

The National Cemeteries
When the Average American
Thinks about National Cemeteries,
Arlington Comes to Mind First
In reality, the System Spans
The 50 States and is Growing

From an airfield near Foggia, Italy, on 10th of May 1944, a B-17 from the 463rd Bomb Group took off on a fateful mission to bomb German aircraft plants at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, near Vienna. As the Flying Fortress neared the target, it was rocked by an exploding antiaircraft shell that set off raging fires within the fuselage. In the nose, the 23 year-old navigator, Harold G. Mohler, was thrown against the metal interior by the force of the blast and knocked senseless. He had seconds to bail out or go down with the plane. We know Mohler's story today because the plane's bombardier ripped off Mohler's flight jacket, rammed a parachute in his hands, and pushed him towards the escape hatch. Mohler was luckier than all but one other crew member. He and the copilot were the only ones to escape.

Later in life, Mohler became chairman of Hershey Foods Corporation, and was forever aware that his life and success had been made possible by an act of courage and compassion by the unknown bombardier. Mohler had never met the man and didn't even know his name because the bombardier had been a replacement that day. But 40 years later through detailed air force records maintained in the National Archives, Mohler was able to identify him. He learned that the young man who saved his life was also named Harold---Harold P. Kennedy---from Paragould, Ark., and that his remains were interred in an American cemetery in France.

When Mohler's plane crashed, the Germans buried the remaining eight crew members in a local cemetery near Neustadt, where their bodies remained until after the war. The military graves registration personnel swept all of Europe's battlefields to locate fallen Americans. They knew that a B-17 had gone down near Wiener Neustadt on May 10, and even interviewed Mohler after his release from a prison camp for information about survivors. They retrieved the bodies and shipped home those whose relatives asked for their return. Kennedy had no next of kin, and today his body rests in a simple plot in the Lorraine Military Cemetery in St. Avold, France.

The story of Harold P. Kennedy is but one of many. Today, hundreds of thousands of American war dead are buried overseas in military cemeteries that forever will be a tiny piece of the United States. Most of the overseas cemeteries are in Europe, and hold the remains of soldiers killed in both World I and World War II. There is a military cemetery near Manila where the remains of more than 17,000 dead are buried from the Pacific campaigns of World War II. Mexico City also is the site of an American Cemetery, which is the final resting place of American soldiers killed in the Mexican War of 1846-47.

The overseas military cemeteries are administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC), a small independent agency of the Executive Branch of the Federal Government that was established in 1923 to care for the dead of World War 1. All the cemeteries are poignant and dignified reminders of the human cost of war. One of the most stirring is at Normandy. It is situated on a cliff overlooking Omaha beach and the English Channel, just east of St. Laurent-sur-Mer where American troops went ashore on D-Day. The cemetery covers 172 acres and contains the graves of 9386 Americans killed in the campaigns through France and the Low countries in World War 11. The remains of 1557 missing soldiers are inscribed on the walls of a memorial garden on the east side of the cemetery. The memorial is a semi-circular colonnade with a loggia at each end containing large maps and narratives of the military operations. At the center of the memorial is a bronze statue entitled, "Spirit of American Youth." Few can visit the Normandy Cemetery and not go away humbled by the serene gravity of the setting.

A total of 124,912 U.S. war dead are interred in the 14 permanent American military cemeteries overseas, 30, 921 from World War 1 and more than three times that number from World War 11. The ABMC also administers fifteen separate monuments and two commemorative plaques overseas.

The cemeteries (and monuments) administered by the ABMC are but a few of the burial grounds designated for America's war dead and veterans. As such, the ABMC facilities are not designated "National cemeteries." These are located on American soil and are administered by the Veterans Administration; the VA maintains 114 sites located in 38 states and Puerto Rico. In addition it administers 32 Soldier's lots where veterans may be buried Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia, and the United States Soldier's & Airman's Home national Cemetery, in Washington, D.C., are administered by the army. Fourteen ➤

additional national cemeteries, including Gettysburg, which was dedicated in 1863 with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, are closely associated with national battle fields and military parks in the United States, and are maintained by the Department of Interior, through the National Park Service..

