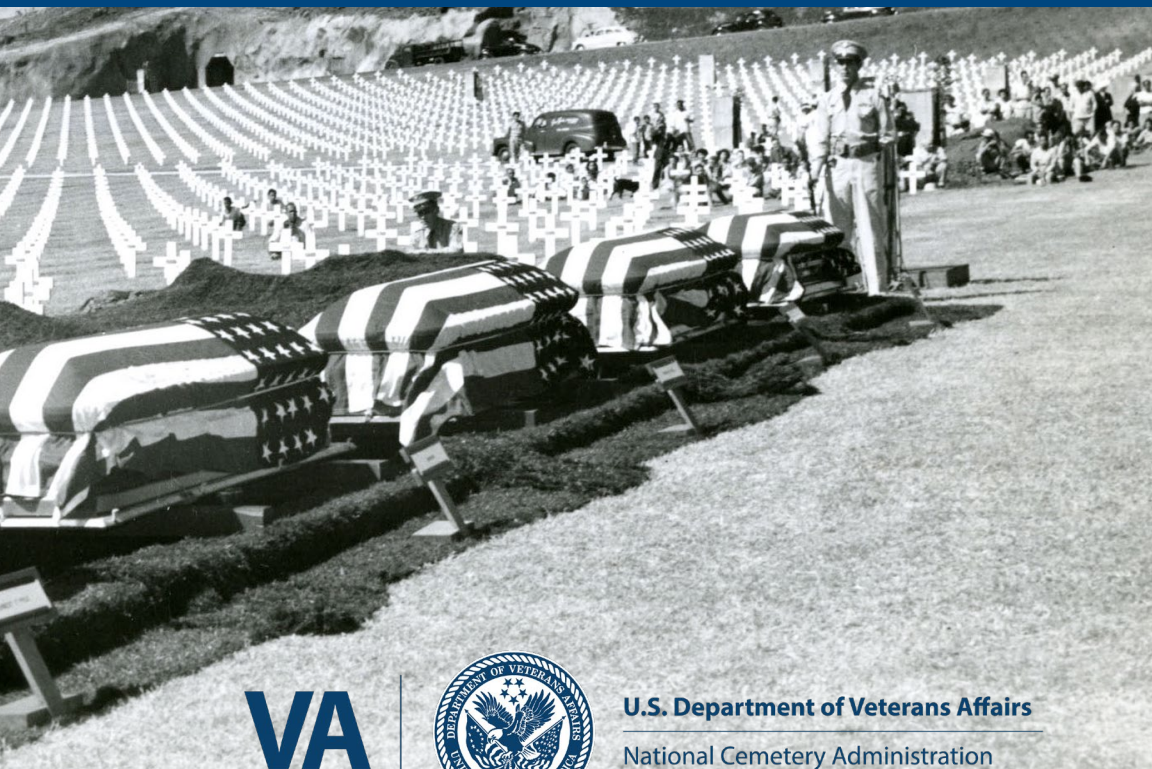




National Cemetery Administration

World War II 75th Commemorative Series

America's World War II Burial Program



VA



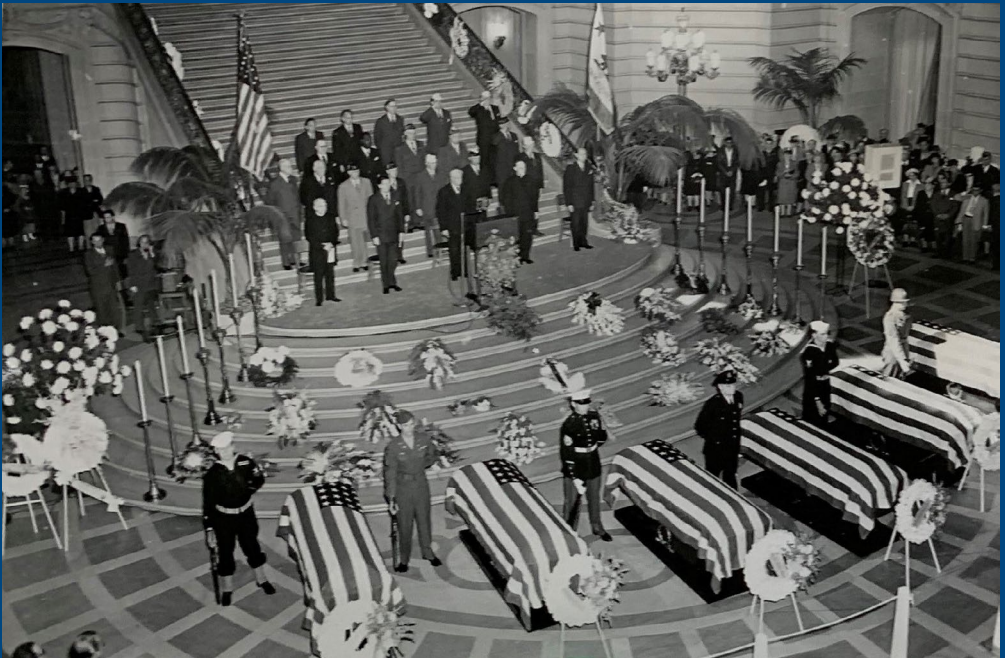
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

National Cemetery Administration



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

To fulfill President Abraham Lincoln's promise "to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans.



