

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE ADMINISTRATION, 1933-PRESENT

As part of New Deal government restructuring, administration of Poplar Grove National Cemetery was transferred in 1933 from the Quartermaster General in the War Department to the National Park Service in the Interior Department. Although Poplar Grove legally remained subject to the same National Cemetery regulations under which it had been previously administered, the transfer to the National Park Service soon led to marked changes in the landscape. While there were plans for improvements and a relatively large number of new burials were made in the decades after 1933, overall during this period Poplar Grove National Cemetery saw little actual improvement and instead experienced a gradual eroding of its landscape. The work done by the War Department between 1925 and 1932 in fact remains the last major program of improvements to the cemetery landscape, aside from the acquisition of land outside of the inclosure wall completed in 1991.

Over the course of National Park Service administration, the character of Petersburg and its surrounding region changed considerably as suburban development became the dominant pattern of growth, as it did in most parts of the country. Although the lands of Petersburg National Battlefield experienced the greatest changes, Poplar Grove was not immune from these regional shifts. Suburban development around Petersburg began in large part after World War I, but by the time of World War II had not extended far from the city limits. [Figure 1.66] The rural area surrounding Poplar Grove up until this point remained largely unchanged since the founding of the cemetery eight decades earlier. The improvement of Vaughan Road into Route 675 during the 1930s, together with continued work on Flank Road as a parkway for Petersburg National Battlefield, foretold of things to come by improving automobile access to the area.

The major physical changes in the region occurred mostly in the decades following World War II as the city center declined and suburban development reached into the countryside. During this time, Dinwiddie County and Petersburg, together with Hopewell and Colonial Heights, were incorporated into the Richmond Metropolitan Area, linked by the Richmond & Petersburg Turnpike (later Interstates 95 and 86), completed by 1952.¹ To retain development that was occurring outside of its historic limits, the City of Petersburg extended its municipal boundaries south to Flank Road in 1964, approximately a quarter mile north of the cemetery. Since the new city boundaries did not limit development, suburban growth extended into Dinwiddie County, with houses often developed in strips along existing roads, such as Vaughan Road. [Figure 1.67] Several large industrial plants were built in the area, and in 1970 the Collier

Yard was enlarged on the old Weldon & Petersburg Railroad located east of the cemetery. Despite this development over the past four decades, the area immediately surrounding Poplar Grove today still retains active farms growing crops such as soybeans, grapes, and hay, and large tracts of wooded land.

EARLY NATIONAL PARK SERVICE STEWARDSHIP, 1933-1949

The National Park Service was created in 1916 to “promote and regulate the use of Federal areas known as national parks, monuments, and reservations”—mostly big national parks in the West—with a purpose to “conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and the wild life therein, and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”² In its expanded role as steward of national cemeteries beginning in the 1930s, the National Park Service was embarking on administration of a new type of resource with which it had virtually no prior experience. Although Poplar Grove still shared the same issues common to its sister national cemeteries that remained in the War Department, the National Park Service took a different course with regard to the landscape. Under park service administration, Poplar Grove’s landscape was altered in response to longstanding issues, notably maintenance, and according to plans by National Park Service designers in keeping with styles of landscape design characteristic of the national park system.

Administration & Use

On June 10, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed Executive Order No. 6166, which called for an extensive reorganization of Executive Agencies. Of relevance to Poplar Grove, Section 2 of this Executive Order specified the transfer and consolidation of all functions of military parks and national cemeteries under the War Department to the Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations (National Park Service) in the Department of Interior. Those parks and cemeteries deemed desirable to the work of the War Department were not transferred. The list of parks and cemeteries to be transferred, which included Petersburg National Military Park and Poplar Grove National Cemetery, was approved on July 28, 1933 under Executive Order No. 6228. Only eleven national cemeteries were transferred; most were retained by the War Department.³ Cemeteries selected for transfer were considered to be more significant for their history than for their use as active burial grounds, and were located near to national park units. Other national cemeteries transferred to the National Park Service in the mid-Atlantic region included Fredericksburg (as part of Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania County Battlefields Memorial National Military Park), Yorktown (as part of Colonial National Monument), and

Gettysburg (as part of Gettysburg National Military Park).⁴ Despite the administrative transfer, the National Park Service was still responsible for adhering to National Cemetery regulations as it carried out burials, maintenance, and improvements at the national cemeteries. While the National Park Service largely administered the national cemeteries on its own, there was some contact maintained, at least initially, with the War Department when major issues arose.⁵ Cemetery superintendents continued to complete the standardized Quartermaster General quarterly report forms through the 1930s, which were apparently forwarded to the War Department.⁶ Biannual inspections of Poplar Grove by the Office of the Inspector General in the War Department ceased with the administrative transfer in 1933.⁷ The National Park Service apparently maintained no formal system of regular outside inspections for the national cemeteries that addressed physical conditions, and there is no record of the War Department intervening in the park service management of Poplar Grove during this time.⁸

The administrative transfer of Petersburg National Military Park and Poplar Grove National Cemetery took effect on August 10, 1933. Both the park and cemetery were placed under the temporary administration of Colonial National Monument, located in the vicinity of Williamsburg approximately sixty miles to the east near the Chesapeake Bay. Colonial, established in 1930 under National Park Service administration, preserved colonial-era sites including the Revolutionary War battlefield at Yorktown (which surrounded the Civil War-era Yorktown National Cemetery) and the Jamestown settlement site. The relationship with Petersburg was probably created for two reasons: first, because Colonial National Monument was the closest pre-existing park unit to Petersburg; and second, because Colonial also administered Yorktown National Cemetery, which had been transferred from the War Department at the same time as Poplar Grove.⁹ Poplar Grove remained under the administration of Colonial's Acting Superintendent B. Floyd Flickinger until December 1935, when administration was shifted to Petersburg National Battlefield, which had been supplied with its first superintendent the previous September.¹⁰ From August 1933 until 1949, Poplar Grove retained its own superintendent, who reported to the park superintendent but also retained some autonomy. On September 5, 1933, Benjamin F. Moore was appointed the first cemetery superintendent under the National Park Service. As with War Department superintendents, Moore continued to be responsible for oversight of maintenance, cemetery staff, the burial record, and reporting.¹¹

Although the significance of Poplar Grove to the rest of park was its association with the Civil War, the cemetery remained open to new burials from veterans of other wars. The reason why new burials continued to be accepted despite the fact

that they had no association with the park's theme is not known. Perhaps the National Park Service was attempting to functionally maintain Poplar Grove as a typical national cemetery, or perhaps the burials had been reserved prior to the administrative transfer to the park. Burials continued in the earlier pattern of one or two per year with a few exceptions. [Chronological tally of burials in Appendix D] Between 1933 and 1949, a total of nineteen new graves were dug, with 1940 the most active year when there were five new burials.¹²

In contrast to the burial rate, visitation to Poplar Grove rose dramatically, with ten times the number of visitors during the mid-1930s as there were in the late 1920s. For the fiscal year from October 1934 to September 1935, 1,675 visitors were reported, in contrast to the 142 visitors recorded during the fiscal year of 1928-1929.¹³ This increase in visitation was most likely a result of increases in park visitation, and in particular those visitors who drove the Siege Line Tour along Flank Road, which was completed to Halifax Road and Fort Wadsworth in 1934.¹⁴ Poplar Grove was identified as a stop on the tour, but it was not until the completion of the Flank Road railroad underpass and extension of Flank Road to Vaughan Road in 1944 that the cemetery had a relatively direct connection to the route of the Siege Line Tour (via Vaughan Road). [Figures 1.68, 1.69]

During the first eight years of National Park Service administration, Poplar Grove and Petersburg National Military Park enjoyed an ample work force made possible through New Deal federal work-relief programs that addressed conservation and park development needs. Most of this labor was supplied through the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) agency created on March 31, 1933, which carried out its work by a labor force called the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC, whose name was later adopted for the ECW agency, was charged with "restoration of the country's depleted natural resources..."¹⁵ CCC camps were established at many national parks across the country, with the biggest parks often having six or seven camps. Petersburg National Military Park, still in its initial stages of development, was provided with one CCC camp. In July 1933, CCC Company 1364, consisting of approximately 173 enrollees, arrived from Camp Meade, Maryland and established Camp MP-2 (MP = Military Park) near Fort Stedman within the main tract of the park east of Petersburg. In 1939, the CCC began to convert itself for defense work and the Petersburg CCC camp (redesignated as Camp VA NP(D)-3) was closed in July 1942. During its seven years at Petersburg, the CCC worked on such tasks as planting trees, clearing underbrush and stabilizing earthen fortifications, general maintenance, and building park roads and trails. In the vicinity of Poplar Grove, the CCC built Flank Road, and in the Federal Left Flank cleared underbrush from Fort Fisher and planted grass on Fort Welch, among many other projects.¹⁶

On September 18, 1933, Colonial Superintendent Flickinger wrote to Poplar Grove Superintendent Moore: “As I told you the day I was at your Cemetery, Mr. Colston [superintendent of the CCC camp] told me that he would be glad to furnish you with a detail of Conservation boys to help you with the clean-up work at your Cemetery...”¹⁷ That fall, a CCC crew of five worked one day per week at Poplar Grove. Over the life of the CCC camp at Petersburg, a crew of between three and five men worked at Poplar Grove at various times during the month, with the schedule dependent on the season and whether there were any major projects underway. With this labor force, funded outside of the cemetery appropriation, the only regular employee maintained at Poplar Grove was the superintendent.¹⁸ In addition to the assistance of the CCC, the cemetery also benefited from the system-wide resources of the National Park Service, such as the Branch of Plans and Designs, which developed a master plan for the cemetery between 1937 and 1941.