More than 2,000,000 Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict—from the Revolutionary War to the Persian Gulf—are honored by burial in the VA's national cemeteries, which comprise more than 10,000 acres from Hawaii to Maine, and from Alaska to Puerto Rico.

Aside from the federally maintained facilities here and abroad, each state maintains its own cemetery or cemeteries in which veterans and their families may be buried. The state sites have been developed through a program in which the federal government provides funding for the facility.

SLOW EVOLUTION

The origins of the National Cemetery System date from the second of the Civil War, 1862. Thousands of men had already died at Bull Run and Shiloh, and there was

battles

desperate need to find space to bury all those expected to die in the conflict. Congress enacted legislation authorizing the president to purchase grounds to be used as national cemeteries, "for those soldiers who shall have died in the service of their country". Fourteen cemeteries were established that first year, including one at Antietam Battlefield where 4476 Union Soldiers were buried following the battle.

By 1870 the U.S. government had established 73 national cemeteries for the remains of some 300,000 Union dead from the Civil War. Most were located in the South and South-West, near battlefields and campgrounds. Others, such as the one at Beverly, N.J., were established near army hospitals and were for the thousands of soldiers who died of wounds or disease. The identities of nearly half of the soldiers buried in these new cemeteries are unknown. It was common practice during the war to bury the dead where they fell and many bodies were never recovered at all. After the war, teams combed the battlefields searching for grave sites, and the remains of those who were killed and never buried. According to Josephine Nealon, a staff assistant with the VA's National Cemetery System, the remains of Civil War dead are still being found on old battlefields.

The National Cemetery System has evolved slowly since the Civil War. In 1873, all honorably discharged veterans became eligible for burial in national cemeteries. Additional sites were added to the system in the late nineteenth century, particularly those associated with military posts in the west. Fort McPherson National Cemetery in Maxwell, Nebr., was established in 1873; Santa Fe National Cemetery in 1875; and San Francisco National Cemetery, 1884. America's involvement in World Wars 1 and 11 led to further expansion of the system. More than 400,000 American soldiers, airmen, sailors and marines lost their lives in World War 11. After the war, families of the dead were given the choice of having remains of their loved ones returned home for burial in a national cemetery or in a private one, or having the remains interred in a military site overseas. At the families request, some 1711,000 World War 11 dead were returned to the United States. The Korean and Vietnam wars added to the number of war dead buried in the National cemeteries.

Today, more than 130 years after its founding, the National Cemetery System faces its greatest challenge since the Civil War. More than 26,000,000 honorably discharged veterans—including an estimated 8,000,000 vets of World War 11—have the right to be buried in a national cemetery. In addition, their spouses and dependent children also have that right. But of the 114 sites administered by the VA, 53 have exhausted available grave sites, leaving only 61 cemeteries able to take burials. Of these, 13 could close by the year 2000 because of insufficient space. Efforts are underway, however, to forestall some of these closures by acquiring nearby properties.

In an effort to deal with the expected increase in burials over the next 15 years, the VA has adopted a policy of establishing regional cemeteries, each one large enough to take the remains of veterans and their families. One of these is Indiantown Gap National Cemetery in Annville, Pa., near Harrisburg. Development of the site began in 1976 and the first burial took place in 1982. Since that time, some 6000 burials have been

conducted, and the cemetery has space for more than 600,000. Indiantown Gap is designed with family crypt in which more than one member of a family may be buried.

VA policy encourages the states to develop burial sites with 50 per cent matching grants provided by the federal government. For example, the state of Pennsylvania maintains the Pennsylvania Soldiers & Sailors Home Cemetery in Erie, Pa.

A new national cemetery, San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery, in California, opened in 1992. Environmental studies are underway for cemetery development in nine locations--- Chicago, Seattle, Albany (N.Y.) Cleveland, Dallas, Oklahoma City, Pittsburg, Detroit and Miami.

ARLINGTON AND JEFFERSON BARRACKS

Arlington National Cemetery, across the river from Washington, D.C., is known around the world. It is here that many of America's heroes are buried including President John Kennedy, and his brother, Robert; President Howard Taft; astronaut Virgil "Gus" Grissom; "Dick" Scobee, commander of the space shuttle Challenger; Joe Louis; and writer Dashiell Hammett. In all, there are some 200,000 buried in Arlington.

