

## Monument to 11700 Unknown Dead <sup>[1]</sup>

### Rating:



Average: 4.5 (2 votes)



U.S. National Cemetery, Salisbury,  
N.C.

<sup>[2]</sup>

### Monument to 11700 Unknown Dead

Salisbury National Cemetery

View complete article and references at Commemorative Landscapes of North Carolina at:

<https://docsouth.unc.edu/commland/monument/74> <sup>[3]</sup>

Description: This monument is a 50-foot tall granite obelisk with a base measuring 18 feet by 18 feet. It is dedicated to the unknown soldiers who died in the Confederate prison at Salisbury. The obelisk is crowned with a laurel wreath; laurel leaves decorate the four sides. Above the base rest a helmet, sword, shield, and a chain with broken bracelets. A veiled tablet, signifying the unknown, is also carved into the obelisk.

Images: [Front view](#) <sup>[4]</sup> | [View with the Maine Monument in sight](#) <sup>[5]</sup> | [Rear view](#) <sup>[6]</sup> | [Sculptural detail](#) <sup>[7]</sup> | [Front Inscription](#) <sup>[8]</sup> | [Right Inscription](#) <sup>[9]</sup> | [Left Inscription](#) <sup>[10]</sup> | [Rear inscription](#) <sup>[11]</sup> | [Stone marker](#) <sup>[12]</sup> | [Builder Alexander McDonald of Mount Auburn, Massachusetts](#) <sup>[13]</sup> | [Designer Augustus Van Cleef of New York](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

### Inscription:

Front: "PRO / PATRIA / 11700 / THIS MONUMENT WAS ERECTED BY ACT OF CONGRESS APPROVED MARCH 3, 1873 TO THE MEMORY OF THE UNKNOWN UNION SOLDIERS WHO DIED IN THE CONFEDERATE PRISON AT SALISBURY, N.C."

Right: "THEY DIED THAT THEIR COUNTRY MIGHT LIVE."

Left: FOR OUR COUNTRY 'TIS BLISS TO DIE.

Rear: IN 18 TRENCHES, JUST SOUTH OF THIS SPOT, / REST THE BODIES OF 11,700 SOLDIERS OF THE / UNITED STATES ARMY, WHO PERISHED DURING / THE YEARS 1864 AND 1865 WHILE HELD BY / THE CONFEDERATE MILITARY AUTHORITIES AS / PRISONERS OF WAR IN A STOCKADE NEAR / THIS PLACE.

Dedication date: 1876

Creator: Augustus Van Cleef of New York, Designer Alexander McDonald of Mount Auburn, Massachusetts, Builder

Materials & Techniques: New Hampshire granite

Sponsor: Commissioned by Congress, General Orders No. 47

Cost: \$9500

Subject notes: During the civil war, Salisbury was the location of a Confederate prison that was originally intended for Confederate military offenders and state prisoners. On October 5, 1864, 5,000 Union prisoners of war were transferred to the prison, far exceeding the intended limit of 2,500 people. As a result, food and space were scarce, while disease was rampant. The dead were buried in trenches in a cornfield to the west of the prison. After the war, efforts were made to determine how many unknown prisoners had been buried in the cemetery. Colonel Oscar A. Mack estimated the number to be 11,700 in his 1870-71 report.

Controversies: Recent research has cast doubt on the accuracy of the number 11,700. Some scholars believe this number is too large; however, determining the exact number is not a likely possibility.

**Location:** The monument is located near the western side of the cemetery. Just south of the monument are 18 burial trenches with stone markers. The large obelisk is located next to both a monument erected by [the state of Maine](#) <sup>[15]</sup> honoring Maine's fallen soldiers and a small plaque placed by the United Daughters of the Confederacy which includes a diagram of the burial trench locations. A [monument](#) <sup>[16]</sup> erected by the state of Pennsylvania, located further down the hill, is in sight.

**Landscape:** The monument is part of the Salisbury National Cemetery and is surrounded by graves, including the 18 trenches containing the unknown dead to whom the monument is dedicated. At the top of a hill, the monument is a prominent feature of the cemetery landscape.

**City:** Salisbury

**County:** Rowan

**Subjects:** Civil War

**Latitude:** 35.65928

**Longitude:** -80.47487

**Subjects:**

[Monuments](#) <sup>[17]</sup>

[Places](#) <sup>[18]</sup>

**Authors:**

[Commemorative Landscapes of North Carolina](#) <sup>[19]</sup>

**Origin - location:**

[Rowan County](#) <sup>[20]</sup>

[Salisbury](#) <sup>[21]</sup>

**From:**

[Commemorative Landscapes of NC, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill.](#) <sup>[22]</sup>

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**Source URL:** <https://ncpedia.org/monument/monument-11700-unknown>

**Links**

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