As was characteristic at most National Park System units, maintenance and funding declined at Poplar Grove during World War II, following the termination of the CCC program and through the post-war years into the late 1940s. Poplar Grove continued to maintain its own staff (the superintendent) and funding appropriation until 1949.¹⁹

Initial Maintenance & Changes to the Grave Markers

Given the number of improvements the War Department had undertaken at Poplar Grove during the late 1920s and early 1930s, the cemetery landscape was probably in good condition upon its transfer to the National Park Service. In his first quarterly report to the National Park Service, cemetery superintendent Benjamin Moore described his work during the month of September 1933: “Cutting out 18-inch border at roots of ivy [on inclosure wall], trimming ivy and shrubbery, removing obstructions from drains, cutting grass and working flowerbeds.”²⁰ None of this reflected any unusual or pressing problems. As park service personnel began to inspect the cemetery in the ensuing months, however, problems were identified. The first addressed was tree work. In February 1934, CCC crews removed seven large elms, one maple, and one linden. A report to the Chief Forester of the National Park Service during this same month identified that the majority of the trees in the cemetery were in poor condition and that a large percentage would continue to be lost annually. It found the elms doing poorly and recommended that none be planted in the future (the report did not mention the discovery of Dutch elm disease in Ohio four years earlier). The report also recommended a program of feeding, pruning, and spraying, and new plantings.²¹

The second major problem initially identified by park administrators was maintenance of the gravestones and the lawn around them. Park administrators apparently felt that the significant amount of labor required for mowing the eight acres of cemetery lawn and trimming around the nearly 5,600 grave markers was a problem, despite the use of the power mower acquired just two years earlier in 1931 and the availability of CCC crews. With a new superintendent and a new agency, there was apparently no institutional memory with which to judge the effort needed to mow the lawn. In addition to the lawn mowing, there was also the added work needed to clean and align the grave markers, many of which were purportedly leaning as cemetery superintendent Walter Pearce had reported in the spring of 1932.²² Although Pearce wrote that he would begin work on the grave markers, he probably only corrected a small number in the year prior to the National Park Service transfer.

In addition to these maintenance issues, park officials may have considered the grave markers aesthetically unpleasing for what had become, at least administratively, a park landscape. During the 1930s, National Park Service designers and planners generally emphasized harmonizing built features with the natural landscape, an effort coined “landscape naturalization.”²³ The geometric pattern and whiteness of Poplar Grove’s grave markers would have been incompatible with such an approach to the landscape. The headstones and blocks—in 1934 just fifty-eight years old and from the Victorian era not widely appreciated at the time from an aesthetic perspective—were probably seen as lacking historic significance—at least in their upright position.

The administrative culture of the National Park Service at the time might also have been a factor that affected the treatment of the grave markers. In the early 1930s, the park service had minimal experience with preserving historic, cultural landscapes. With a few exceptions such as Colonial National Monument, it was only with the administrative transfer in 1933 that the park service acquired battlefields and other historic sites. In addition, it was not until 1935 that Congress passed the Historic Sites Act, which declared historic preservation to be national policy and directed the National Park Service to “restore, reconstruct, rehabilitate, preserve, and maintain historic or prehistoric sites, buildings, objects, and properties of national historical or archeological significance.”²⁴

In October 1933, Colonial Acting Superintendent Flickinger had received word from Arthur E. Demaray, Associate Director of the National Park Service, that “As far as funds are available, improvements in both Yorktown and Poplar Grove National Cemeteries should be made...We hope that you will give this matter your prompt attention.”²⁵ Yorktown was similar to Poplar Grove with the

standard features including a brick inclosure wall, white marble tablets and blocks for gravestones, an iron rostrum, and a Meigs-plan lodge. Demaray mentioned work needed on the Yorktown rostrum (for which he used the civilian term “pavilion”), utility building, and flagpole. Within a few months of Demaray’s October 1933 letter, Acting Superintendent Flickinger had approved a far more extensive so-called improvement at Yorktown. As that cemetery’s superintendent reported: “All headstones and square block markers are being set flush with the surface of ground as a maintenance economy.”²⁶

Superintendent Flickinger may have been inspired to reset the grave markers by the advice of professional cemetery administrators and in particular by current trends in modernizing old cemeteries. In the June 1925 edition of the journal *Park and Cemetery*, an article appeared on addressing problems associated with old tablet-type headstones that often leaned out of alignment. The article cited a solution employed at Greenwood Cemetery, a rural cemetery in Rockford, Illinois, in which the tablet headstones were taken off their bases and reset in the ground. According to the author, “With their neatly kept turf, the flat stones make a very presentable appearance as ledger memorials.”²⁷ [Figure 1.70] Another article on the subject appeared in the July 1931 edition of *Park and Cemetery*, citing the same benefits, as well as the “very greatly reduced” costs of lawn maintenance made possible when headstones are reset at lawn level.²⁸ Whether Superintendent Flickinger was aware of these articles is not known. The War Department had not, however, adopted this approach toward the maintenance of its national cemeteries.

While economy of maintenance was apparently an important consideration in the decision to reset Yorktown’s headstones as ledger stones, Acting Superintendent Flickinger and other park service administrators may have also considered the change to be an aesthetic improvement. This is suggested by Flickinger’s recommendation made in December 1933 to remove the Victorian-era iron rostrum, which he reported was “a foreign note in the landscape.”²⁹ The landscape that Flickinger was referring to was probably not the cemetery alone, but also the park’s Revolutionary War-era battlefields that surrounded the cemetery. The National Park Service Branch of Plans and Designs concurred with Flickinger’s recommendation and the rostrum was removed in c.1934. If the rostrum was a foreign element in the larger restored Colonial-period landscape, Flickinger must certainly have also considered the marble headstones foreign as well.³⁰

With the improvement work underway at Yorktown, Superintendent Flickinger turned to Poplar Grove to implement the similar changes, although he apparently did not recommend the removal of the rostrum and did not specify changes to

other vertical elements in the landscape—the gun monuments, flagstaff, and tablets. In January 1934, Flickinger contacted the War Department for their concurrence on the project. On January 16, 1934, he received the following telegram from Hillory A. Tolson in the Assistant Director's Office of the National Park Service: "[To] Mr. B. Floyd Flickinger, Supt. Colonial National Monument, Yorktown, Virginia. Retel 15h stop War Department advises satisfactory lower headstones stop If done expense this office. Tolson."³¹

During February and March 1934, CCC crews sunk Poplar Grove's 3,355 blocks and cut the approximately 2,320 headstones, laying the upper sections flush in the ground as ledger stones.³² The headstones were set over the graves (exact location not known) and were simply dug into the ground rather than set on a foundation, thus being subject to settling and heaving. Unlike the larger headstones illustrated in *Park and Cemetery*, the relatively small government headstones could become quickly covered by grass and did not have a marked presence in the lawn. The change to the landscape was dramatic: when looking across the cemetery, the headstones and blocks had become largely invisible. [Figure 1.71] The marble bottoms from the headstones were temporarily stacked in the cemetery, and in the following summer were sold to local resident Oswald E. Young who purchased the two-foot slabs for \$45 to construct a house nearby (the Tombstone House, as it is known locally, was featured during the 1930s in Ripley's *Believe it or Not.*)³³ As with Yorktown, the change to Poplar Grove's grave markers was done both for reasons of maintenance economy and for aesthetics—apparently to create a more park-like appearance to the landscape.³⁴

While the grave marker project was apparently not well planned or documented, its underlying reasons came out in ensuing years in response to heated public criticism. In November 1935—on the eve of the cemetery's administrative transfer from Colonial National Monument to Petersburg National Battlefield—cemetery superintendent Moore recounted the public's criticism directly to National Park Service Director Arno Cammerer:

There is no written complaint of record in this cemetery, but there has been many verbal expressions from tourists and visitors to the cemetery for the past year relative to two important features, namely, the section of unimproved road leading to the cemetery [Vaughan Road]; and to the present horizontal position of the headstones....People who have visited here frequently during the past years remark that when the stones were in an upright position arranged with uniformity in circles around the flagstaff there was an attractiveness and beauty of the grounds which is lost in the present

*position of the stones. Many of the more than sixteen hundred visitors to the cemetery during the past year have expressed themselves in various ways on this subject. Some were disappointed in not being able to get a picture of the grave and headstone of their relative, due to the stone being lowered. One party expressed regret that the stones could not have been left standing at least during the life of the present generation. An elderly school teacher in the community who had brought her pupils on each Memorial Day and decorated the graves for years past expressed deep regret at the change in the stones. Another lady said that for this same reason she did not desire her veteran husband interred here. Numerous other expressions in clued the opinion that the sentimental appeal of the upright headstones will be hard to overcome.*³⁵

Criticism from the Daughters of Union Veterans of the Civil War, based in Washington, D. C., reflected the public's perception that the National Park Service was changing the historic character of its national cemeteries to make them conform to park standards. In a 1937 complaint to her Congressman, Daughter Dorothea Dix Tent wrote:

*Also, since the National Cemeteries, in which repose many thousands of our heroic dead have been taken from the jurisdiction of the War Department and transferred to the Interior Department along with the National Parks [military parks], are being made into parks. One, Poplar Grove National Cemetery, Petersburg, Virginia, has already been denuded of all the grave markers...and the cemetery is now literally a park. We are also asking you to use your influence against destroying these National Cemeteries where sleep the Nation's Honored Dead.*³⁶

The Congressman in turn asked Director Cammerer to address the complaint. In his response, Cammerer confirmed not only that the stones had been leveled for maintenance reasons, but that indeed they had also been leveled for aesthetic purposes:

*...Headstones have not been removed from the graves; they have simply been placed in a horizontal position flush with the ground. This was done for a dual purpose: to improve the appearance of the cemetery and to facilitate neat grass cutting. We feel that the result is very satisfactory.*³⁷

While the grave stone leveling may have improved the appearance of the landscape in the eyes of some park officials, the project in the end did little to ease maintenance. In 1939, Petersburg Superintendent O. F. Worthington, Jr., wrote, in response to continuing complaints about the grave markers, that lawn maintenance at Poplar Grove "...is admittedly a problem which demands a disproportionate share of our funds and time. The lowering of the stones contributes to the burden, for it is difficult indeed to keep the wire grass from covering them horizontally..." Worthington noted that the grass around the stones had to be cut by hand, as it had when the stones were upright. In another problem ensuing from the project, he noted that some stones were being chipped by the mower as it passed over them (some stones had heaved due to the freeze/thaw cycle).³⁸ Despite the public criticism and lack of practical benefit, no changes were made to the stones during this time. There were, however, several proposals, including one in 1939 to set the headstones in a concrete collar, intended to prevent the grass from creeping over the stones and prevent the mowers from chipping them.³⁹

The following year, in May 1940, the War Department advised the National Park Service that it could furnish new, rectangular flat stones for all of the graves, and Director Arno Cammerer recommended to cemetery Superintendent Moore that "...it might be well to take advantage of their generous offer while the markers are available. This would mean a complete coverage of new headstone markers flush with the ground...The [War] Department seems most anxious to make these replacements at this time."⁴⁰ In 1939, the park had already begun to use these new headstones to mark new graves at Poplar Grove, using a standard design for flat marble markers issued in 1936 by the War Department for use in private cemeteries.⁴¹ Colonial National Historical Park (National Monument) took the War Department up on its offer and replaced all of the markers at Yorktown National Cemetery in c.1940. [Figure 1.72] The project was not, however, implemented at Poplar Grove, probably because cemetery Superintendent Moore disagreed with Director Cammerer and advocated instead that the original upright tablet style be furnished because the flat markers were "hard to maintain and source of criticism."⁴²