Ceremony in San Francisco in honor of the first American WWII dead repatriated. Memorial events were held at Marina Park and the San Francisco Civic Center, October 10-11, 1947. (US Army Photo, 111-SC-292307, NARA II, MD)

Cover: Interment of war correspondent Ernie Pyle and four others, including an unknown, in National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP), HI, July 19, 1949. (U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, NARA II, MD)

National Cemetery Administration
World War II 75th Commemorative Series

America's World War II Burial Program

History Program
Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovation
National Cemetery Administration
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

www.cem.va.gov



2020

Table of Contents

	Page
Message from VA Leadership	v
Foreword	vi
Part I:	
History of the National Cemetery System	1
History to World War II	1
National Cemeteries in World War II	7
Part II:	
Repatriation	10
“Return of the Dead Program”	10
Returning Home	15
Part III:	
Features of National Cemeteries	19
Design	19
Grave Markers	20
Burial Sections	22
Group Burials	22
Columbaria	23
Walls, Gates, Flagstaffs	23
Superintendent Lodges	24
Rostrums	24
Monuments and Tablets	25
Other National Cemeteries	26
Recommended Reading and Sources	27
National Cemetery Administration	30
Acknowledgments and Credits	C3

List of Illustrations

Interment of war correspondent Ernie Pylecover

Repatriated WWII dead honored at San Franciscoinside front cover

Grave of Fleet Admiral Nimitz and wife in Golden Gate National Cemetery1

The Dade Pyramids in St. Augustine National Cemetery6

Casketed Spanish-American War remains at Presidio6

French children decorate American WWI graves at Suresnes outside of Paris6

Interments in National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific10

Deceased crew of USS *New Mexico* being transported for burial off Okinawa13

Army officer examines map of temporary WWII burial plots in Europe14

American WWII dead being loaded in USAT *Joseph V. Connolly* at Antwerp,
Belgium15

Military escorts inspect caskets before final transport17

Elevation drawing of Golden Gate National Cemetery main gate19

Grave markers in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery21

Marker for group burial of USS *Minneapolis* crew in Fort McPherson National Cemetery ...22

World War II Monument in Fort Snelling National Cemetery25

1963 Army map of National Cemetery Installations28-29

Sidebars of NCA WWII Burials

Ernie Pyle (war correspondent), USN2

Millie Dunn Veasey (“Six Triple Eight” Battalion), USA3

Joseph R. Julian (MOH recipient), USMC4

Frank and Preston Toledo (Navajo Code Talkers), USMC8

Annie G. Fox, USA9

Roger Romine (Tuskegee Airmen), USAAF12

James E. Atterberry, USCG16

Charles B. Leinbach, USA18

USS *Minneapolis* (CA 36), USN23



**Robert L. Wilkie,
Secretary of the
Department of Veterans
Affairs**



**Randy C. Reeves,
Under Secretary for
Memorial Affairs**

Message from VA Leadership

"Millions of American service members defeated tyranny and led the world to victory in World War II. VA thanked these heroes by providing them not only with health care, but with other benefits that allowed millions of Veterans to thrive in the country they risked all to defend. In fact, the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, or 'G.I. Bill,' enabled those Veterans and their families to build the America we know. Decades later, the accomplishments of this generation shine just as brightly as they did upon their return from overseas, and our National Cemetery Administration has established thousands of permanent tributes to these patriots to ensure we never forget their sacrifice."

"One measure of the high price our World War II Veterans paid is the number of Americans who fought in that epic struggle: approximately 15 million. More than 405,300 of them heroically made the ultimate sacrifice. Here at home capacity at national cemeteries was increased in order to properly memorialize those Veterans and provide final resting places. In fact, NCA continues in this sacred mission today. We owe it to all of them to make sure that no Veteran from the 'Greatest Generation' ever dies."

Foreword

This National Cemetery Administration (NCA) publication is the first in a series on topics related to World War II. This introductory booklet coincides with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the end of the war and explains our sacred duty to memorialize the men and women who served in that epic conflict and who now rest in cemeteries managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

World War II was a transformative event of the twentieth century and laid the foundations for today's geopolitical world. Hardship and tragedy engulfed the globe and freedom was threatened as never before. In a show of resolve and unity that this country had never experienced, Americans from all walks of life – representing every race, creed and community – joined together to defeat tyranny.

More than 16 million Americans served in the Armed Forces during the conflict, helping the United States and its Allies emerge victorious. But that victory came at a cost. Official casualty sources estimate worldwide battle deaths at nearly 15 million military personnel, and civilian deaths at more than 38 million. Of that number, more than 405,300 Americans died.

