

President's Grave in Arlington on Hill Overlooking Washington

WASHINGTON (AP) — The spot on a sloping hillside in Arlington National cemetery where President John F. Kennedy will be buried looks out upon a magnificent vista of the nation's capital which he knew so well in life.

Just 13 days ago, Mr. Kennedy paid his last living visit to the tradition-wrapped cemetery when he led the nation in tribute to America's war dead on Veterans Day, Nov. 11. With him then was his son John Jr.

The spot chosen for the President's grave is an open place but flanked by the graves of the more than 126,000 others. It is down the broad sloping lawn below the columned mansion once the home of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee.

City Across River

Above the gravesite the colonnades of the mansion and the American flag fly in front gleamed in Sunday's bright fall sun. Below and beyond are the iron grillwork doors of the main entrance to the huge cemetery.

Farther beyond, across the bridge which spans the Potomac river lies the city. At the end of the bridge is the massive whiteness of the Memorial building dedicated to another assassinated President, Abraham Lincoln.

The site of Mr. Kennedy's grave is in an area which had been kept without graves. But graves for the multitude of other men who served their country are not too far away—the orderly rows of stones stretching to both sides and climbing row upon row, back up and across the sprawling acreage.

No Grave Before

Until now, there has been no grave between the mansion once lived in by the Lee and Custis families and the roadway at the foot of the hill which leads in from the main gate.

The grave of the only other President buried in Arlington, William Howard Taft, is near the cemetery's great memorial gate. The nearest graves are about

50 yards from the Kennedy site. Among the men buried there are naval officers, who, like Mr. Kennedy, fought in World War II.

Elsewhere in the cemetery are many of the famous in American history—Pierre L'Enfant who designed the capital city; Robert Todd Lincoln, son of the President; Gen. John J. Pershing; William Jennings Bryan; Gen. George C. Marshall; Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

The first soldier buried in Arlington was a Civil War man, Pvt. William Christman, Company G, 67th Pennsylvania, buried in 1864. Since then about 126,000 men who served in five great wars have been buried in the cemetery.

The area of the Lee mansion was the center of the cemetery at the outset.

Built in 1802

The mansion was built in 1802 by George Washington Parke Custis, adopted grandson of President George Washington. Custis had inherited 1,100 acres of land from his father in 1781. When the custises died, their daughter, Mary, inherited the estate. She had married a young Army officer who later became the confederacy's famous general, Robert E. Lee.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, federal troops were sent across the Potomac to occupy the high ground of the Lee estate, overlooking the approach to Washington.

The federal government eventually got around to buying the estate, but the circumstances were peculiar. It was sold to the government for taxes, amounting

to \$92.06 which Mrs. Lee was unable to pay because she lived in the Confederacy and could not cross the Union lines from Richmond.

Changed Little

After the war, a member of the family won a court fight for a new payment. In 1883, the government paid the Lee family \$150,000.

The spot at which Kennedy's grave is situated probably is little changed in appearance from the days when the Custis and Lee families lived in the mansion atop the hill.

The lawn is smooth and green. Only a few trees are permitted to stand in the expanse of grass. The now bare boughs of a big tree only partly screen the view of the city across the river. Nearer to the gravesite is a small cedar, standing alone. Off to the right is a tree entwined in the rich, thick green of a vine.