Landscape Management during Early Years of Petersburg Administration

The massive change to Poplar Grove's grave markers was not undertaken as part of any planned program of improvements. It was only in June 1934, after the stones were laid flush, that a plan was outlined with the title "Six-Year Advance Program of Federal Construction for Poplar Grove National Cemetery." This plan, totaling \$3,700, recommended tree surgery and protection; repair of the

lodge and cemetery wall (inclosure wall); construction of a concrete basement for a water tank; repair of the driveways; and “landscaping cemetery grounds.”⁴³

Following the administrative transfer from Colonial National Monument to Petersburg National Military Park in December 1935, several projects were undertaken to improve the appearance of the landscape in keeping the general intent of the Six-Year Advance Program. In 1936, an ECW (CCC) project was proposed for seeding and sodding.⁴⁴ The following spring, CCC crews planted 115 red cedars, mostly as screening to create more enclosure around the cemetery. The plantings followed a plan developed by the National Park Service Branch of Plans and Design that was finalized in January 1937. [Figure 1.73] This plan documented existing mature trees (the young trees planted in 1931 were not shown) and specified planting cedars around the perimeter of the inclosure wall primarily on the west and south-west sides to screen the Blaha Farm and its barnyard and chicken house to the southwest of the cemetery. A post and barbed-wire fence was built on the property line to protect the red cedars from livestock. [Drawing 4] Another grouping of red cedars was planted alongside the lodge and utility (restroom) building to screen the view of this utilitarian area from the cemetery proper. Other red cedars were scattered along the inside of the wall and across the cemetery lawn as specimens. After the planting, CCC crews worked through the summer of 1937 on repairing and repointing the inclosure wall with flush joints, at which time some or all of the sandstone pilaster caps may have been replaced with pre-cast concrete caps. [Figure 1.74] Finally, in 1939 the old well house in the service yard was removed and a new cover installed, and an overhead utility line was brought in from the Blaha farmhouse (southwest of the cemetery) to provide electrical power to the lodge.⁴⁵

As these improvements were being planned and implemented, the National Park Service was developing a master plan for Petersburg National Battlefield, including Poplar Grove National Cemetery, developed by the Branch of Plans and Design and completed in c.1941. The master plan included two graphic plans for Poplar Grove. One was a more technical plan, and the other an illustrated rendering of the cemetery showing its tree-lined approach road and a detail of the inclosure wall.⁴⁶ [Figure 1.75] The master plan focused on documenting existing conditions while apparently proposing no changes. It illustrated an overall informal, idealized rural landscape of lawn and scattered trees, characteristic of landscape design in the park service and longstanding efforts to minimize maintenance. The plan did not specify restoration of landscape features, such as the brick gutters and drives, shrubs, the sylvan hall, or the circular turn-around.

The technical plan contained a detailed inventory of all trees and shrubs, including small trees set out by the War Department in 1931 and the red cedars planted in 1937, showing a fairly even distribution across the cemetery and the alley along the approach road.⁴⁷ [Listing of tree species inventoried in Appendix H] The plan created a cataloguing system for the trees, identifying each by number and listing species, caliper, and condition. It was probably at this time that each tree was marked by a circular metal tag with the catalog number. The plan also showed buildings and structures, English ivy on the inside of the wall, the arborvitae hedge around the service yard, and woods to the north, east, and south sides. It did not show small-scale features such as the gun monuments, tablets, and benches. The plan also included a note that there were eighty-four burial plots available in the cemetery. This number was most likely derived from plans to fill in walks and empty plots within rows where trees had been removed. The War Department took the same approach to providing additional burial plots within other Civil War-era national cemeteries in the region.⁴⁸

Although the CCC program was discontinued in 1942, several maintenance projects were completed during World War II, including removal of diseased and dead trees in 1942, and replacing drain pipes in 1943.⁴⁹ Aside from these two projects, there were few changes to Poplar Grove's landscape through the remainder of Superintendent Moore's tenure that ended upon his retirement in 1949.

MISSION 66 ERA, 1949-1975

While there were sporadic efforts to spruce up the cemetery during the three decades following Superintendent Moore's retirement in 1949, overall maintenance and improvements were sustained at a bare minimum, despite the influx of funds for park development. It was during this period that many of the small-scale features in the cemetery landscape were lost, leaving it with a barren and abandoned feeling, especially without the grave markers in a visible position and with a decreasing number of specimen trees and shrubs.

Planning and development at Petersburg National Military Park during this time were carried out largely through the structure of the National Park Service's MISSION 66 program and Parkscape, its successor into the early 1970s. The MISSION 66 program was approved by Congress in 1956 as a ten-year improvement program to be completed upon the fiftieth anniversary of the National Park Service in 1966. It was intended to make up for increases in visitation and deterioration in park infrastructure that had occurred since World War II, and to replacing the earlier cycle of yearly budgets that had hindered post-war planning and construction. Although MISSION 66 was comprehensive

in its scope, it in effect emphasized building construction. At Petersburg, the highlight of the MISSION 66 program was a new visitor center and overpass on Route 36 in the main part of the park between Petersburg and Hopewell, completed in 1967. Closer to Poplar Grove, the park completed Flank Road through the Federal Left Flank in 1963, following a CCC access road. These improvements were detailed in a new park master plan completed in 1965.⁵⁰

Aside from the MISSION 66 improvements, the years between 1949 and 1976 were a time of significant change for the park, renamed Petersburg National Battlefield in 1962. Visitation increased dramatically, reaching more than a half million annually by 1976, following renewed interest over the previous decade attributed to the Civil War centennial. While the park was enjoying increased public support, it also divested itself of the original system of outlying tour roads due in large part to suburban development pressures. In 1973, the park transferred ownership of Flank Road east of Vaughan Road to the City of Petersburg [see Figure 1.67]. The recently completed section to the west within Dinwiddie County was retained by the National Park Service.⁵¹ At Poplar Grove, the same suburban development trends led to changes in the setting of the cemetery.

Administration & Use

Upon Benjamin Moore's retirement in 1949, Petersburg National Military Park decided to abolish the position of cemetery superintendent. Maintenance of the cemetery was subsequently absorbed by the existing staff of Petersburg National Military Park, supposedly without increase in appropriation comparable to cemeteries that remained within the National Cemetery System.⁵² While the Poplar Grove lodge was used for park staff housing, the cemetery for the first time lacked daily on-site supervision until February 1957, when the park appointed a full-time caretaker for the cemetery. The caretaker was assisted by other park maintenance staff as needs arose. Yet with only three full-time maintenance workers during the 1950s for the entire park, labor remained at short supply.⁵³

Despite the problems with maintenance and funding, the park prepared studies and developed plans during this period for managing Poplar Grove. In 1954, the park's historian, Herbert Olsen, completed the first history of the cemetery, for which a "Historical Land Status Map" and updated "Burial Location Plan" were prepared by the regional Design & Construction Division. The Burial Location Plan was the first graphic to show the location of the graves by number.⁵⁴ For its MISSION 66 prospectus, finalized in the spring of 1957, the park included an item for the repair of the cemetery's graves and markers, at a projected cost of \$17,500.⁵⁵

The National Park Service continued to accept new burials through the 1950s, despite that these interments shared no association with the park's Civil War theme. The years between 1950 and 1957 in fact witnessed a record number of burials since the first new veteran graves were dug in 1896. During this eight-year period, twenty-one new burials were made, with a high of five burials in 1956. [Chronological tally of burials in Appendix D]. These new burials were concentrated in the row at the east end of Division F, and were also scattered throughout the cemetery, apparently in extra spaces within the rows that had been occupied by trees, but not filling in walks and drives as had been suggested in the 1941 master plan [see Drawing 4]. In 1957, the last non-Civil War burial was made in the cemetery.⁵⁶ After this point, the park closed the cemetery to new burials, but remained open for the reinterment of Civil War remains and burials in a few previously reserved grave sites—although the cemetery would not receive such a reinterment for another four and a half decades. In May 1957, the War Department concurred with park's decision, and Poplar Grove was removed from the list of active cemeteries.⁵⁷ Despite being closed to new burials, Poplar Grove continued to receive relatively high visitation, reaching upwards of 7,000 annually by the early 1970s due primarily to its association with Petersburg National Battlefield.⁵⁸

Landscape Changes

In April 1957, eight years after the retirement of the cemetery's last on-site superintendent, Roy Appleman, Petersburg National Military Park Staff Historian, wrote a very critical letter on the condition of Poplar Grove to the Regional Director of the National Park Service:

...I do not see how the National Park Service can escape the responsibility of carrying out a rather extensive rehabilitation of the cemetery in the near future. Of all the work that needs to be done at Petersburg, this needs most to be done. In fact, I have seen very few jobs to do anywhere in the park system that I think rank in urgency with this one. The Poplar Grove Cemetery is now in a condition that approaches a disgrace. The cemetery is relatively uncared for, the headstones cannot be found because twenty odd years ago they were cut off and laid flat on the ground and have since become covered with dirt and grass, and the speaker's stand [rostrum] is badly in need of repair and maintenance...On the occasion of my second visit to the cemetery...I saw two old women looking around in the grass for headstones—where none were to be seen. They were buried under dirt and grass. Occasionally a stone can be found, and I observed that in the back part

*of the cemetery quite a number were visible in whole or in part, but only a small portion I would estimate of the total number...*⁵⁹

Appleman was writing the Regional Director in response to the park's recently released MISSION 66 prospectus, with its item for repair of the graves and markers. Apparently in response to Appleman's letter, the amount was raised from \$11,200 to \$17,500 (\$76,000 to \$119,000 in 2005 dollars), but still did not include any substantial improvements or new construction. On April 22, 1957 just a few weeks after Appleman's letter, National Park Service Assistant Director, Jackson E. Price received harsh criticism on the condition of Poplar Grove from a Mrs. Arvo N. Niemi of Chicago, who had been in touch about the matter with her Senator. In this letter, she reinforced Appelman's observations and the longstanding public criticism over the grave stones:

*...The neglect was evident in every inch of the cemetery. From the flagpole, the 'Stars and Stripes' were hanging limply and in ribboned tatters. Walking the width and length there were thousands of grave markers sunk below the ground level. As if this were not enough, the layers and layers of grass had completely obliterated from recognition the majority of Union graves. This was not true of the graves of World War I and World War II....I only wish that I could concur in your statement that the Poplar Grove Cemetery's condition was greatly superior to that indicated in my letter to Hon. Senator Potter. It was the extreme contrast, the woeful neglect of the final resting place of those who gave their lives in the Battle of the Crater and Petersburg that incensed me...*⁶⁰

