

“No Veteran Forgotten No Veteran Left Behind”

TOOLKIT

This toolkit is for private cemetery owners, volunteer organizations, historical preservation societies, non-profit and faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations interested in preserving Veteran legacies through private cemetery restoration.

It contains resources for educating and sharing best practices with NCA community stakeholders who order headstones, markers and medallions for Veterans interred in private cemeteries who were initially interred without a marker or whose marker is damaged. In addition, county, state and local VA government officials and Veteran Service Officers may find this information useful when assisting communities with the process of documenting Veterans interred in private cemeteries.

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Cemetery Restoration

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is launching a nationwide initiative to acknowledge and collaborate with community-led efforts to restore Veteran gravesites within historic private cemeteries.

Together, NCA and community members, will share experiences and best practices for obtaining the necessary documentation for Veterans to order headstones and markers, how to safely clean Veteran headstones and markers, and other restoration related work.

This initiative complements community led volunteer efforts across the country that identify, restore, and preserve historic private cemeteries to respect and honor Veterans and who may be buried there.

VA Headstone and Marker

VA provides a free headstone or marker for any Veteran buried in a private cemetery anywhere in the world. There are countless Veterans laying in unmarked graves. Once discovered, NCA can assist in providing and preserving their legacy by placing a headstone or marker on their gravesite.

NCA Partnerships for Cemetery Restoration

Paul LaRue – Researcher/Teacher- Ohio – December 2020

Luise Barton – Lakeside Cemetery Community -Canon City, Colorado – December 2020

James LaMar – Greenlawn Memorial Park – Bakersfield, CA- December 2020

Jimmy James – Greenview Cemetery – Richmond, VA – December 2020

Steven Sims – Gettysburg National Military Park – Gettysburg, VA

Barbara Barksdale - Midland Cemetery – York, PA – February 2022

Dianne Boetcher - Ellsworth Cemetery – Westminster, MD – June 2022

Samantha Dorm - Lebanon Cemetery – York, PA – January 2023

Donn Weaver – Saints and Sinners Cemetery- Oakhill, Fla. – April 2023

Diane Christopher - Sacred Hearts Cemetery – Dinwiddie, VA – April 2024

Fort Lincoln Cemetery in Brentwood, MD- May 2024

VA Internal Partner for Volunteerism

VA Center for Development & Civic Engagement (CDCE), Center for Development and Civic Engagement (CDCE), Deputy Director, Mr. Prince Taylor, Prince.Taylor@va.gov, www.volunteer.va.gov

VA Center for Faith –Ms. Trulesta Pauling, Community and Outreach Specialist, Center for Faith-Base and Neighborhood Partnerships, Trulesta.Pauling@va.gov, www.va.gov/cfbnp, VACFBNP@va.gov

How Can Communities Get Involved

Volunteers across the nation are encouraged to come together to honor and memorialize our American heroes by caring for Veteran grave sites and headstones in private cemeteries. Many volunteers can earn education credit for community service.

Where to Find Volunteers

- High School and College Students
- Sororities and Fraternities Looking for Community Projects (including Military Sorors and Frats)
- Churches/Youth Groups
- National Cemetery Support Groups
- Work Release Programs/Low offense incarcerated members
- Military Support Groups/National Guard Members/Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts
- Veteran Service Organizations/Community-Based Organizations

Best Practices for Cemetery Restoration Volunteers

- Walk-thru cemetery to check for damaged headstones and gravesites that need headstones,
- Remove brush and unsightly overgrowth, collect, and dispose of trash, clean headstones,
- Take photos of areas that need restoration,
- Dress appropriately for inclement weather and/or large brush or muddy grounds,
- Pull invasive plant growth in the burial grounds and in gravestone collections,
- Add soil and grass seed to settlement and erosion areas,
- Place surveyor flags at any identified memorials or gravesites identified as Veterans,
- Prepare and cast wildflower seed in defined areas to create habitat for pollinators and birds,
- Provide hands-on instruction for cleaning of gravestones, memorials, and other artifacts,
- As appropriate, reset toppled headstones onto their bases, and right leaning grave markers to a proper and secure upright position.

Cleaning Headstones

The VA National Cemetery Administration (NCA) provides headstones or markers to eligible Veterans in private and municipal cemeteries. The headstones and markers remain Federal property.

The goal of cleaning headstones is to remove air pollution soiling, lichen, bird droppings, dirt, salts, and sap - it is NOT to make the headstone or marker look "like new." Improper or unnecessary cleaning can accelerate the deterioration of marble and granite; pre-1970s bronze was not sealed and will have a blue-green patina that will not be removed by cleaning.