Tourists flock to visit the Kennedy grave site and watch the changing of the guard at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. A walk through the rows of grave markers and monuments is a walk through American history from the Revolution to the present. It is a special cemetery.

But every national cemetery is special. Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Mo., for example, is a former military outpost on the eastern edge of the Louisiana Purchase. It was named after President Thomas Jefferson who died in 1826, just 6 days before the post opened. During the years before the Civil War, many of the principal players in the war passed through or were stationed at Jefferson Barracks. Second Lieutenant Jefferson Davis was stationed there after graduation from West Point in 1828, as was Second Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant in 1843. Colonel Robert E. Lee assumed command of the post in 1855.

The post cemetery, originally intended only for the garrison's dead, was enlarged in 1863 to provide a burial for Union Soldiers killed in battle. Jefferson Barracks became a National cemetery in 1866. In the years immediately following the Civil War, search and recovery teams brought the remains of many Union soldiers initially buried in various locations throughout the state, to Jefferson Barracks for final burial.

Many could not be individually identified, but were known to be Union troopers by the shreds of blue uniforms found with the remains.

In addition to the Union dead of Jefferson Barracks, 1140 Confederate soldiers are interred there. Many had been prisoners of war and died of disease while in captivity. The

federal government also maintains a number of Confederate cemeteries in Civil War Battle areas.

Many buried at Jackson Barracks played roles in American History. These were veterans of the Revolutionary War. Colonel Thomas Hunt was a minuteman at the battle of Lexington and Concord in April 1775, and a veteran of the Indian Wars. Major Aeneas McKay, Grave 2287-B, was a veteran of the War of 1812, the Indian Wars, and the Mexican War. The 2 year-year old daughter of Lt. Zebulon Pike, the famous soldier-explorer, is buried in Grave 2288-E. the cemetery also contains seven Medal of honor winners.

There are 564 group burials consisting of the remains of two or more servicemen interred in a common grave site. Many of these group burials are the remains of fliers who died in air crashes and whose bones are mingled with their fellow crew members and unable to be identified. The largest single group consists of 123 victims of a massacre of prisoners of war by the Japanese in December 1944 on Palawan Island, Phillipines.

More than 99,000 burials have been made at Jefferson Barracks since 1966. Today, the average daily number of burials is fourteen. It is anticipated that the cemetery will have available space through the year 2013.

Other cemeteries are tourists attractions. The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, near Honolulu, is familiarly known as "The Punchbowl" because it is cupped in a dormant Hawaiian volcano crater. It offers a spectacular vista of the Hawaiian capitol. San Francisco National Cemetery also offers views of the Pacific, as well as San Frisco Bay and the Golden Gate Bridge, Hampton National Cemetery, Va., on the grounds of the VA Medical Center, is the smallest national cemetery with only 21 headstones spread on 0.03 acre. It was used for the emergency burial of victims of a yellow fever epidemic in 1898.

Today, most burials are of aging veterans and their families. Occasionally, the remains of soldiers killed in battle and never properly buried, or never buried at all, are interred in one of the national cemeteries. The remains of 28 American soldiers killed in fighting against the British at Fort Erie, Ontario, Canada, in the War of 1812, were recently uncovered near the former battle site. Their bodies were reinterred in the national cemetery at Bath, N.Y., which like many others, is an enduring memorial to the millions of Americans who fought, and some who died, in the service of their country.

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American veterans are buried around the world. These overseas' sites are administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission. The cemetery at the left is in Cambridge, England. The cross in the foreground marks the grave of a veteran killed on 14 August 1941, before America entered the Second World War.



National cemeteries, on the other hand, are located on American soil and are administered by the Veteran's Administration. One of these is located in Bath, in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State. Recently, the remains of 28 American soldiers, killed fighting the British at Fort Erie during the War of 1812, were uncovered near the battle site, and reinterred in this national cemetery.