Within weeks of Mrs. Niemi's letter, the park began improvements at the cemetery. By early May of 1957, work was underway on a new entrance sign, cleaning and painting the entrance gate, tree trimming, and a general leveling and clean-up of the grounds. The work included addressing the condition of the grave markers in fulfillment of the MISSION 66 prospectus. The park did not heed Staff Historian Roy Appleman's suggestion, made in his letter to the Regional Director, that "...the only course is to raise the headstones and set them upright like they were originally."⁶¹ Rather than use new stones, Appleman had recommended that the old stones be set with iron pins in new foundations, at an estimated cost of \$2.00 per headstone. Instead, the park simply raised the existing stones above grade. [Figure 1.76] Despite previous problems with settling, the headstones were apparently not raised on a firm foundation, but rather just set on the ground. At this time, the park probably also replaced a number of broken stones and blocks with the contemporary rectangular flat marble markers. By early June, the rehabilitation work was, according to Superintendent Bernard

Campbell, “progressing nicely.” Much of the work had been completed by Memorial Day, in preparation for a ceremony carried out by the park in cooperation with Fort Lee, at which time American flags were placed at each grave.⁶²

It was probably in 1957, as part of this rehabilitation project, that the park installed three aluminum-frame signs and revised the organization of the cemetery plan. The old iron tablets, with the four-line verses, cemetery regulations, and other notices, were most likely removed at the same time. The three new signs were installed at the flagstaff: a small sign probably with a visitor registry, flanked by two larger signs, one with the burial register, the other the revised plan with interpretive text and a rendering of Poplar Grove Church. [Figure 1.77] In revising the cemetery organization, the park was apparently trying to make it easier for visitors to locate graves, an effort that had been difficult even with the headstones in a visible condition. The new organization did away with the division and section designations and reordered the cemetery into twenty “Blocks” identified by Roman numerals [Figure 1.78] Ten of the blocks incorporated more than one section, and a new block (Block XX) was created for the row of recent burials on the east end of Division F (Block XIX). In addition to reorganizing the divisions and sections, the new plan identified the radiating drives (except for the main drive) by letters A through F. Small iron tablets with the letter designation were installed at the head of the drives on the innermost circular drive [see Figure 1.77 and Drawing 4].⁶³

Over the course of the two decades following the 1957 improvements, little additional improvement work was accomplished. The park continued to maintain most of the features remaining from the War Department era, including the four gun monuments (1869), settees (c.1878), and tall flagstaff anchored by four guy wires (1931) [see Figure 1.77]. Although there was apparently no replacement vegetation planted, the park did also maintain the existing trees and shrubs, including the arborvitae hedge around the service yard, and the boxwood Maltese cross hedge (c.1872) in front of the lodge. [Figure 1.79] The gravestones, despite the work done in 1957, continued to sink into the ground and by the early 1970s, many had once again become obscured by grass and soil. Cars often drove over the graves along the main entrance drive when passing in opposite directions.⁶⁴

While there were few built changes within the cemetery walls, the situation was different beyond the walls on the surrounding property that was owned by the Odom family and known by the 1970s as “Beau Vista Farms.”⁶⁵ Lester Grady and Roberta E. Odom had acquired the ninety-acre farm, owned during the Civil War

by the Flower family, from Russell and Audrey Garner in 1954.⁶⁶ A 1969 aerial photograph of the farm documents Poplar Grove National Cemetery and the acreage of the farm's numerous fields. [Figure 1.80] Two years later in 1971, Lester Grady died, and he was buried in a small cyclone-fence enclosed family plot established on the south side of the approach road. That same year, a second burial was made in the cemetery for Nellie E. Jones.⁶⁷

Following the death of her husband, Roberta Odom began to subdivide rear portions of the farm, while retaining the prime agricultural land in production. In July 1972, Mrs. Odom conveyed to other family members the cemetery plot which was, according to the deed, "made expressly for the purpose of providing to the heirs of Lester Grady Odom, deceased, and their descendents, grantees herein, a place for maintaining a family cemetery."⁶⁸ Around the same time, Mrs. Odom subdivided two lots along the north and east sides of Poplar Grove National Cemetery and sold them to Anthony Blaha and Ronald Peterson, each of whom built single-family houses on the property, within seventy-five feet of the east wall. [Figure 1.81] To access these houses, a driveway was built off the cemetery approach road, along the edge of an old field bordering the west side of the cemetery, extending along the full length of the cemetery's north side, and turning south to follow the cemetery's east wall.⁶⁹

The construction of the Blaha and Peterson houses, along with the access drive, had a marked impact on the setting of the cemetery. Along the north side of the cemetery, most of the woods were cleared for the access drive, leaving a thin hedgerow that opened up views of the drive, power line, and wetlands and fields to the north [see Drawing 4]. Woods were also cleared around the two houses, bringing the houses into view from the cemetery and breaking up the wooded enclosure along the east side of the cemetery. [Figure 1.82] Despite this development, the rural setting of the cemetery, visible from Vaughan Road across the fields of the Odom farm, remained largely intact.

During the early 1970s, probably during the tenure of Petersburg Superintendent Larry L. Hakel (1972-1975) and around the time that the park gave up ownership of Flank Road, the National Park Service completed work at the cemetery that effectively stripped the landscape of most of its remaining small-scale features and shrubs dating from the War Department era. Three of the four gun monuments, the settees, and the Maltese cross hedge were removed, and the flagstaff was reduced in height from about eighty feet to forty and its guy wires were removed. The well in the service yard was removed and replaced by a new well further to the west. This work was probably completed in 1974, when the park was considering work on the approach road. At the time, the park was questioning its responsibility for maintaining the approach road, which was

private property owned by Roberta Odom but subject to a permanent easement (right-of-way) provided for in the 1877 deed expanding the cemetery boundaries. The park's questions were probably due to budget limitations—limitations that may have also led to the removal of the cemetery features. The questions were also most likely driven by uncertainty over liability for the right-of-way, given that the Blaha and Peterson families were using the approach road to access their new homes.⁷⁰

EPILOGUE, 1975-PRESENT

Following the appointment of Wallace B. Elms as the new superintendent of Petersburg National Battlefield in August 1975, the park began to plan for improving Poplar Grove's buildings and landscape and preserving the rural character of the cemetery setting in the face of development pressures.

In November 1976, the park received approval for a "Development/Study Package Proposal" for cemetery improvements based on a Resource Management Plan approved the prior September. The purpose of this project was to "Improve the appearance and enhance the preservation of Poplar Grove National Cemetery." The project, budgeted at \$321,000, was intended largely as a rehabilitation of the cemetery. There were no plans to restore lost features or to reset the grave markers to their former upright position. The park at this point lost its institutional memory, and no longer understood the history of the landscape, except the general outline of development included in Herbert Olsen's 1954 history. In addition to the improvement work, the proposal also recommended acquisition of additional land around the cemetery, amounting to five acres, to provide the minimum area needed for maintenance of the inclosure wall and to place the approach road in government ownership. The reasons for the project, according to the park's proposal, were based on the deteriorated condition of the cemetery:

The Service has been severely criticized for not meeting its obligations at Poplar Grove. The headstones have gradually sunk over the years until many are no longer visible. The brick wall that encloses the cemetery is in danger of collapse. Trees and shrubs no longer agree with the planting plan of 1937 and the cemetery generally looks shabby...Unless this project is funded the cemetery will continue to present a shabby appearance and the historic resource will continue to slowly deteriorate through benign neglect. Existing funds can only maintain this facility at existing levels, accordingly the need to upgrade the facility is critical.⁷¹

A scope of work was soon developed by the National Park Service's central design office, the Denver Service Center. In 1977, Livas & Associates Architects of Norfolk, Virginia, developed comprehensive design drawings. The project schedule called for final design in 1979 and construction the same year.⁷² Details of the project included setting the headstones and blocks one and one-half inches above grade on concrete foundations to prevent subsidence; installing granite paving around the flagstaff and one remaining gun monument; closing the main drive to vehicles by placing bollards east of the service yard; installing an interpretive wayside near the service yard; repairing the inclosure wall, lodge, stable, restrooms, and rostrum; and redesigning the entrance and service yard into a temporary visitor parking lot, with the long-term goal of creating parking outside of the cemetery. [Figure 1.83] Plantings were only proposed around the new parking area, pending further study on the historic plantings and possible disturbance that tree plantings could cause to the gravesites.⁷³ Funding for the improvements had been allocated through the final design stage, but nothing had been secured for actual construction by March 1978.⁷⁴ Probably due to lack of funds, the project was never built.

While the improvements stalled, the park did progress the land acquisition component. In July 1977, Superintendent Wallace Elms sent the Mid-Atlantic Regional Director sketches of the proposed minimum and optimum land acquisitions necessary to access the inclosure wall, secure the approach road, and preserve the setting of the cemetery. The optimum acquisition, amounting to over eighteen acres, included the approach road, field to its north, private access drive, and the Blaha and Peterson houses [see Figure 1.81]. The minimum area, amounting to five acres, included a strip around the cemetery, the approach road, and the old field between the west wall of the cemetery and the private access drive. Elms closed his letter urging acquisition of the property "...in the near future before additional development makes acquisition impractical or at least much more costly."⁷⁵ By the following November, the park Regional Office had decided to support the optimum proposal, and a package of legislative support materials was completed in February 1978 for acquisition of 17.74 acres at an estimated cost of \$295,000. The proposal, submitted at the same time as another proposal for acquisition of the 1,200-acre Five Forks Battlefield, outlined the park's intention to secure the cemetery approach road, prevent construction of additional houses next to the inclosure wall, and provide an "appropriate open space setting and buffer zone befitting the historicity and commemorative dignity of the final resting place for the Civil War dead interred therein."⁷⁶

The acquisition stalled for a number of years, apparently due in part to a proposal for a housing development on the land and probably also to lack of funds.⁷⁷ By 1987, the park's new superintendent, Frank J. Deckert, settled with Mrs. Roberta