VA prohibits the general public from power washing government-furnished headstones and markers due to the damage it may cause to historical headstones. [Learn more about cleaning Government-Furnished Headstones and Markers.](#)

Eligibility for Headstone, Marker and Medallions

In most cases, you can apply for one of these memorial items if you're representing the deceased Veteran, service member, or family member in any of these relationships or professional roles.

One of these must describe your relationship to the deceased:

- A family member, **or**
- A personal representative (someone who officially represents the deceased), **or**
- A representative of an accredited Veterans Service Organization, **or**
- An employee of a state or local government whose official responsibilities include serving Veterans, **or**
- Any person who's legally responsible for making arrangements for unclaimed remains or for details having to do with the deceased's interment or memorialization, **or**

Any individual representing the deceased, if the Veteran's service ended before April 6, 1917.

[Read more about the types of Headstones, Markers and Medallions](#)

Documents Needed

Generally, the Veterans DD-214 or similar discharge is needed to request the headstone/marker/medallion.

[View a complete list of Veterans Military Discharge Documents](#)

Ordering A Headstone or Marker for Veterans in Unmarked Graves

For a headstone, grave marker, or niche cover, fill out a Claim for Standard Government Headstone or Marker (VA Form 40-1330).

[Get VA Form 40-1330 to download](#)

Ordering A Medallion - For a medallion to be placed on a privately purchased headstone or marker, fill out a Claim for Government Medallion for Placement in a Private Cemetery (VA Form 40-1330M)

[Get VA Form 40-1330M to download](#)

If you need help, call the National Cemetery Administration Memorial Products Service at 800-697-6947. Memorial Products Service staff is available Monday through Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm (ET).

Ordering Historic Headstones and Markers (prior to World War I)

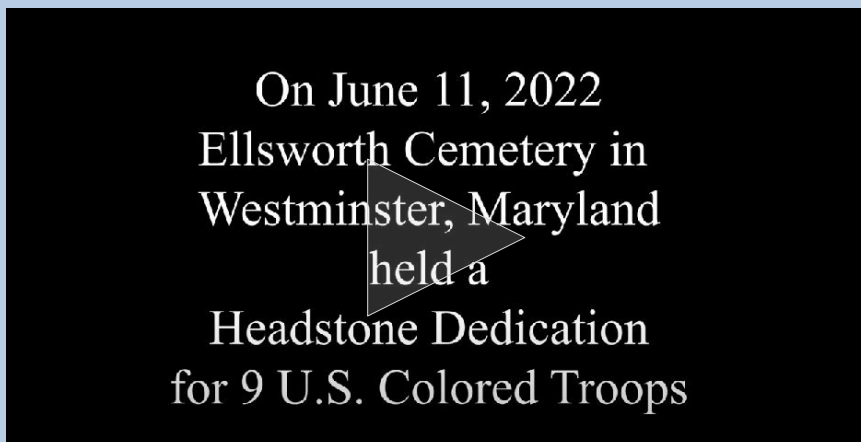
Eligibility criteria for a government-furnished headstone or marker are provided in Section 2306 of Title 38 of the United States Code (Headstones, Markers, and Burial Receptacles). The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) may furnish a government headstone or marker for eligible individuals buried in private cemeteries who died prior to November 1, 1990, if the grave is unmarked. VA may furnish a government headstone or marker for eligible individuals buried in private cemeteries who died on or after November 1, 1990, if the grave is marked with a private headstone or marker.

NCA Videos of Cemetery Restoration Projects: Placing Headstones on Unmarked Graves.



[View YouTube video, Preserving Veterans Legacies: Placing Headstones on Unmarked Graves](#)

See how Midland Cemetery owner and other researchers provide cemetery restoration.



[View YouTube video, Ellsworth Cemetery USCT Headstone Dedication](#)

Watch ceremony of Maryland historic cemetery preserve the legacy of nine African American Veterans gravesites with VA headstones.

Examples of Government Issued Headstones/Markers

Figure 1:



Figure 1: Bronze Flat Marker

Figure 2:



Figure 2: Older Marker with acceptable Patina.

Figure 3:



Figure 3: Marble Flat Marker.

Figure 4:



Figure 4: Left: Upright marble headstone, Middle: Headstone with lithograph, Right: Headstone without Lithograph

Figure 5:



Figure 5: Upright Granite Headstone (with lithograph)

VA Form 40-1330M, Medallion

[VA Form 40-1330M, Claim For Government Medallion To Affix To A Private Marker](#)

Medallion

The Department of Veterans Affairs provides two types of medallions, by request, to be affixed to an existing, privately purchased headstone or marker to signify the deceased's status as a Veteran or Veteran/Servicemember who is also a Medal of Honor recipient. These devices are furnished in lieu of a traditional Government headstone or grave marker for those Veterans who served on or after April 6, 1917, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. These medallions are durable and can be easily affixed to privately purchased headstones by anyone.



