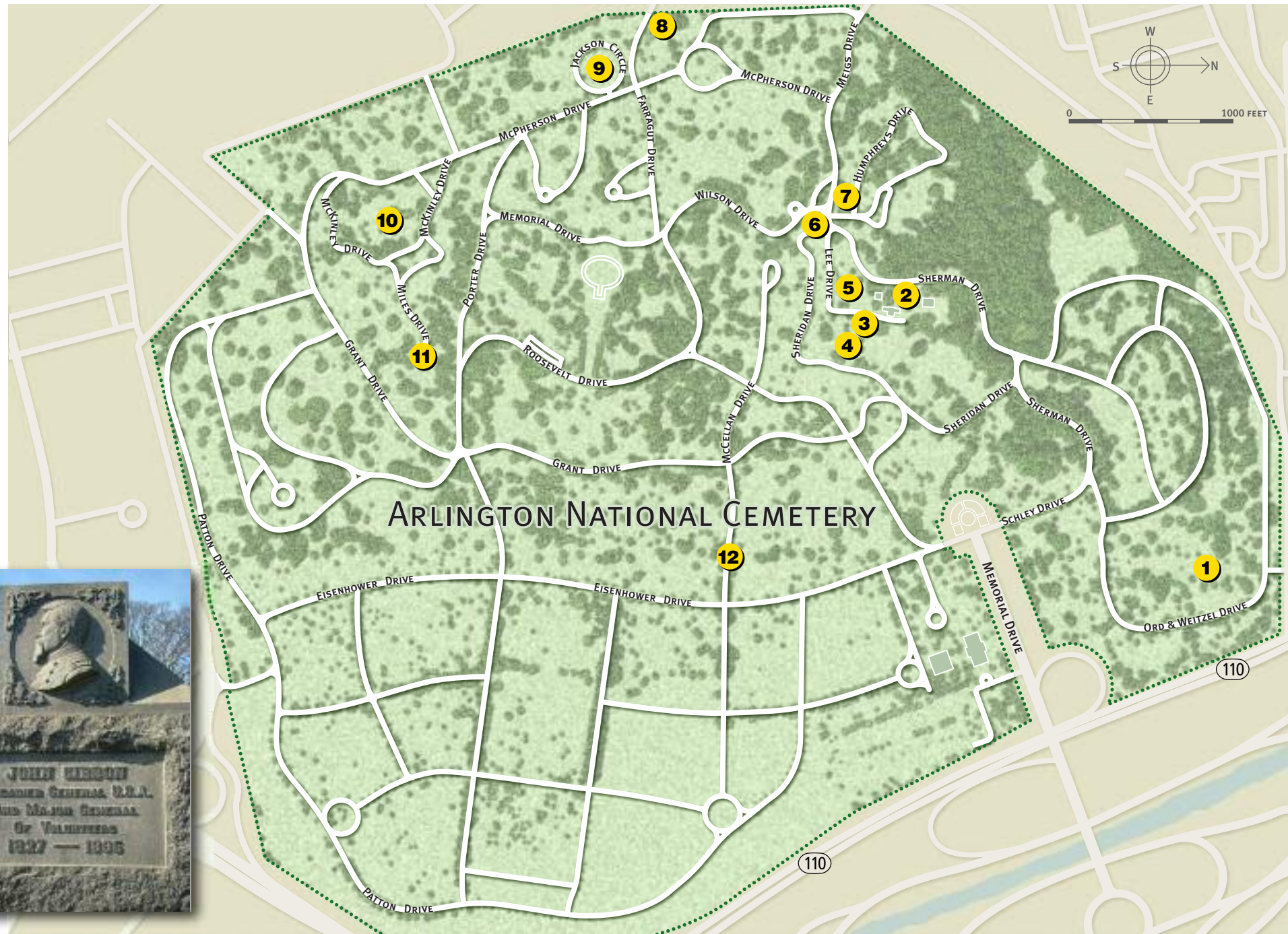


# Fame's Eternal Camping Ground

In the 1870s, having lost a son to the war that was now finally behind the nation, General Montgomery C. Meigs threw himself into the evolving design of Arlington National Cemetery. Under this accomplished engineer's supervision, what began as a handful of burials on land near Robert E. Lee's Arlington estate had grown into a formal cemetery, with thousands of interments and ornate memorials to those lost in the fight.