Odom on a much reduced proposal for a 3.7-acre parcel that would include the land between the west wall of the cemetery and the private driveway to the Blaha and Peterson houses, and a strip along and including a section of the approach road and Odom cemetery, extending one hundred feet south of the road. [Figure 1.84] The remainder of the approach road extending out to Vaughan Road would remain in private ownership subject to the park's right-of-way. Mrs. Odom offered the property as a donation, in return for the park's commitment to maintain her family's small cemetery plot. According to Deckert, the 3.7-acres "should provide an excellent buffer zone on the west side of the cemetery and a portion of it could be used for a small parking lot to accommodate visitors."⁷⁸ The regional office agreed with Deckert's proposal, and following completion of a survey in January 1990, a contract for donation between Roberta Odom and the National Park Foundation (a charitable organization working in partnership with the National Park Service) was finalized on September 5, 1990. The contract reserved forever the right of family members to access the cemetery, but did not specify how the cemetery would be maintained. The park did assure Mrs. Odom that it was the intent of the National Park Service to maintain the cemetery to National Park Service standards.⁷⁹ On April 24, 1991, Roberta Odom signed the deed for the property, and soon after, the National Park Foundation conveyed the property to the federal government to become part of Poplar Grove National Cemetery.⁸⁰

As Superintendent Deckert had suggested, a small visitor parking area was built in c.1995 [actual date?] on the Odom tract on the north side of the approach road, adjoining the cemetery gateway. Beyond the parking area were young, dense woods of loblolly pine, which had grown up since the driveway to the Blaha and Peterson houses had been built in c.1972. [Figure 1.85] The growth of these woods, together with another lot of successional woods at the intersection of the approach road and Vaughan Road, obscured the views of the cemetery and approach road from the west that had characterized the landscape since the Civil War. The entire approach to the cemetery had in fact undergone a marked change. Although still bordered by cultivated fields, the allee of roadside trees, first planted in 1879 and last replanted in 1931, had largely disappeared, replaced by an informal edging of volunteer red cedar, red maple, and other deciduous trees. Additional successional vegetation outside the southwestern wall had grown up around the scattered red cedars planted in 1937, further changing the once open views looking out from the cemetery west and south to the surrounding farmland.

Within the cemetery walls, improvements since the 1970s have been mostly related to maintenance. The drive and approach road were last repaved in 2003,

using a sand (for the approach road and parking lot) and pea gravel (main drive and service drive) top-coat to provide the character of gravel. More substantial has been the continued loss of specimen trees and shrubs and loss of woods to the north of the cemetery during a 1994 storm. Few new trees and shrubs have been planted. The park has maintained the grave markers by cleaning the surfaces, leveling those that have sunk, and trimming the surrounding grass. Despite this, the flush position of the grave stones continues to be recognized as a major deficiency. In 2002, the park received preliminary approval for a comprehensive rehabilitation project to: “Remove those conditions which impair the ability of the American public to safely access, understand, enjoy and reverently commemorate Poplar Grove National Cemetery as the final resting place...” for Civil War soldiers.⁸¹ Addressing the condition of the gravestones is a primary objective of this project. Since little research had been done on the history of the cemetery landscape, the park funded this cultural landscape report as the first step in planning for restoring the historic character of Poplar Grove to the standards of Civil War-era national cemeteries.

Poplar Grove National Cemetery, with its thousands of graves, landscape design that reflects the systematic national effort to honor the fallen, and its current interpretive and commemorative use, is a landscape with enormous historic significance for its associations and design. While long closed for new burials, the cemetery remains open for reinterment of Civil War remains that are discovered in the Petersburg area. In 2003, for the first time since 1957, two burials were made in the cemetery—reinterment of three remains from the Peeble’s Farm and Ream’s Station battlefields.⁸² Such active funerary uses continue however subtly the cemetery’s connection with the Civil War and the National Cemetery System. Such associations are, however, most evocatively seen in the landscape, which, properly treated, will convey in perpetuity the tragic consequences of the Civil War and the unprecedented national response to honor the fallen.

ENDNOTES

¹ U.S.G.S. Petersburg 15 minute quadrangle map, 1952.

² Preamble to The National Park Service Organic Act (16 U.S.C. 1 2 3, and 4), 25 August 1916 (39 Stat. 535).

³ During the 1930s, as the War Department was transferring the cemeteries to the National Park Service, it was also establishing several large new cemeteries near major metropolitan areas. The War Department was reorganized as the Department of Defense in 1949, and in 1973, most of the national cemetery system was transferred to the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs). In 1998, the name of the National Cemetery System was changed to the National Cemetery Administration. Department of Veterans Affairs, “Fact Sheet: The National Cemetery Administration” (Unpublished paper, April 2004).

⁴ Monro MacCloskey, *Hallowed Ground: Our National Cemeteries* (New York: Richards Rosen Press, 1968), 123-124. City Point National Cemetery was probably not transferred to Petersburg National Military Park because it was still an active cemetery. The numerous national cemeteries near Richmond National Battlefield Park, including Richmond, Seven Pines, Glendale, Cold Harbor, and Fort Harrison, were not transferred to the Department of Interior most likely because Richmond National Battlefield Park was not created until 1936, three years after Executive Order 6166.

⁵ On August 3, 1933, Jas. H. Laubach, Lieutenant Colonel, Quartermaster Corps, wrote a memo to the Quartermaster of the Third Corps Area, Baltimore, concerning the administrative transfer, in which he stated: "It is assumed that from conversations had with representatives of the Interior Department, your advise and recommendations will be sought for some months to come. It is the desire of this office that such assistance as can be rendered be promptly furnished." Aside from the Quarterly Reports, the only example of NPS contact with the War Department regarding the maintenance of Poplar Grove occurred in 1934 over the question of lowering the grave markers.

⁶ Herbert Olsen, "Poplar Grove National Cemetery History" (Unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service, 31 May 1954), 63; Quartermaster General National Cemetery Quarterly Report forms completed for Poplar Grove, 1933-1937, Poplar Grove National Park Service Records, NARA II, box 2704.

⁷ The last Inspector General inspection of Poplar Grove found in the National Archives is from May 1928 (Robert G. Goetz, Survey of Poplar Grove to Commanding General, Third Corps Area, May 18, 1928; survey made on May 11, 1928, RG 159, Records of the Inspector General, Entry 11, Office of the Inspector General Annual Inspection Reports 1912-1939, Cemeteries, Box 294, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland). The last War Department inspection report was made in 1931 (A. B. Kaempfer, Corps Area Inspector General, Third Corps Area, 28 October 1931, RG 92, Entry 1891, Box 1773, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence, Geographic File, 1922-1935, National Archives II). The function of the Inspector General by this date had apparently been transferred to the Office of the Quartermaster General (Corps Areas).

⁸ No record of War Department intervention was found in RG 79, the Poplar Grove NPS records at National Archives II. No post-1933 Poplar Grove records were found in RG 92, Office of the Quartermaster General at National Archives II.

⁹ Colonial National Historical Park, "Creation of Colonial National Historical Park," online article at <http://www.nps.gov/archive/colo/Ythanout/colonhp.html>, accessed 15 September 2006.

¹⁰ R. M. Holmes, Chief Clerk, Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, to William H. Green, Superintendent, Poplar Grove National Cemetery, 26 August 1933, Floyd B. Flickinger to J. Walter Coleman, Acting Superintendent Petersburg National Military Park, 16 December 1935, RG 79, Records of the National Park Service, Entry 31, Military Parks, National Cemeteries, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II], box 2704; Lee A. Wallace, "A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956" (National Park Service History Division, 1983), 89.

¹¹ Olsen, 64, 88. The cemetery superintendent's autonomy from the park superintendent is suggested by the direct correspondence in with the Director of the National Park Service during the 1930s and 1940s, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, boxes 2703-2704.

¹² Poplar Grove burial register, digital Access table compiled by Betsy Dinger-Glisan.

¹³ Benjamin Moore, Poplar Grove superintendent to H. C. Bryant, Assistant Director National Park Service, 11 October 1935, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704; Poplar Grove Quarterly Report for the period ending June 30, 1929, RG 79, Entry 5, Records of the War Department Relating to National Parks, 1892-1937, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland, box 50.

¹⁴ Roger Charles Sherry, "Cultural Landscape Report for the Federal Left Flank and Fish Hook Siegeworks" (National Park Service Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, October 2004), 57.

¹⁵ Richard Bartlett, "Preliminary Checklist of Records of the NPS Relating to the Civilian Conservation Corps Camps and Works Progress Administration Work Camps" (Unpublished paper, National Archives, June 1945), 3, NARA II.

¹⁶ Wallace, 128; Sherry, 55, 58, 95-96.

¹⁷ B. Floyd Flickinger, Superintendent Colonial National Monument, to Poplar Grove Superintendent Benjamin Moore, 18 September 1933, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

¹⁸ Quarterly Reports for Poplar Grove National Cemetery, for period ending 31 December 1933, 30 June 1934, 30 September 1935, 31 March 1937, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704. Although the 1937 quarterly report was the last report filed at the National Archives, it is likely that CCC crews continued to assist at Poplar Grove until the camp was closed in the spring of 1941.

¹⁹ Olsen, 88.

²⁰ Benjamin Moore, Poplar Grove Quarterly Report for the Period Ending September 30, 1933, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704. No documentation was found on the exact location of the flowerbeds. They were located near the lodge.

²¹ Charles E. Shevlin, Forester, to Chief Forester, Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, 13 February 1934, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

²² "...Headstones, Is in poor alinement, Many of them was never aligned, and to line them now will be a job, Those that need lowering, raising and striating up will be attended to soon." [sic] Superintendent Walter Pearce, quarterly report ending March 31, 1932, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

²³ This was part of a broader style known as the "NPS rustic style." Linda Flint McClelland, *Presenting Nature: The Historic Landscape Design of the National Park Service, 1916- to 1942* (Washington: Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places, 1993), 153.

²⁴ Historic Sites Act of 1935 (49 Stat. 666; 16 U. S.C. 461-467).

²⁵ Associate Director A. E. Demaray to Acting Superintendent B. Floyd Flickinger, 27 October 1933, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

²⁶ Cemetery superintendent R. G. Anderson, Quarterly Report for Yorktown National Cemetery," for quarter October 1, 1933-December 31, 1933 [assumed date], RG 79, Entry 11, NPS Central Classified File, 1933-49, National Cemeteries, NARA II, files for Yorktown National Cemetery [hereafter, Yorktown NPS records, NARA II]. Another reason for leveling the grave markers at Yorktown may have been to avoid needed repairs. A big windstorm had swept across Yorktown in August 1933, probably leading to damaging of the grave

markers, similar to the impact from the 1915 tornado Poplar Grove. The grave markers at Fredericksburg National Cemetery, which was also transferred to NPS, were not laid flat.

²⁷ “Resetting Leaning Headstones,” *Park and Cemetery*, volume 35, no. 4 (June 1925), page 107.

²⁸ Ray F. Wyrick, “Modernizing Old Sections: Redevelopment Work in Greenwood at Rockford,” *Park and Cemetery*, volume 4, no. 5 (July 1931), 142-143.