Bronze Medallions: Small, Medium, or Large. The bronze medallion is available in three sizes: **Small** (2" W x 1-1/2"H x 1/3" D), **Medium**, (3-3/4" W x 2-7/8"H x 1/4" D), **Large** (63/8" W x 4-3/4"H x 1/3" D) Each medallion is inscribed with the word "VETERAN" across the top and the branch of service at the bottom.

Medal of Honor Medallions: Medium or Large

The Medal of Honor (MOH) Medallion comes in two sizes. **Medium or Large.** Each medallion is inscribed with "MEDAL OF HONOR:" at the top and the branch of service at the bottom.



National Parks Service Gives Grants For Cemetery Restoration

The National Park Service (NPS) administers several competitive grant programs that are generally available to state and local governments and non-profit organizations. Faith-based organization would be eligible for these programs provided they have non-profit status.

Learn about [Competitive Grants at the Historic preservation Fund \(NPS\)](#)*

Organizations interested in preservation resources including documentation, funding, and technical assistance should contact their NPS [State Historic Preservation Office \(SHPO\)](#)* as a starting point.

Sample Story:

[Soapbox Cincinnati News: National Park Service awards major grant to historic African American cemetery](#)*

The caretakers of a historic but threatened African American cemetery in Cincinnati have been awarded a major federal grant to help restore it. The Union Foundation, which oversees the United American Cemetery in Madisonville, has been awarded a \$750,000 grant from the National Park Service.

Resources:

- [State Historic Preservation Office](#)*
- [Directory of National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers](#)*
- For property on federal or tribal land: [Advisory Council on Historic Properties, Federal Preservation Officer \(FPO\) list](#)* or [NPS, Tribal Historic Preservation Office Program](#)*
- [NPS, National Register of Historic Places](#)*
- Evaluation Criteria:
 - [NPS, National Register Criteria for Evaluation](#)*
 - [NPS, National Register Nomination Form](#)*
 - [NPS, Sample Nomination Forms \(currently not working\)](#)*
- [NPS, Guidelines for Evaluating and Registering Cemeteries and Burial Places](#)*
- [NPS, National Center for Preservation Technology and Training \(Videos\)](#)*

Questions about cemetery restoration should be sent to the VA National Cemetery Administration at VANCACOMREL@va.gov.

Visit [State Departments of Veterans Office locations](#)

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Cemetery Restoration Stories Across the Country

[Cincinnati, Ohio WCPO: Newly passed legislation will help fund Union Baptist Cemetery and other Black burial ground*](#)

[Galveston, TX The Daily News: Galveston's first Black cemetery included in national historic register*](#)

[National Park Service Communication Office: National Park Service awards \\$5 million to help preserve America's equal rights history*](#)

[Washington Township, PA Trib Star: Daughters of American Revolution to dedicate marker for 18 veterans interred at Washington Township cemetery *](#)

[Knoxville, TN Knox news: Mars Hill Cemetery, a historic oasis in West Knoxville, gets some love*](#)

[CNN.com: Decades of Black history were lost in an overgrown Pennsylvania cemetery until volunteers unearthed more than 800 headstones*](#)

[Abilene, TX KTAB/KRBC: Search for Family of freed slave buried in unmarked grave underway in Abilene*](#)

[Birmingham, AL WBRC: Historic Gadsden cemetery erects new headstones for veterans*](#)

[Springfield, IL, The State Journal-Register: 'The proper respect': Group looks to restore marker of Black Civil War veteran*](#)

[Kalamazoo, MI, WWMT: Unmarked grave of Civil War veteran honored with gravestone dedication in Allegan*](#)

[Fort Wayne, IN, WPTA: <https://www.21alivenews.com/2023/09/30/civil-war-memorials-unveiled-veterans-national-memorial-shrine-museum/>*](#)

[Albuquerque, NM, KOB4: New Mexicans celebrate renovated section for veterans at Fairview Cemetery*](#)

[Grand Rapids, MI WOODTV4: Veterans carry on public service with cemetery cleanup*](#)

[Louisville, KY, DailyCamera.com: Louisville Cemetery cleanup ensures veterans' resting spots are tidy*](#)

[Washington, DC, Doughboy Foundation: 'Hello Girls': The female telephone operators who helped win WWI*](#)

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