Cemeteries



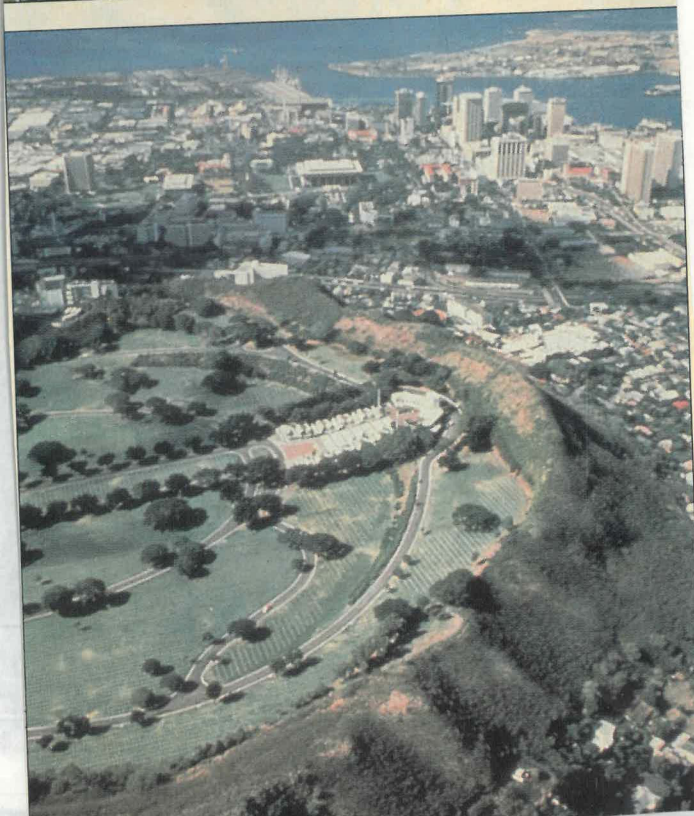
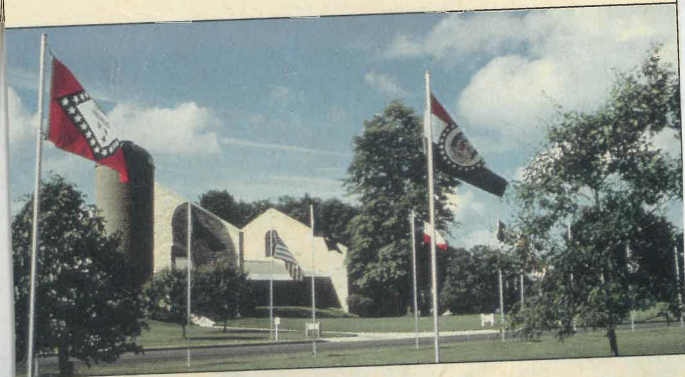
Congress created the National Cemetery System in 1862 to provide proper burial and mark, uniformly, the graves of Union dead. This headstone bears a Civil War era inscription. It is located at Marietta, Ga.

By 1870, national cemeteries numbered 62 and provided burial grounds near battle sites, field hospitals, and prisoner-of-war stockades. This headstone is for "unknown" Civil War dead, and is located in San Antonio, Tex.

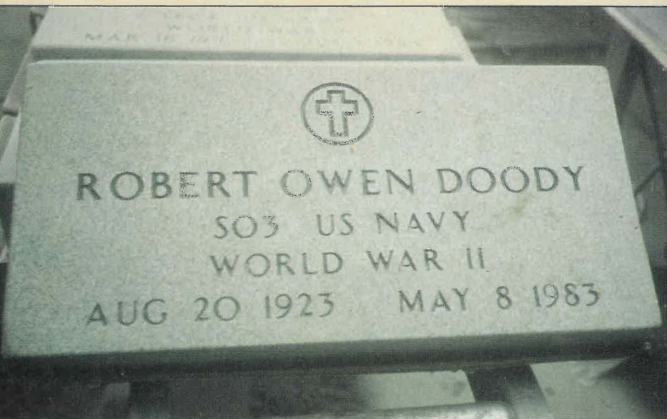


Cemeteries have a variety of architectural styles reflecting our heritage, regional character, and, at times, a cemetery's historical origins. Above: In 1859, Zachary Taylor was buried in a cemetery in Louisville, Ky., which became a national cemetery named for him.

Below: The structures at Indiantown Gap, one of the newer cemeteries in the system, reflect the surrounding Pennsylvania farmlands. Bottom: With a commanding view of Honolulu, the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific is commonly known as the "Punchbowl."