Many citizens today do not realize that the U.S. government offered the families of American war dead burial options following the war. Like World War I, families of those killed abroad could choose burial in an overseas military cemetery or choose to repatriate the remains of a loved one to U.S. soil. More than 60 percent of WWII families chose to have the remains returned to the United States for interment. The repatriation program operated at a scale unprecedented in history. Service members representing every military branch and all segments of U.S. society were repatriated, many for burial in America's national cemeteries, then managed by the Army. In 1973, many of these cemeteries transferred to the VA with the establishment of the National Cemetery System. That system became the NCA in 1998. As of June 2020, there are 158 national cemeteries in all. NCA administers 143 of them. Two – Arlington and the U.S. Soldiers' and Airmen's Home national cemeteries – are still administered by the Army. Fourteen national cemeteries are maintained by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service.

Repatriated World War II dead form the core of our national remembrance of that conflict, which still endures today. As our country's WWII generation rapidly passes, many Veterans choose to be interred alongside their comrades in VA's national cemeteries.

Part I: History of the National Cemetery System



Grave of Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz and his wife, Catherine Freeman Nimitz, Golden Gate National Cemetery, CA. Admiral Nimitz desired to be buried alongside those he served with in the Pacific. (NCA Photo)

History to World War II

The United States created the national cemetery system to provide burial space for the large numbers of fallen federal troops during the Civil War (1861-1865). Between April 1861 and April 1865 an estimated 700,000 Union and Confederate service members, roughly 2 percent of the national population, died. By 1862 the need for gravesites was acute and in July of that year Congress authorized President Abraham Lincoln to establish national cemeteries “for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country.” Responsibility for the new cemeteries was placed with the Army Quartermaster General (AQG) which oversaw burial practices such as requiring ledger books that recorded name, grave number, and date of death, as well as provisioning the headboards for each grave. These responsibilities were laid out in the National Cemeteries Act of 1867.

While burial practices were standardized, war-time circumstances guided the location of the new national cemeteries during, and after,

NCA WWII Burials



"Ernie" Taylor Pyle

Ernest "Ernie" Taylor Pyle was born in Indiana in 1900. He enlisted in the U.S. Naval Reserves during World War I and served as a seaman. He attended Indiana University, but took time off from studies to travel abroad. He left school permanently in 1923, a semester shy of graduation, to write for newspapers in Indiana and Washington, D.C. He soon won acclaim as a roving journalist. When the United States entered World War II, Pyle reported from both the European (1942-1944) and Pacific (1945) theaters. The respected war correspondent received the Pulitzer Prize for journalism in 1944 and was killed a year later in the Battle of Okinawa. Pyle was temporarily buried on the island of Ie Shima where he died. After the war, his remains were interred in Okinawa, and finally repatriated to the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific, HI, in 1949 (Section D, Site 109).

the Civil War. Battle sites, railway hubs, and hospital centers determined where the bodies were buried. Approximately twenty-five national cemeteries and numerous soldiers' lots existed by the war's conclusion. The numbers are imprecise because it often took years for the government to secure the deed of title for land that became a burying ground during the conflict. Regulations at the time restricted burial in national cemeteries to Union Soldiers who fell in battle or who died while on active duty during the conflict. The only Confederate dead that the federal government maintained burial responsibility for were those who died as prisoners of war.

After the war, Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs directed officers to survey lands in the Civil War theaters to find Union dead and to rebury them in new national cemeteries. By 1872, there were 305,492 remains buried in seventy-four national cemeteries and several soldiers' lots, approximately 45 percent were unknowns. Precedents for the post-Civil War consolidation of remains by the AQG lie in earlier American wars. First is the burial of Soldiers killed during the Second Seminole War (1835-1842) after the cessation of hostilities in what is now St. Augustine National Cemetery, Florida. Their remains are in collective graves beneath three pyramids made of coquina stone. Subsequently, in 1851 after the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-1848), the Army gathered the remains of 750 Soldiers who died in or near Mexico City from scattered burial sites and reinterred them in



Millie Dunn Veasey

North Carolinian Millie Dunn Veasey was born in 1918 and graduated from Washington High School in Raleigh. She enlisted in 1942 and joined the "Six Triple Eight" Battalion, the only all-female, all-black unit to serve overseas during World War II. Dunn arrived in Glasgow, Scotland, in early 1945 among the 800 or so "women in technicolor" who overcame prejudice serving in the Women's Army Corps – first stationed in Birmingham, England, then Rouen, France. Staff Sergeant Dunn was discharged in 1945. She married Warren Veasey in 1949, graduated from St. Augustine College in 1953, and became president of the local chapter of the NAACP (1965-1968). The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation honored her service and life-long advocacy of education and civil rights. Veasey died March 9, 2018, at age 100, and is buried in Raleigh National Cemetery, NC, (Section 21, Site 215).

a collective grave in what became Mexico City National Cemetery, now maintained by the American Battle Monuments Commission (ABMC). The gravesite was marked by a single monument.