²⁹ Acting Superintendent Flickinger to Director National Park Service, 26 December 1933, Yorktown NPS records, NARA II.

³⁰ National Park Service Arno Cammerer to Superintendent Colonial National Monument, 3 January 1934, Yorktown NPS Records, NARA II. The brick inclosure wall was probably not considered foreign to the colonial landscape, as brick was the favored building material at Colonial. The Second Empire-style Meigs lodge was, however, probably considered another foreign object in the landscape; a new lodge was specified as part of a six-year improvement plan. This plan was not implemented and the original lodge remains today. At an undetermined date, the tall War Department-era flagstaff was also removed from the center of the cemetery and replaced with a small flagpole near the cemetery entrance that was not visible from the surrounding Revolutionary War-era battlefields.

³¹ A transcript of the telegraph was contained in a letter from Raleigh C. Taylor, Acting Superintendent Petersburg National Military Park, to Director NPS, 1 August 1939, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

³² NPS Associate Director A. E. Demaray to Mr. Roy Hatten, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 13 January 1936, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704. Demaray cited the date of the work in response to a complaint by Mr. Hatten. No records of the grave marker project and CCC labor were found during research in the National Archives.

³³ Acting Superintendent B. Floyd Flickinger to Director NPS, 14 July 1934; R. C. Jennings, Acting Associate Director NPS, 23 July 1934 (authorizing sale of slabs), Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704. The house built with the headstones is today known as the tombstone house.

³⁴ Manning C. Voorhis, Junior Historian and J. Walter Coleman, Acting Superintendent, Petersburg National Battlefield, to Verne E. Chatelain, NPS Acting Assistant Director, 3 January 1936, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

³⁵ Cemetery superintendent Benjamin F. Moore to Director NPS, 6 November 1935, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

³⁶ Edward W. Patterson, 30th District Kansas, House of Representatives, to Arno B. Cammerer, Director, NPS, 13 April 1937, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

³⁷ NPS Director Arno B. Cammerer to Honorable Edward Patterson, House of Representatives, 26 April 1937, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

³⁸ Superintendent O. F. Worthington, Jr., “Report of Conditions in the Poplar Grove National Cemetery,” c. July 13, 1939, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

³⁹ Quarterly report for period 31 March 1935 through 31 March 1944, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704. At Yorktown National Cemetery, the leveled blocks and headstones were removed and replaced with

new rectangular granite markers designed to lie flat. The work was probably done after World War II. Similar stones were installed at Poplar Grove for interments made in the 1950s.

⁴⁰ NPS Director Arno Cammerer to Superintendent, Poplar Grove National Cemetery, 23 May 1940, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

⁴¹ U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "History of Government Furnished Headstones and Markers," <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hist/hmhist.asp> (accessed 29 September 2006). The earliest known rectangular, flush headstone is at grave 1745, date of death 1939.

⁴² Cemetery Superintendent Moore to Director NPS, postal telegraphy, 28 May 1940, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

⁴³ Superintendent Benjamin Moore, "Six-Year Advance Program of Federal Construction of Poplar Grove National Cemetery," 5 June 1934, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

⁴⁴ W. J. Endersbee, Associate Supervisor Emergency Conservation Work, Proposal, ECW project no. 74, 16 April 1936, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

⁴⁵ Poplar Grove Quarterly Reports for periods ending 31 March 1937, 30 September 1937, 30 June 1939, Poplar Grove Records, NARA II, box 2704. The cedars are shown on N. A. Buckley, "Poplar Grove National Cemetery, Part of the Master Plan Petersburg National Military Park, Virginia" (detailed planting plan), c.1941, drawing PETE 325 8041, National Park Service Technical Information Center, Lakewood, Colorado [hereafter, "NPS TIC"]. The precast concrete caps are specified on W. J. Carnes, "Proposed Improvement of Brick Wall at Poplar Grove National Cemetery," 29 May 1937, with notation "Job completed September 7, 1937," drawing PETE 325 2056, NPS TIC.

⁴⁶ Buckley, detailed planting plan, c.1941; N. A. Buckley, "Poplar Grove National Cemetery, Part of the Master Plan Petersburg National Military Park, Virginia" (rendered plan), c. 1941, drawing PETE 325 2073, NPS TIC. No textual materials from the master plan were found.

⁴⁷ Although this plan inventoried each tree, the key on the table that indicated species and size only inventoried the mature trees.

⁴⁸ Other national cemeteries in Virginia, including Cold Harbor, City Point, Glendale, and Fort Richmond, have filled in walks and drives with burials during the twentieth century. Personal observation by author, 2006.

⁴⁹ Poplar Grove Quarterly Reports, for the period ending June 30, 1942 and June 30, 1943, Poplar Grove NPS Records, NARA II, box 2704.

⁵⁰ Martin Conway, "History of Petersburg National Battlefield, 1957-1982" (National Park Service History Division, 1983), 4-5; Sherry, 60-61. The 1965 master plan and MISSION 66 documents were not examined for this project. According to correspondence from Superintendent Bob Kirby, the master plan consisted primarily of construction schematics. E-mail, Bob Kirby to Betsy Dinger-Glisan, 18 September 2006.

⁵¹ Conway, 18, 23, 81, 85.

⁵² Olsen, 63.

⁵³ NPS Assistant Director Jackson Price to Arvo Niemi, 3 May 1957; Staff Historian Roy Appleman to Regional Director, 1 April 1957, RG 79, Series A 58, Poplar Grove National Cemetery, NARA II, [hereafter, Poplar Grove NPS Records A58, NARA II], box 537. No information was found on how long this caretaker position was maintained.

⁵⁴ NPS Design & Construction Division, Region One, "Burial Location Plan, Poplar Grove National Cemetery" (undated, c.1954), Drawing PETE 325-2037, NPS TIC; NPS Design & Construction Division, Region One, "Historical Land Status Map, Poplar Grove National Cemetery (30 April 1954), Drawing PETE 325-2038, NPS TIC.

⁵⁵ NPS Assistant Director Jackson Price to Arvo Niemi, 3 May 1957, , Poplar Grove NPS Records A58, NARA II, box 537.

⁵⁶ Poplar Grove Burial Record, Access database.

⁵⁷ Lieutenant Colonel John J. Flynn, Quartermaster Corps, Memorial Division, to Bernard Campbell, Petersburg National Military Park, 8 May 1957, Poplar Grove NPS Records A58, NARA II, box 537; NPS, "Quarterly Summary of Interments and Available Grave Sites," Poplar Grove, January-March 1958: Known, 2,205; Unknown: 4,110; total: 6,315. Reservations of Grave Sites Made During Month: 0. Total Grave sties remaining available: 0. "Remarks: There are seven reservations of which four are in the same gravesite with their spouse; and three are adjoining gravesites." It is not known if these reservations were subsequently used.

⁵⁸ Poplar Grove visitation statistics, 1973-1977, in "Legislative Materials to support Acquisition of Additional Acreage for Poplar Grove National Cemetery a part of Petersburg National Battlefield" (Unpublished report, NPS Mid-Atlantic Region, finalized 10 February 1978), 8, NPS TIC, PETE D-58.

⁵⁹ Appleman to Regional Director, 1 April 1957.

⁶⁰ Mrs. Arvo N. Niemi, Chicago, to NPS Assistant Director Jackson E. Price, 22 April 1957, Poplar Grove NPS Records A58, NARA II, box 537.

⁶¹ Appleman to Regional Director, 1 April 1957.

⁶² Bernard Campbell, Superintendent, Petersburg National Military Park, to Regional Director, 7 June 1957; clipping on Memorial Day Service at Poplar Grove, Richmond *Times-Dispatch*, 30 May 1957, Poplar Grove NPS Records A58, NARA II, box 537.

⁶³ Plan of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, c.1957; a grayscale version of this plan was also created, located in the Petersburg National Battlefield administrative records for Poplar Grove, file 1975-1977, Hickory Hill administrative offices, Petersburg [hereafter, "Poplar Grove administrative records"]. The numbering on this plan was probably based on the c.1954 "Burial Location Plan" that was included in the 1954 History of Poplar Grove by Herbert Olsen (this c.1954 plan does not show the block designations). The small iron tablets identifying the radiating drives appear in a 1968 photograph by Fred Bell in the park administrative files for Poplar Grove. No evidence prior to 1957 of the letter designation to these drives, or to the block designations, was found.

⁶⁴ National Park Service, "Task Directive: Cemetery Improvements at Poplar Grove, Petersburg National Cemetery" (Denver Service Center, finalized 1 March 1978), NPS TIC, document PETE D-36.

⁶⁵ Memorandum, Ray Blaker to Superintendent Wallace B. Elms, 16 December 1975, Poplar Grove NPS Records A58, NARA II, box 537.

⁶⁶ Deed, Russell W. Garner and Audrey E. Garner to L. G. Odom and Robert E. Odom, 24 February 1943, copy in Poplar Grove administrative records.

⁶⁷ Existing grave stones in Odom cemetery: JONES, E. Everett 1885-1981, Nellie E. 1885-1971; ODOM, Roberta E. 1914-1993, L. Grady 1891-1971.

⁶⁸ George Whitman, Jr., "Plat Showing .054-Ac Parcle Surveyed for Mrs. L. G. Odom," 29 July 1972, Poplar Grove administrative records; Deed, Robert E. Odom to Heirs of Lester Grady Odom, Book 157, page 313, Dinwiddie County land records.

⁶⁹ William B. Redmon, NPS Regional Solicitor to Associate Regional Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, 8 March 1974: "...It is assumed that the local landowner who built an access road leading to the right-of-way [entrance road] two years ago...", Poplar Grove administrative records.

⁷⁰ Memo, Petersburg Superintendent Larry Hakel to Regional Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, 11 February 1974, Poplar Grove administrative records. The removed features were photographed in 1968 by Fred Bell, Poplar Grove administrative records; and do not appear in photographs taken in 1978, "Legislative Materials to support Acquisition of Additional Acreage for Poplar Grove National Cemetery (Petersburg National Battlefield, 10 February 1978), File PETE D-58, NPS TIC.

⁷¹ National Park Service, "Development/Study Package Proposal, Cemetery Improvements at Poplar Grove," approved 8 November 1976 and finalized 2 August 1977, in "Task Directive: Cemetery Improvements at Poplar Grove, Petersburg National Cemetery" (Denver Service Center, finalized 1 March 1978), NPS TIC, document PETE D-36.

⁷² Task Directive, 1978, 1.

⁷³ Livas & Associates, "Miscellaneous Improvements, Poplar Grove Cemetery" (set of eight plans, cover sheet dated 15 December 1977), Drawing PETE 325-41008, NPS TIC.