Cemeteries



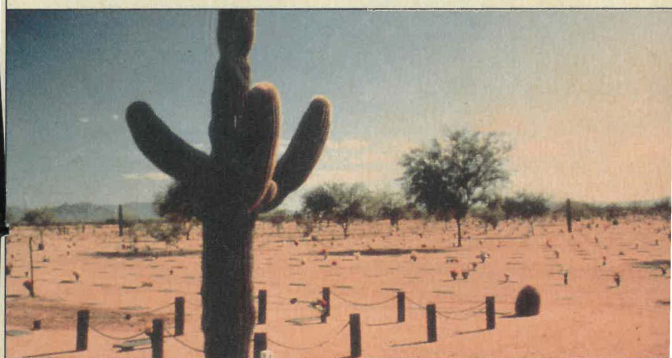
In 1990, the NCS' Monument Service provided more than 280,000 headstones and markers for placement in national, state, military, and private cemeteries. It automatically provides a stone or marker for those interred in national or state veterans' cemeteries; families must apply for a monument for graves in private cemeteries. The flat marker, shown above, is ready for shipment. Below is the Rhode Island Veterans Cemetery.



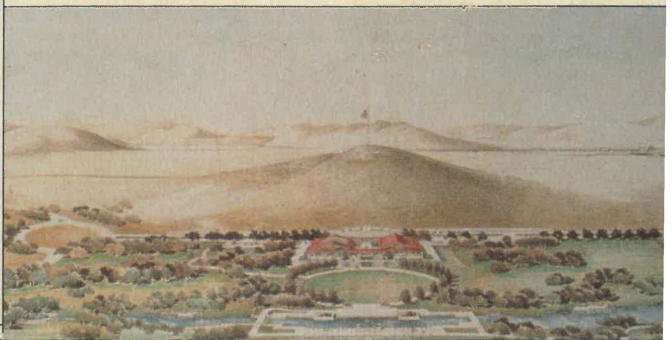
It takes 50 days to receive a bronze marker and 65 days for a stone headstone or marker. The NCS places the headstone or marker in national cemeteries; applicants pay for installation in private cemeteries.



In 1973, the National Cemetery System, then administered by the Department of the Army, contained 84 cemeteries; 82 were transferred to the VA. Arlington National Cemetery and Soldiers Home National Cemetery remained under the Department of the Army. Shown here is Fort Snelling National Cemetery.



Officials work with local groups to provide burial space where it is most needed. In 1989, the National Cemetery System added the veterans cemetery in Arizona to its roster, and renamed it National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona. Clearly, all national cemeteries do not look alike. One recently opened site is the San Joaquin Valley National Cemetery, about 120 miles southeast of San Francisco. It is shown here in an architectural rendering.



The Stone Mountain Memorial

Gutzon Borglum, the sculptor, originally selected for the work had a misunderstanding with the committee in charge and destroyed his models and abandoned the work, when it was hardly more than begun as far as actual carving goes. Augustus Lukeman was then selected, he was born in Richmond, Va. tho a resident of New York.

In 1925—Lukeman then said the conception upon which he will begin work is thus outlined ----- A Hall of Fame, consisting of a large circular building, will be cut out of the solid rock at the base of the mountain. This innovation will be a massive structure 150 feet long, 50 feet deep, and 60 feet high. In the building will be 13 columns, each representing one of the states of the Confederacy. They will be engaged columns, tied together with a large band on which inscription will be moved. Between the columns will be spaces on which will be carved the names of famous Americans and also subscribers to the Memorial.

The approach to the Hall of Fame, will be by a grand staircase, each step representing a state. On the balustrades which flank the steps will be two great tripods in which on ceremonial occasions incense will ascend through the Hall of Fame to Stone Mountain. At the base of the steps will be a lagoon, in which the Hall of Fame will be reflected. On each side of the lagoon there will be a rise of several steps to a higher platform on which will be planted a double row of trees, leading from the boulevard approach to the mountains itself and flanking each side of the great stairway. In the end of the Lagoon will be two recumbent figures, one of the Unknown Confederate Soldier and the other of the Unknown Union Soldier, clasped in death. Augustus Lukeman said when he took the commission to create a the Memorial to the Southern Confederacy on the face of Stone Mountain about 16 miles from Atlanta, Georgia, he found his predecessor had cut into the solid granite an unfinished head of great size with two large holes on each side of it and that he had destroyed whatever idea or design he may have had..