After the Civil War, the Army deactivated its obsolete western garrisons along former migration trails and trading routes. Post cemeteries at those locations were absorbed by the national cemetery system. Some were designated as national cemeteries. Where the post was closed, the remains were exhumed and reinterred in nearby national cemeteries such as Santa Fe, New Mexico; San Francisco (Presidio), California; and Fort McPherson, Nebraska. By 1900, the U.S. Army maintained eighty-one national cemeteries.

The Spanish-American War (1898-1902) marked an important shift in military burial practices. The theaters of war in Cuba and Philippine Islands led to U.S. combat deaths outside of the country for the first time since the Mexican-American War. In contrast to the decisions made after that conflict, the AQG repatriated the remains of all those who died in service during the Spanish-American War. The Burial Corps, which was composed of civilian morticians employed by the Quartermaster, oversaw the process. The burial policies and centralized record keeping implemented in the Civil War and after contributed to a lower number of unknowns. Less than 14 percent of the Spanish-American War dead, 385 in battle and 2,061 in service, were unknown burials.



Joseph "Rudy" Julian, Medal of Honor Recipient

President Lincoln signed a bill creating 200 "medals of honor" for Navy personnel in December 1861. He authorized 2,000 Army medals in July 1862. Both services made the decoration permanent on March 3, 1863. Today in excess of 390 Medal of Honor recipients are interred or memorialized in VA national cemeteries, more than ninety for service in WWII. Platoon Sergeant Joseph "Rudy" Rodolph Julian, USMCR, is but one example. Julian was with the 5th Marine Division on Iwo Jima on March 9, 1945. With his platoon stalled, Julian launched a one-man assault against fortified enemy positions and contributed to the continuation of their advance. He was mortally wounded in the attack. Julian is buried in Long Island National Cemetery, NY, (Section DSS, Site 12).

National cemetery system operations evolved again in response to new generations of Veterans. World War I propelled sweeping changes in Veterans' benefits, including future burial space, for the approximately 5 million men and women mobilized once the United States entered the war in 1917. Total American deaths in WWI were 116,516. While a small sum compared to other belligerents, it was substantial considering the short period of U.S. involvement. Secretary of War Newton D. Baker initially promised that the government would return the bodies of all those killed overseas. The War Department set up the Quartermaster Corps's American Graves Registration Service (AGRS) in August 1917 to handle the temporary burial process in Europe. Its detailed work and the introduction of service identification (dog) tags reduced the number of unknown burials to less than 4 percent.

While the War Department's objective was repatriation, the idea of honoring America's fallen in Europe where they had died found support from influential Americans such as former President Theodore Roosevelt who had lost a son in the conflict. Additionally, the policies of Allied partners to bury and memorialize their dead near battlefields, along with the overwhelming French and Belgian gratitude displayed for fallen Americans, made General John J. Pershing (Commander, American Expeditionary Force) desire to erect fitting cemeteries and monuments to his men on European battlefields. The federal government

ultimately presented families with a choice: have the remains transported to the United States for burial or to reinter them in an American military cemetery established in Europe. Approximately 65 percent elected repatriation. Of the 46,520 remains sent home, just more than 12 percent, or approximately 5,800, were buried in a national cemetery. In Europe, the AGRS continued its consolidation process and reburied 30,973 remains in six American military cemeteries in France, Belgium, and England (another 4,456 were commemorated on Tablets of the Missing within the cemeteries). In 1923, stewardship of these cemeteries became the responsibility of the newly created ABMC, chaired by General Pershing himself.

Just as the War Department relinquished administrative responsibility for overseas military cemeteries, in the 1930s it also transferred national cemeteries adjacent to historic battlefields to the National Park Service (NPS), a bureau of the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Concurrently, the War Department was planning an expansion of the national cemetery system for a large number of modern Veterans. While relatively few World War I dead were buried in national cemeteries, enlistment for the war dramatically increased the Veteran population eligible for a burial benefit. A survey of the national cemetery system in 1929 assessed the capacities of existing cemeteries to meet future needs. The results indicated that space would be available until the 1990s; however, more than 50 percent of all interments occurred in just nine of the eighty-four national cemeteries. Many Civil War-era cemeteries were closed to new burials and demographic studies revealed increased numbers of Veterans living in urban areas. These statistics suggested city-living Veterans would face burial space constraints. In response, and in anticipation of future need, the Army pursued new cemeteries near where Veterans resided. Seven national cemeteries were established between 1934 and 1939 in California, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, and Texas. The seven inter-war national cemeteries marked the first designed expansion of the cemetery system since its inauguration in 1862. They also illustrated a significant shift in how sites were selected, based on population statistics and advocacy by Veterans' groups. The planned interwar expansion proved timely with the coming of World War II.