⁷⁴ Task Directive, 1978, 1, 4.

⁷⁵ Superintendent Wallace B. Elms to NPS Regional Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, 1 July 1977, Poplar Grove administrative records.

⁷⁶ "Legislative Materials to support Acquisition of Additional Acreage for Poplar Grove National Cemetery a part of Petersburg National Battlefield" (Unpublished report, NPS Mid-Atlantic Region, finalized 10 February 1978), 8, NPS TIC, PETE D-58.

⁷⁷ Included in the "Legislative Materials" package is a communication from Senator Bill Bradley's office dated 29 October 1980 requesting the status of a "housing project proposed—next to Petersburg N.B.P."

⁷⁸ Superintendent Frank J. Deckert to Regional Director, Mid-Atlantic Region, 9 September 1987, Poplar Grove administrative files.

⁷⁹ In a letter to Mrs. Odom dated 8 March 1990, prior to the contract, Superintendent Frank Deckert wrote: "While we cannot obligate future funds or services in any of the documents that enable your donation to

occur, you can be assured that it is the intent of the National Park Service (NPS) that the donated property (including your family cemetery) will be maintained to NPS standards.” Poplar Grove administrative records.

⁸⁰ “Individual Offer to Donate Real Property” (contract) signed by National Park Foundation on 5 September 1990, in letter, Alan A. Rubin, President, National Park Foundation to Gerlad L. Kirwan, Chief, NPS Land Resources Division, 6 September 1990; Memorandum, Gerald L. Kirwan to Superintendent, Petersburg National Battlefield, 9 April 1991, Poplar Grove administrative records. This 1991 letter has a note on it saying Mrs. Odom signed the deed on April 25, 1991.

⁸¹ “Restore Facilities, Resources & Character Defining Elements to National Cemetery Standards—POGR,” PMIS 89424, created 8 April 2002, updated 24 January 2005, Petersburg National Battlefield.

⁸² Poplar Grove burial register; Ben Bagwell, “Poplar Grove Buries Three Unidentified Union Soldiers,” Petersburg *Progress-Index*, 27 May 2003, online at www.progress-index.com, accessed 19 September 2006.

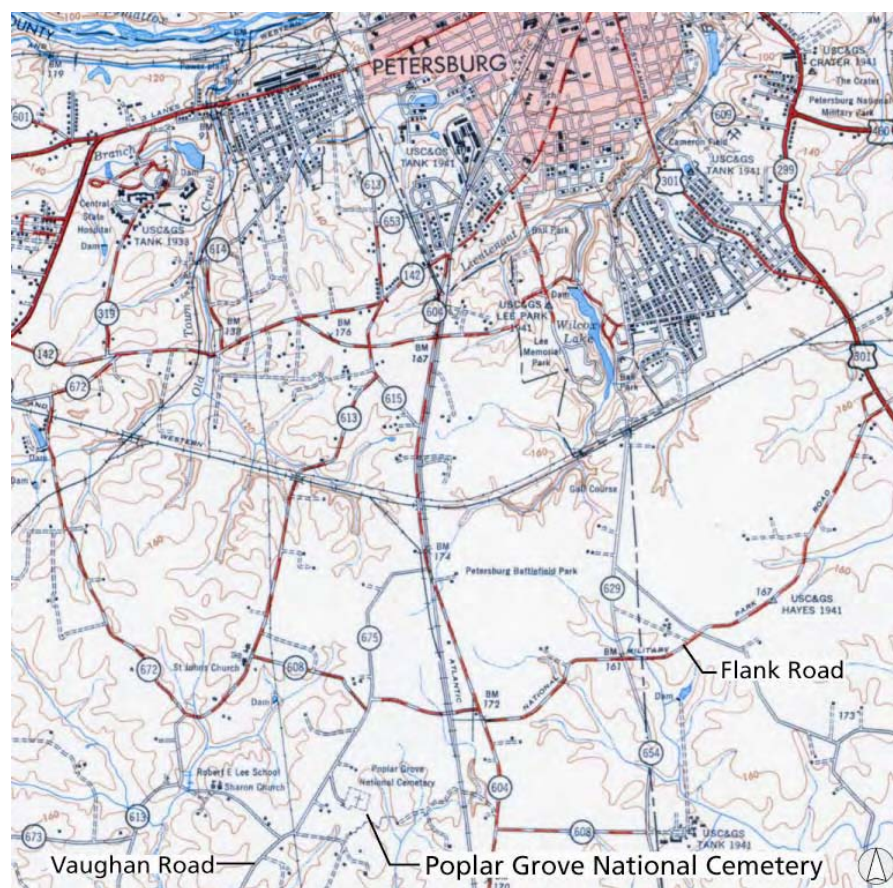


Figure 1.66: Roads and development in region surrounding Poplar Grove, 1946. Vaughan Road is shown as Route 675. This map does not show Petersburg National Battlefield lands. U.S.G.S. Petersburg 15 minutes series quadrangle, 1946 (surveyed by Army Map Service 1941), annotated by SUNY ESF.

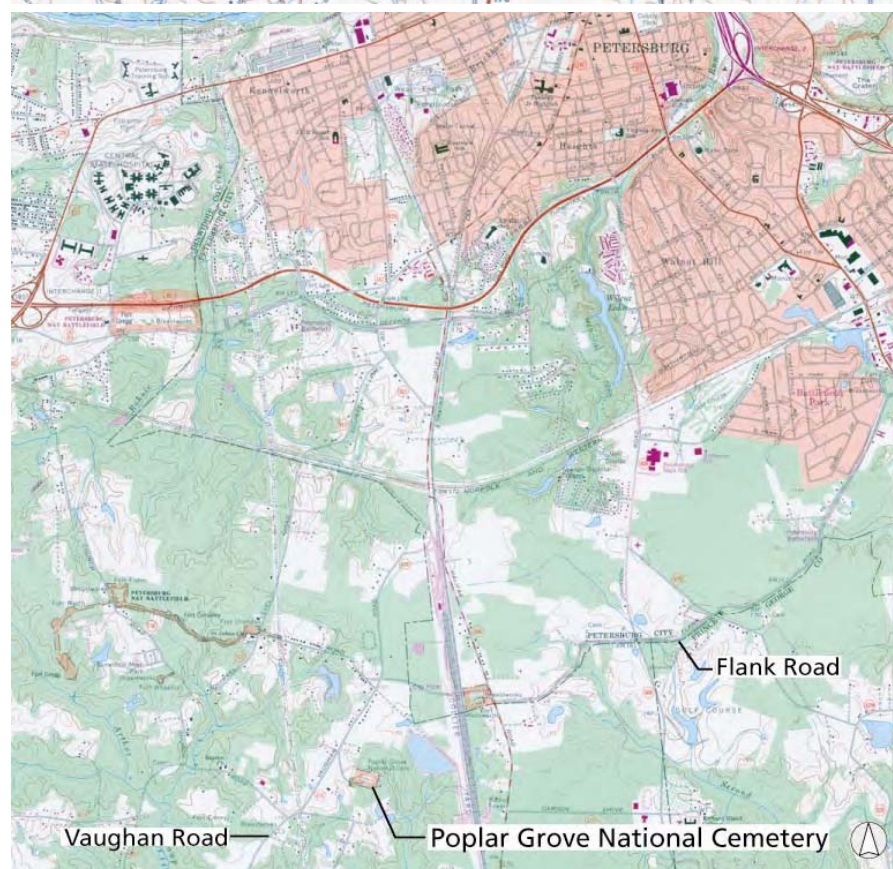


Figure 1.67: Roads and development in region surrounding Poplar Grove, 1987. Note numerous houses built along roads surrounding the cemetery. U.S.G.S. Petersburg 7.5 minute series quadrangle, 1969 updated to 1987 (updates shown in purple), annotated by SUNY ESF.



Figure 1.68: The Flank Road (Siege Line Tour) railroad underpass near Fort Wadsworth, located a half mile north of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, nearing completion in 1944. The section of Flank Road to the east was completed in 1934. Petersburg National Battlefield.