In the School-Arts Magazine 1926 it says—16 miles from Atlanta in North Georgia is a solitary rock that lifts its gigantic mass more than a thousand feet against the blue curtain of sky and against its summit in the golden sunlight that rests like a benediction upon its bare and granite head. No more worthy memorial could have been conceived by those who wish to perpetuate the memory of the valor of their forefathers in everlasting stone; for it is the largest single mass of granite in the world—a mountain of stone 8,000 feet high and a mile in perpendicular precipice; and on this mammoth back ground is to be carved the Supreme Monument of history.

Sweeping across its gray surface for a distance of 1350 feet, a panorama of the Confederate forces of horses, men and arms will be carved in high relief and in proportion to the vast size of the mountain. At the top the artillery will appear as if coming over the mountain from the right; and to the left of this procession will sweep the confederate cavalry in full motion. Each of the 13 Southern States will be represented by its most distinguished Confederate generals portrayed in likeness; and around these leaders will move vast numbers of the Confederate forces, involving at least seven hundred carved

figures. The dramatic center of the grand ensemble will be a colossal group of seven figures—the confederate high command just having reviewed the passing army. One gets the feeling of motion in the flapping capes of Davis and Jackson, the fluttering banners in the hands of the two color-bearers and the restless eagerness of the horses, impatient to be gone. On the face of Davis who heads the group is written a sublime pathos and tragedy, a profound sadness that seems to foretell the fate of the confederacy itself—Lee dominates the central group just as he dominated the military operations of the confederacy. His face is resolute, tho' filled with sorrow for the sufferings of his people. His attire is immaculate and his graceful bearing bespeaks the power and gentleness of his inheritance. In striking contrast is the attitude of Jackson who died in the zenith of his military success and whose bearing is marked by assurance. His face is rugged, fearless, indomitable—that of a man untouched by defeat and filled with a resolution to fight to the end.

The figure of Lee will be 153 feet high—the most imposing sculpture of ancient or modern times—taller than the Colossus of Rhodes, the statue of Liberty or Trojans Column.

August Delineator 1928—Speaking of important events—The Honor of Your Presence By Frances Parkinson Keyes, "The Stone Mountain Association takes pleasure in announcing that General Rob't E. Lee and Traveler will be unveiled on Stone Mountain—on the 63rd anniversary of Appomatox and requests the honor of your presence on that occasion. The Old Guard of the Gate City will act as a Military Host and Guard of Honor: The invitation was accepted. Attending were members of both political parties, coming from widely separated sections of the country. Senator Smoot of Utah; Harris and George of Georgia; Keyes of New Hampshire, Sackett of Kentucky and McMasters of South Dakota; Representatives Tilson of Connecticut (Republican Floor Leader of the House) McFadden of Penn., Bell of Ga., Montague of Virginia, Ramseyer of Iowa, Robison of Ky., Faust of Mo., Leer of Calif., O'Conner of N.Y. and Arnold of Ill. Such a company was the personification of the truth of the Statement that "although the Stone Mountain Memorial is dedicated to the Soldiers of the Southern confederacy and will perpetuate their memory as long as the earth endures, it has no where been regarded as a monument to sectionalism, or secession, or division or war." On the contrary, it has been hailed by American people. It has been commended by four Presidents of the U.S.—Wm. Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. It has been received the sanction and support of the congress of the U.S. in the passage of an act by unanimous vote of the House and Senate authorizing the mintage of a silver coin dedicated to the Soldiers of the South, which act nationalizes the monument—It was to witness the completion of the Central figure of the group that Georgia had sent out its call of welcome and that the country had answered.

After addresses by Mr. Randolph, president of the Association and a direct descendant of Thomas Jefferson, who acted as Court of the state and Mr. Jimmie Walker, Mayor of N.Y. and as he finished speaking the great grandson of General Lee, Robert E. Lee the fourth—a sweet and sturdy little boy of three opened a cage, releasing a flock of doves which, as they fluttered, soared above the crowd, gave a signal for withdrawing the two

flags which covered the compelling figure on the mountain side and it was revealed in all its majesty,--an everlasting monument to an everlasting fame.

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