The Dade Pyramids at St. Augustine National Cemetery, FL, ca. 1885. The pyramids were dedicated in August 1842 and cover the vaults of Soldiers who died during the Florida Indian Wars (1835-1842). (The Miriam and Ira D. Wallach Photography Collection, b11707414, New York Public Library)



Casketed remains of Soldiers who died of various diseases during the Spanish-American War at Presidio cemetery (San Francisco National Cemetery), ca. 1900. (Yountville Collection, GOG 1766, Golden Gate NRA, Park Archives, San Francisco, CA)



French children decorating graves at the American military cemetery at Suresnes outside of Paris for Lafayette Day, September 1918. Suresnes became a permanent ABMC WWI cemetery, it also holds American WWII unknowns. (American Red Cross Photograph Collection, ANRC-17561, Library of Congress)

National Cemeteries in World War II

The December 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor thrust the United States into World War II (1941-1945). More than 16 million Americans served in the conflict, and over 405,300 died, more than 291,000 of these being combat deaths. The national cemetery system faced an influx of burials not seen since its establishment. As the country entered WWII, historic precedent indicated that a combination of repatriated war dead and Veterans eligible for interment in national cemeteries would greatly increase the need for burial space in national cemeteries. It was unclear during the war where deceased American service members would permanently rest. The Army Quartermaster General initially anticipated that more WWII families would request the repatriation of bodies than those following the Great War and determined that if 70 percent of families made such requests, all dead would be brought home. This prediction was based on two factors. American WWII battlefields were not only in western Europe like WWI, but also on remote Pacific islands. Second, most of the ABMC's WWI cemeteries fell into enemy hands during WWII. While they suffered only minor damage, it was believed that this might compel families to view overseas cemeteries as inherently vulnerable. Wholesale repatriation was abandoned by war's end as it became clear that such a policy would undoubtedly quash the wishes of many families.

Over 280,000 recovered American remains from World War II would be interred abroad and at home in the decade after the war. The ABMC selected fifteen sites for the 92,958 remains whose families opted for interment overseas (this includes over 6,000 unknowns). They memorialized more than 78,900 names on Tablets of the Missing in their cemeteries. Over 171,000 families requested repatriation. Approximately 133,000 were interred in private cemeteries, while just over 37,000 (or 20 percent of the total repatriated) were buried in national cemeteries. While not counted among the repatriated at the time, the 13,000 WWII remains buried in the newly created National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (NMCP) at Honolulu should also be recognized among those returned to American soil; similarly, are those buried at Fort Richardson and Sitka national cemeteries in Alaska, and at Puerto Rico National Cemetery in San Juan.



Navajo Code Talkers

Cousins Frank and Preston Toledo, Navajos and from New Mexico, enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps on October 17, 1942. Both were Code Talkers in the Pacific during World War II and are buried in Santa Fe National Cemetery. Navajo Code Talkers were American Indians recruited by the Marines to relay messages on the battlefield using their tribal language. Frank, a corporal, mustered out in January 1946, a few weeks later than Preston, a private first class. A photograph of the Toledo cousins was featured in a traveling Smithsonian Institution exhibition beginning in 2006. For many, this image made them a face of this extraordinary group. In 2001, the 29 original Code Talkers were awarded the Congressional Gold Medal and those who served later in the top-secret program received the Silver Medal. Frank's honor was posthumous; he died August 14, 1970 (Section V, Site 1780). Preston died December 15, 2004, (Section 13, Site 648).

The high numbers of those who served during the war caused eligible Veteran burial projections to rise steeply, as well. Estimates of “registrants” by state early in the war showed that at least 12.5 million Veterans would qualify for a grave in a national cemetery. This jumped to over 16 million with the inclusion of surviving Spanish-American War and WWI-era Veterans. If historic trends held and 17 percent of qualifying Veterans utilized their burial benefit, approximately 5.5 million gravesites in national cemeteries would be needed for Veterans, spouses, and eligible dependents in the post-war era. Only fourteen national cemeteries out of ninety-one at the time offered space and proximity to population centers for inclusion in post-war schemes. An additional eight cemeteries had very limited space for new burials and fifty-four Civil War-era cemeteries were closed. A wartime study of military burial plans called for the creation of more than seventy national cemeteries but the costly and ambitious plan lost traction in the post-war Congress. The national cemetery system underwent conservative modernization. Ultimately, only four WWII-era specific cemeteries were constructed by the Army (NMCP, Willamette National Cemetery in Oregon, Black Hills National Cemetery in South Dakota, and Puerto Rico National Cemetery). Two existing properties in Alton, Illinois, and Fort Logan, Colorado, became national cemeteries in 1948 and 1950, respectively. The first influx of WWII burials to the cemetery system

**Annie G. Fox**

On December 7, 1941, First Lieutenant Annie Fox was stationed at Hickam Field adjacent to the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. She was the chief nurse and became the first woman to receive the Purple Heart in 1942 for "outstanding performance of duty" during the Japanese attacks on the naval base. Her "calmness, courage and leadership was of great benefit to the morale of all with whom she came in contact." Initially reserved for bravery in action, today the Purple Heart is awarded to those injured or killed in combat. This criteria change was made during World War II, and in 1944 the Army rescinded her Purple Heart replacing it with the Bronze Star. Fox enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps in 1918 and retired from military service in 1945. She died in 1987, age 93, and is buried in San Francisco National Cemetery (Section A, Site 657-A).

happened when the first repatriated remains began arriving to the East and West coasts in late 1947. In the decades since these initial repatriations, hundreds-of-thousands of WWII Veterans have joined their comrades in VA national cemeteries.