To this Meigs added a large red sandstone arch, honoring General George McClellan, that would serve as the cemetery's formal entrance. Unabashedly patriotic, Meigs emblazoned this splendid sentiment across its top: "On fame's eternal camping ground these silent tents are spread, and glory guards with solemn round the bivouac of the dead."

Today Arlington Cemetery is best known for its later burials, including the Tomb of the Unknowns and the graves of the Kennedys, Supreme Court justices and other notable Americans. And it is, of course, still an active cemetery. But this venerated historic site is home to the tombs and memorials of countless Civil War soldiers whose honor it was to be the first to be buried there. —Kim O'Connell



General Philip Kearny's remains were reinterred at Arlington in 1912, 50 years after his death.



Joe Wheeler's gravesite, marked by this obelisk, offers a nice vista of Washington, D.C.



Famed Iron Brigade commander John Gibbon is buried in Section 2, Lot 986.

**1.** A fitting first stop when visiting Arlington Cemetery is the site of its first military burial: Lost to disease in May 1864, Private William Christman of the 67th Pennsylvania Infantry was laid to rest beneath tombstone No. 19 in Section 27. This section contains the graves of dozens of other Civil War casualties, including U.S. Colored Troops and former Custis Estate slaves, as well as members of the famed Irish Brigade and heavy artillery troops.

**2.** More than 200 years old, Arlington House is currently undergoing restoration,

but visitors can still walk through the mansion, including the bedroom where Lee resigned from the Union Army on April 20, 1861. An outbuilding behind the main house features an exhibit on the Freedman's Village, a settlement for former slaves that was established on the cemetery grounds in 1864 (no trace of the actual village remains).

**3.** The grave of the war's most famous drummer boy, Johnny Clem, is visible as you approach the Lee mansion on foot from the south.

**4.** Down the hill from Clem's grave and an Iron Brigade memorial lies Confederate cavalry General "Fighting Joe" Wheeler, whose burial place is marked by a tall obelisk. The West Point-trained Wheeler is one of only a few Rebel officers buried at Arlington.

**5.** The Tomb of the Unknown Civil War Dead contains the remains of 2,111 soldiers, buried there in 1866 so their countrymen could, according to the tomb's moving inscription, "honor them as of their noble army of martyrs."

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**6.** The grave of popular Union General Philip Kearny, killed at the 1862 Battle of Chantilly, is marked with an immaculately carved monument—one of only two equestrian statues at the cemetery.

**7.** Montgomery Meigs is buried in a family plot alongside his son, John Rodgers Meigs, who lies beneath a figurative statue depicting his controversial roadside killing in the Shenandoah Valley in 1864.

**8.** Along the cemetery's back wall lies James Parks, whose tombstone's inscrip-

tion heralds his "long and useful life" first as a Custis Estate slave and later as a respected gravedigger at Arlington.

**9.** Moses Ezekiel's intricately chiseled Confederate Memorial is surrounded by the graves of Southern soldiers, whose tombstones are differentiated from others in the cemetery by their pointed tops.

**10.** Section 11 marks the site of Fort McPherson, one of the dozens of wartime defenses that surrounded Washington during the war. The road circling this

section mimics the star-like shape of the bastion-style fort.

**11.** A striking white cross indicates the resting place of Major Jonathan K. Letterman, the surgeon who developed a groundbreaking system of triage stations and field hospitals for the Union Army. Letterman was only 48 when he became ill and died in San Francisco in 1872.

**12.** Visitors should make a point of passing through the impressive McClellan Gate as they enter or exit the cemetery.