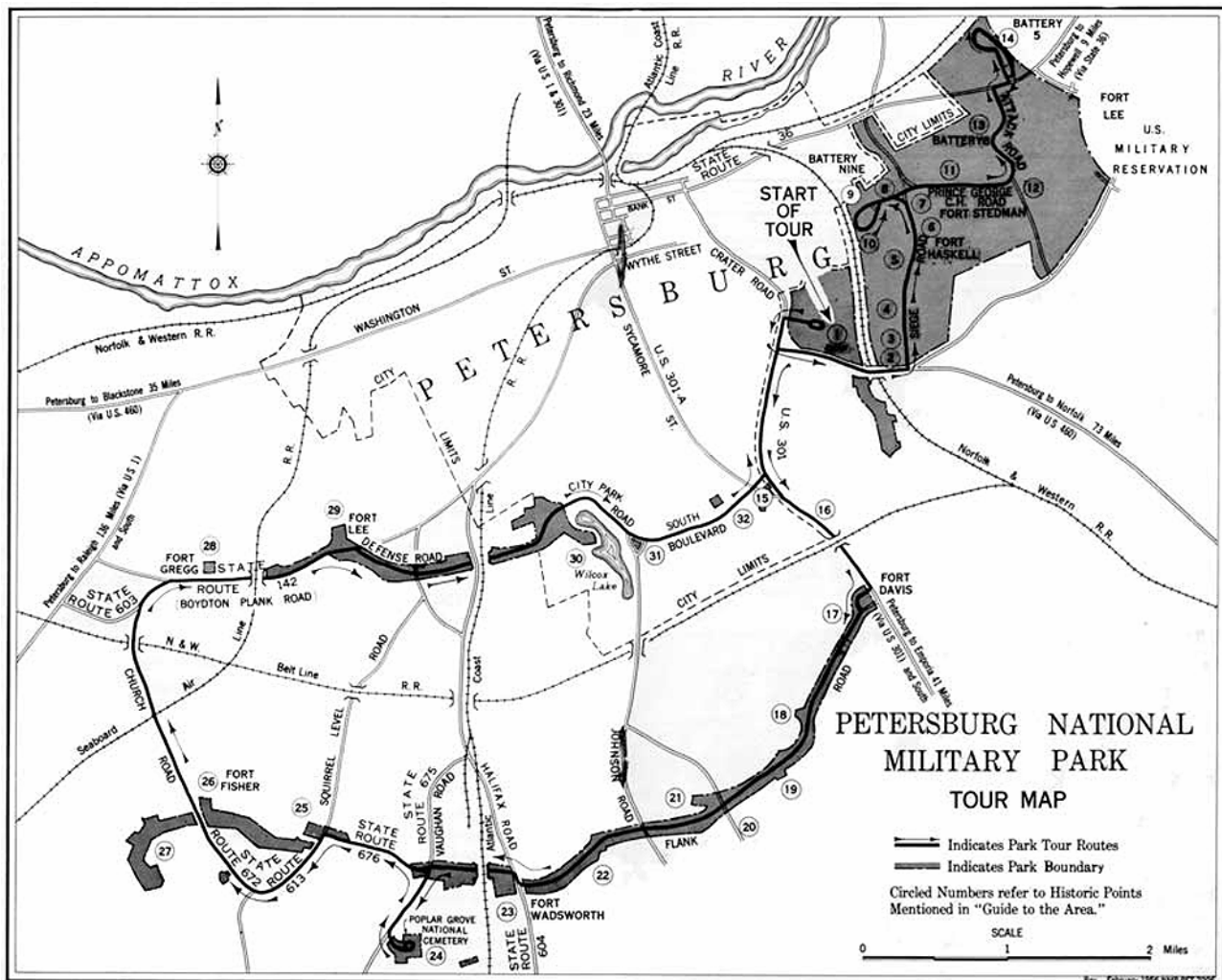


Figure 1.69: Tour map of Petersburg, c.1951, showing the relationship of Poplar Grove (stop #24) to the Siege Line Tour (Flank Road). The upper route was known as the Defense Line Tour (Defense Road); areas in gray are lands of Petersburg National Battlefield. Flank Road was completed to Vaughan Road via the railroad underpass in 1944. The portion of Flank Road west of Squirrel Level Road was not built until the 1960s. Richard Wayne Lykes, *Petersburg Battlefield* (Washington D. C.: National Park Service Historical Handbook Series 13, 1951).

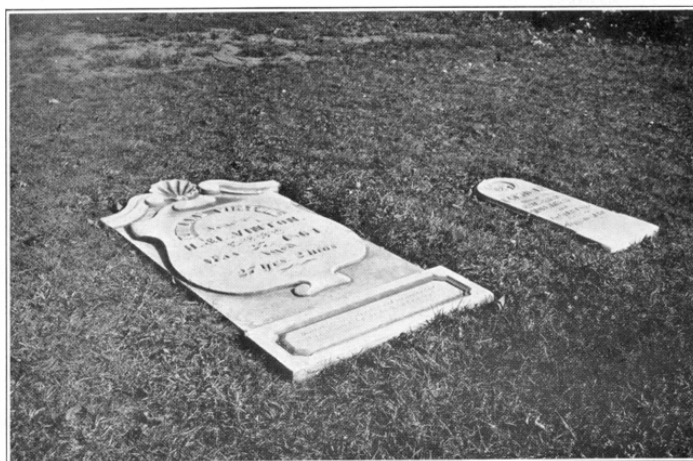
RESETTING LEANING HEADSTONES



THE LEANING HEADSTONES

Nearly all of the older cemeteries are faced with the problem of taking care of the old thin headstones, set in the early days before modern regulations regarding foundations and construction were in force. These old slabs in various stages of leaning and toppling may be seen in the old sections of many of our cemeteries. Many of them have fallen and broken, and present unsightly conditions that cemeteries have sought to ameliorate in various ways.

The illustrations on this page show how the problem is being taken care of by F. S. Marriner, Supt. of Greenwood Cemetery, Rockford, Ill. When these old stones begin to lean or need repairs, Mr. Marriner endeavors to get the permission of the lot owner to take them off of their shaky bases and reset them as ledger stones on good concrete foundations. The pictures speak for themselves. One shows some leaning stones that need attention and the other shows some of the old slabs that have been reset. With their neatly kept turf, the flat stones make a very presentable appearance as ledger memorials.



THE REMEDY: RESET AS LEDGER STONES

Figure 1.70: Precedent from civilian cemeteries of resetting tablet headstones as "ledger stones," lying flush with the ground. *Park and Cemetery*, volume 35, no 4. (June 1925), page 107.



Figure 1.71: View of Poplar Grove National Cemetery looking northeast toward the flagstaff from the rostrum (visible in shadows), showing the effect of the leveling of the grave markers undertaken in 1934, photographed 1939. Two of the leveled grave markers (headstone, block) are visible along the lower right part of the photograph. Note remaining tablets and gun monuments. Library of Virginia, from collection of Virginia Room Exhibit at the 1939 World's Fair, image /WF/05/06/017.jpg.



Figure 1.72: Replacement flat grave markers at Yorktown National Cemetery, installed in c.1940, view looking northeast from a current photograph with the Revolutionary War battlefield in the background. SUNY ESF, 2006.

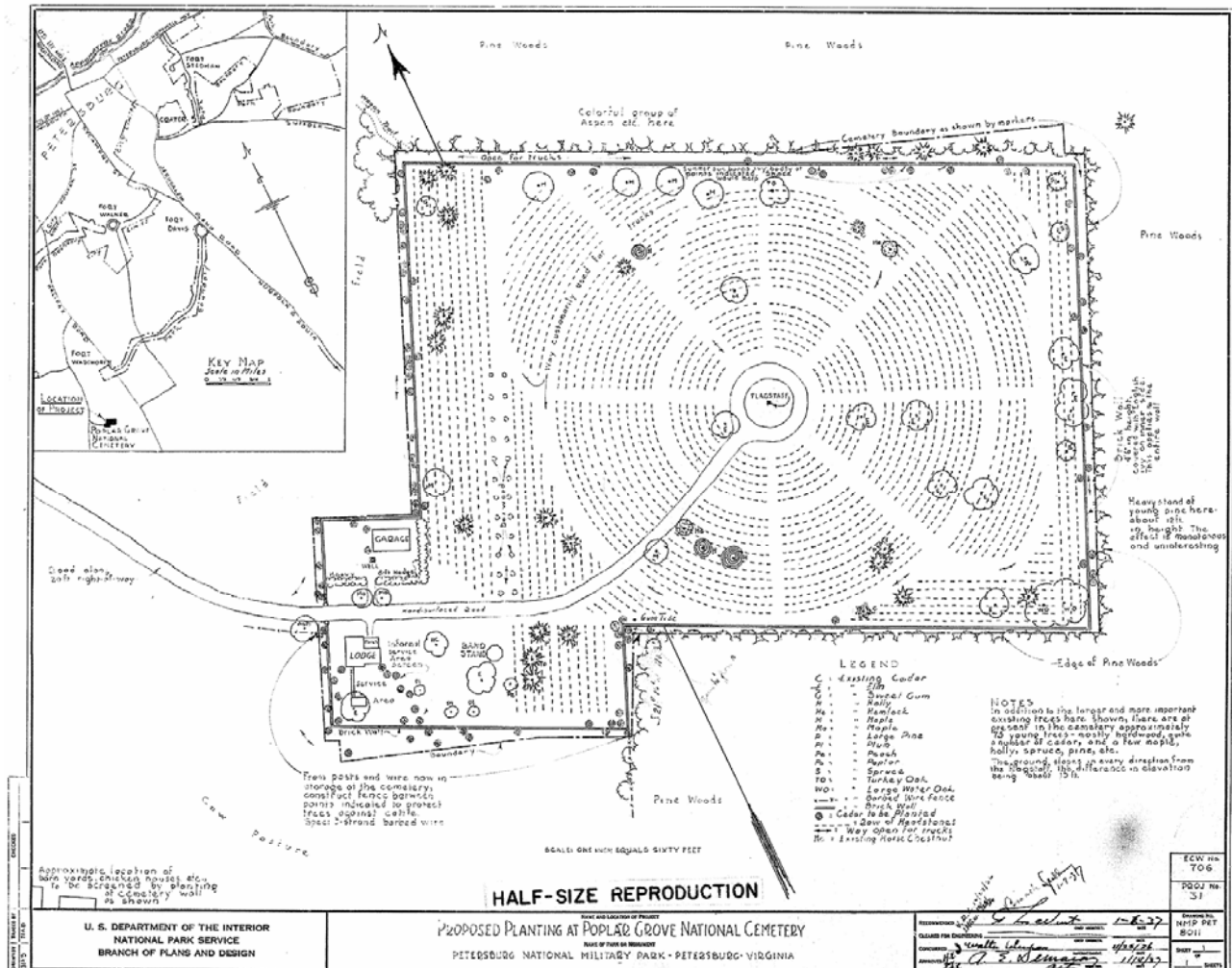
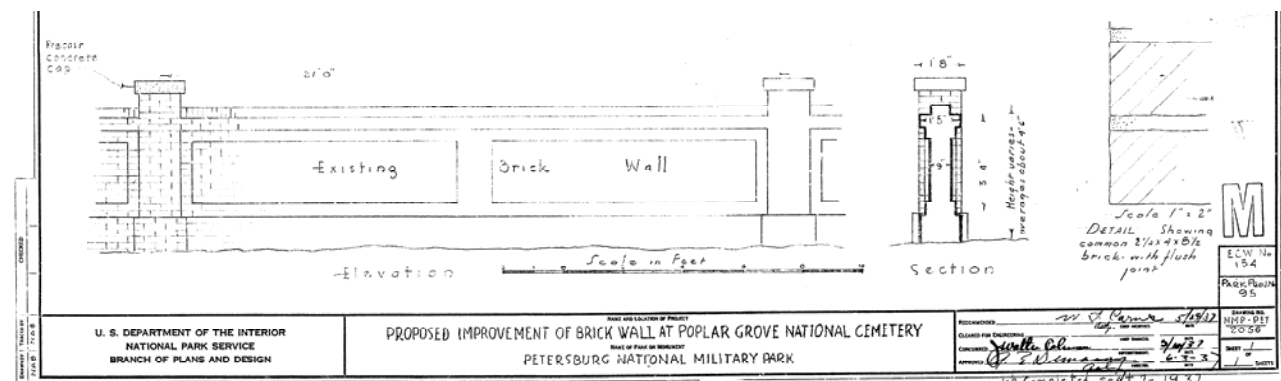


Figure 1.73: Plan showing planting of red cedars and existing mature trees, 1937 The plantings were completed by the CCC in 1937. National Park Service Branch of Plans and Design, 29 May 1937, drawing PETE 325-8041, National Park Service Technical Information Center, Lakewood, Colorado.



1.74: Detail, 1937 rehabilitation plan for brick inclosing wall. The work was completed by the CCC. National Park Service Branch of Plans and Design, drawing PETE 325-2056, 29 May 1937, National Park Service Technical Information Center, Lakewood, Colorado.