Through 2018, six of the inter-world war and World War II-era national cemeteries are among the twelve most active burial locations for World War II Veterans: Fort Logan, Colorado; Fort Rosecrans, California; Fort Snelling, Minnesota; Golden Gate, California; Long Island, New York; and Willamette, Oregon. These cemeteries contain 428,988 Veterans of the war.

Part II: Repatriation



A Marine Guard of Honor stands at the head of a casket prior to interment rites in NMCP, HI, March 23, 1949. (U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, NARA II, MD)

“Return of the Dead Program”

The Graves Registration Service recovered the remains of more than 280,000 service members from all theaters of action following World War II. Of these, 171,752 returned to the continental United States via the “Return of the Dead Program.” This complex repatriation program came at an unprecedented financial cost, nearly \$2 billion in 2019 currency, and relied on the labor of over 13,000 uniformed and civilian workers. Returning military dead scattered across the globe, many in remote locations, proved to be a long, arduous process and a logistical feat similar to a wartime operation. The recovery and final disposition of remains buried in temporary cemeteries began six months after the war ended. The delay was borne out of the necessities for planning and procurement of necessary manpower and resources unavailable during combat operations. Recovery and repatriation operations were split up into different regions globally. There were three primary AGRS Command Areas—Europe and Mediterranean, Southwest Pacific and Asiatic, and American—with subordinate zones and field units within each. Military and civilian AGRS personnel in each of these areas recovered, identified, and consolidated dead within their zones. Simultaneously, AGRS and ABMC staff were planning repatriations and

new permanent overseas cemeteries. Much of the planning hinged on decisions made by grieving families.

Recovery and burial of fallen combatants is not a uniquely American practice. Wartime remains have historically been removed due to practical concerns such as sanitation and forensic analysis, for consideration of the living's morale, and out of political or moral motivation. The extent to which the United States endeavored to return its military dead from foreign soil is an overwhelmingly American phenomenon, though. The practice differed so greatly from its wartime Allies that thoughtful explanation of the process was often necessary to alleviate the disappointment in host countries generated by the removal of remains that they proudly cared for.

The American fighting force in World War II, predominately draftees, partially overcame their repugnance of blood, decay, and death by appreciating the emphasis placed on care and consideration for the dead. A manual on the psychology of war available to American Soldiers made the assurance that all American remains, perhaps even their own, would receive "thoughtful care and a decent burial," and that every effort would be made to recover a body, even if it involved personal risk. This expectation was bolstered by the federal government's promise that the "final disposition of our soldiers' remains, in accordance with the wishes of their loved ones, is an inherent obligation of the Government as the final gesture of a grateful country to those who paid the supreme sacrifice." The Memorial Division of the AGRS promised that should families choose a national cemetery, "the flag for which they fought will wave majestically and projectingly over their graves each day from dawn until dusk" and offered assurance that "the names of these Veterans will be perpetuated."

Wishes of immediate family were of the utmost importance to the military and it worked to assure that their every "desire should be fulfilled with regards to final disposition of their loved one." A wartime policy forbidding the transport of remains until hostilities ceased precluded, and greatly extended, the mourning process for families. They received an initial notice of death along with word that decisions on final interment would come later. After the war, families received a questionnaire along with the detailed 1946 Quartermaster pamphlet, "Tell Me About My Boy," explaining burial options. The War Department



Roger Romine

Roger Romine, was a standout scholar and a track star at Oakland Technical High School, California. After studying at Salinas Junior College and San Jose State, he enlisted in the Army Air Forces (AAF) and received a commission in September 1943. Romine rose to the rank of first lieutenant and piloted a P-51 Mustang in the 302nd Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group - the Tuskegee Airmen. He was credited with shooting down three German planes while protecting heavy bombers. After scoring two victories he wrote his parents, "We ARE all afraid, but chance decides in most cases." Romine was killed in Italy on November 16, 1944, when another plane collided with his during takeoff for his 98th mission. The 24-year-old held the Air Medal with five Oak Leaf Clusters and was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He is buried in Golden Gate National Cemetery (Section J, Site 785).

also produced films, such as *Decision* (1946), that explained the process. Families could leave remains abroad in a permanent overseas cemetery maintained in perpetuity by ABMC, have them returned home at the government's expense for burial in a national or private cemetery, or have them sent to a foreign country for burial in a private cemetery if it was the homeland of the deceased or family. Families of those killed at the very end of the war had a two-year wait, at minimum, for repatriation. Families of those killed early in the conflict had to wait up to five-years or more for final burial and closure.

