



“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 others who may be buried there.

VA Headstone and Marker

VA provides a free headstone or marker to any Veteran buried in a private cemetery anywhere in the world. There are countless Veterans from the Revolutionary War forward laying in unmarked graves. 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 Partners

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

Office of Resolution Management, Diversity & Inclusion (ORMDI)

Ms. Tynnetta Lee, Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov

Diversity & Inclusion Specialist, African American Program Manager, VA's Representative for Historically Black Colleges, and Universities, https://www.va.gov/ORMDI/Diversity_Inclusion.asp

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,
- Pulling invasive plant growth in the burial grounds and in gravestone collections,
- Add soil and grass seed to settlement and erosion areas,
- Placing surveyor flags at any identified memorials or gravesites identified as Veterans,
- Preparing and casting 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, resetting toppled headstones onto their bases, and righting 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. These government-furnished 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. Read more at www.cem.va.gov/hmm/cleaning.asp

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: <https://www.va.gov/burials-memorials/memorial-items/headstones-markers-medallions/>

Documents Needed

Generally, the Veterans DD-214 or similar discharge is needed to request the headstone/marker/medallion. See a complete list of documents here:

<https://www.va.gov/records/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](#)).

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](#)). Call the Memorial Products Service at 800-697-6947 for help, Monday-Friday, 8:00am to 5:00pm (EST)

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.

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

<https://youtu.be/00SgMtmbxx4>

Watch ceremony of Maryland historic cemetery preserve the legacy of nine African American Veterans gravesites with VA headstones. <https://youtu.be/mJkzeilWmYU>

Secretary shares Best Practices with Friends of Lebanon Cemetery in York, PA.

<https://youtu.be/ajlvBkmpo18>

Examples of Government Issued Headstones/Markers



Left: Bronze flat markers



Right: (older with acceptable patina)



Left:

Marble Flat Marker



Left:

Upright marble

Headstones (with and without
Lithograph)

Right:

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 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. You can find information about all of our competitive programs here: [Competitive Grants - Historic Preservation Fund \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/competitive-grants/historic-preservation-fund)

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

Sample Story:

[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](#)
- The National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers: [Directory | NCSHPO](#)
- If the property is on federal or tribal land, contact the [Federal Preservation Office](#) or [Tribal Preservation Office](#).
- [National Register of Historic Places \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)
- Evaluation Criteria:
 - [National Register Criteria for Evaluation](#)
 - [National Register Nomination Form](#)
 - [Sample Nomination Forms](#)
- [Guidelines For Evaluating Cemeteries](#)
- National Center for Preservation Technology and Training(Videos), [Cemetery Conservation - National Center for Preservation Technology & Training \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](#)

Questions to the VA National Cemetery Administration should be sent to VANCACOMREL@va.gov

State Veterans Offices

<https://department.va.gov/about/state-departments-of-veterans-affairs-office-locations/>

Cemetery Restoration Stories Across the Country

[Newly passed legislation will help fund Union Baptist Cemetery – WCPO, Cincinnati, Ohio](#)

Galveston County Daily News [Galveston's first Black cemetery included in national historic register | Local News](#)

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

[Daughters of American Revolution to dedicate marker for 18 veterans interred at Washington Township cemetery | TribLIVE.com](#)

[Historic Mars Hill Cemetery in West Knoxville gets some love \(knoxnews.com\)](#)

[Decades of Black history were lost in an overgrown Pennsylvania cemetery until a group of volunteers unearthed more than 800 headstones | CNN](#)

[Search for Family of freed slave buried in unmarked grave underway in Abilene | KTAB - BigCountryHomepage.com](#)

[Historic Gadsden cemetery erects new headstones for veterans](#)

[A group is restoring the marker of a Civil War veteran in Springfield \(sj-r.com\)](#)

8.3 - WWMT (CBS-3): [Unmarked grave of Civil War veteran honored with gravestone dedication in Allegan](#) (22 July, Gabrielle Dawson, 833k uvm; Kalamazoo, MI)

[Civil War Memorials unveiled at Veterans National Memorial Shrine and Museum - 21Alive \(Indiana\)](#)

KOB.com: [New Mexicans celebrate renovated section for veterans at Fairview Cemetery](#)

[Veterans carry on public service with cemetery cleanup - WOODTV.com](#)

[Louisville Cemetery cleanup ensures veterans' resting spots are tidy - Boulder Daily Camera](#)

The American Legion [A 'Hello Girl' recognized | The American Legion](#)