It is impossible to provide a typical family experience or easily characterize their decision process. Some chose to leave remains overseas out of patriotic convictions, others because the pain of having them returned so long after death reopened wounds. National cemeteries provided a desirable option for some families, but distance made them an undesirable option for some who lived too far for easy visitation.

An irrevocable fixed date for family decisions was set depending on timing of exhumation operations in different areas of the world. Deadlines were very deliberately established not too far away, or close, to overseas exhumation operations. The AGRS did not wish to provide families with time to amend their initial decision, or to give themselves inadequate time to establish burial plans. Layouts of permanent overseas cemeteries were considered complete once the final word from next of kin arrived as

additional exhumations would alter the carefully planned memorial plots. When the cemeteries were officially transferred from the AGRS to the ABMC they were considered closed to future burials.

Some families did not have a choice of final resting places. Congress granted the Secretary of War discretionary powers to determine the final disposition of the some 10,000 unidentified remains from the war and for group burials with one or more known individuals. The War Department's "Final Plan" for the disposition of remains written in September 1945 called for the return of all unknowns to U.S. national cemeteries. Legislation in August 1947 reversed this practice and allowed for the interment of unknowns in permanent overseas cemeteries, where most of the 10,000 now lie. Most unknowns from the Pacific were split between the ABMC cemetery at Manila with just more than 3,600 and the Army's NMCP with just more than 2,000. Group



Crew killed in Kamikaze attack on Fifth Fleet flagship, USS *New Mexico* (BB 40) in the Battle of Okinawa on May 12, 1945. This photo was taken after a funeral service held the next day, when fifty-four bodies were being transported off ship for temporary burial in the U.S. Army's 27th Division Cemetery at Ie Shima, Okinawa. Sixteen of these remains, nine Sailors and seven Marines, were eventually repatriated to national cemeteries in AR, CA, HI, MN, TN, and VA. (U.S. Navy Photo, 80-G-326653, NARA II, MD)

burials became a common practice in WWII when individual names of decedents were known, but individual identification was impossible. This was often the scenario with crews of severely damaged aircraft, ships, and tanks. The War Department determined that such individually unidentified comingled remains would be repatriated and interred in the national cemetery most centrally located from the residences of families involved. Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri, contains in excess of 500 group burials; the largest is a group of 123 victims of the December 14, 1944, Japanese attack on Palawan Island. Group graves were initially marked with an upright headstone inscribed with all decedents. The number of names required on some markers made them ungainly and a flat stone was adopted in 1950.



The AGRS's objective was to locate, evacuate, and identify all U.S. military dead. A European Area operations officer in France stands with a site map and points out the location of isolated burials to be recovered by a disinterment team, ca. 1946. (U.S. Army Photo, 111-SC-288458, NARA II, MD)

Returning Home

Identification and exhumations of remains took place concurrently in Europe and the Pacific. Field units in each exhumed graves in scattered plots and consolidated them temporarily. Dependent on family decisions, the bodies were moved to a permanent overseas cemetery (unless the temporary cemetery would become permanent) or temporarily buried or placed in an above-ground mausoleum (only in the Pacific) until shipment home. Nearly 87,000 remains, more than half the total of repatriated dead, came from the European theater. Despite the high volume in Europe, the work in the Pacific proved more challenging because of the vastness and remoteness of the area, as well as the tropical climate. Of 86,000 remains recovered in the Pacific, a total of 54,692 (excluding those in Hawaii, Alaska, and Puerto Rico) were repatriated. The shipments of casketed remains began in fall 1947. Because the first American deaths of WWII occurred in the Pacific,



Caskets of American war dead being loaded into hold #1 of USAT *Joseph V. Connolly* at Pier #4, Antwerp, Belgium, on September 30, 1947. Local residents held a large farewell ceremony for the departing heroes. (U.S. Army Photo, 111-SC-290894, NARA II, MD)

**James E. Atterberry**

The U.S. Coast Guard played an important role in Operation Neptune, the amphibious portion of the June 6, 1944, Normandy invasion. Its primary role was landing 1st Infantry Division troops on the easternmost portion of Omaha Beach. Four USCG LCI's (Landing Craft Infantry) were destroyed on D-Day. Larger than smaller landing craft such as Higgins Boats that brought in the first wave of troops, LCI's faced just as daunting a task. Obstacles blocked their approach and the vessels became hung up or damaged by mines, becoming easy targets. One crewman described the ordeal after hitting a mine: "The 88's began hitting the ship, they tore into the compartments and exploded on the exposed deck. Machine guns opened up. Men were hit and men were mutilated. There was no such thing as a minor wound." LCI 91 made it to the beach but struck a mine in the process. German shells decimated the crippled vessel, setting it afire. Seven crewmen were killed, including Gunner's Mate First Class James Everett Atterberry. His remains were returned to his home state of Arkansas for burial in Fort Smith National Cemetery (Section 4, Site 2154).

dead from that theater made the first voyage home. They sailed on the U.S. Army Transport (USAT) *Honda Knot* from Hawaii to San Francisco on September 30, 1947, with all Navy ships in port displaying their colors at half-mast; the vessel arrived at San Francisco on October 10. The USAT *Joseph V. Connolly* sailed from Europe to New York with repatriations from that theater four days later and it arrived at the New York Port of Embarkation on October 26.

Respectful and solemn ceremonies marked the beginning and end of repatriation voyages. The first group of American remains that left Antwerp, Belgium, were bade farewell from the whole town and paraded to the transport ship. Overseas transportation for the duration of the repatriation period was provided by an Army Mortuary Fleet under the jurisdiction of the Army Transportation Corps. The fleet was composed primarily of converted Liberty ships that could each carry around 6,500 caskets.

The first mortuary ships arriving in San Francisco and New York received heroes' welcomes followed by memorial events at local civic centers. At New York, the casket of an unnamed Medal of Honor recipient on board was conveyed to Central Park and more than 250,000 spectators silently lined the route; a ceremony attended by excess of 150,000 spectators capped the event. While the events were somber compared to the city's Victory Day celebrations years before, they created an atmosphere "contrary to the subdued spirit in which AGRS attempted to

conduct the whole repatriation project.” The routine after each docking was to unload the ships, inspect and inventory caskets, provide the final lists to higher command, and notify families so funeral planning could be finalized. AGRS clerks remained in contact with local Veteran and patriotic organizations so that they could support in the memorialization process. Remains were organized based on final destination and shipped by special railway cars to one of fifteen distribution centers. Families received second notice when the remains reached their distribution center. The casket then began its final leg of the journey, each was escorted by a uniformed representative of the decedent’s Service.

Few problems arose with the whole process. The biggest issue reported by the Memorial Division dealt with leaking information to families. In some instances, clerks at ports or distribution centers sent notice to families pre-maturely causing some irritation when the shipment did not arrive immediately. In addition, some local Veterans’ groups discovered names of arriving dead and took it upon themselves



The final stages of repatriation. Escorts at the Atlanta General Depot in Conley, GA, inspect caskets before their departure to final destinations, January 20, 1949. (U.S. Army Photo, 111-SC-317974, NARA II, MD)

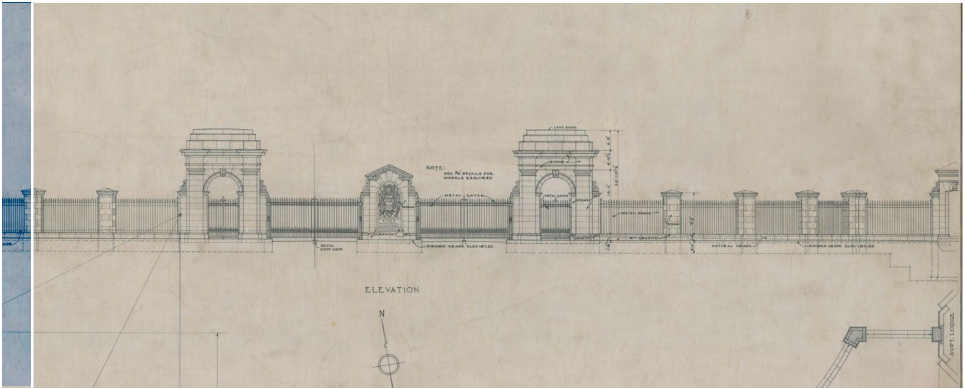
**Charles B. Leinbach**

Charles B. Leinbach was born in Pennsylvania in 1897 to German immigrants. He worked on the family farm before enlisting in the U.S. Army in 1914. A talent for mathematics led to field artillery assignments and Leinbach completed officer's training as World War I ended. He married in 1918 and his family accompanied him to posts across the country. In 1940-1941, as World War II escalated, Leinbach was stationed in the Philippine Islands where he led the 1st Battalion, 25th Field Artillery (Philippine Scouts) and attained the rank of lieutenant colonel. Leinbach earned a Silver Star during the Battle of Bataan before his capture during the surrender of Bataan in April 1942. Leinbach was a prisoner of war until his death onboard the Japanese prison ship *Enoura Maru* on January 9, 1944. His remains were repatriated in 1948 to San Francisco National Cemetery (Section OS, Row 82, Site 12).

to notify families before AGRS could. The escorts served admirably and proved to be a vital aspect of the process. In many situations these young men were the "only personal contact made with relatives" by the government during repatriation. They were often "leaned upon by bereaved families, funeral directors, Veterans' groups and others" and sometimes "became another son" to grieving families.

The government's "Return of the Dead Program" was undertaken not just for those killed, but for their families. It was a promise kept to those who made the ultimate sacrifice for their country. The journey back for all service members who died far from home between December 1941 and August 1945 was a long one in distance and time. Remains repatriated from across the world between 1947-1951 made up the vanguard of post-war burials in national cemeteries, now part of a system overseen by the NCA that continually ensures that a U.S. Veteran never dies in that their memory is preserved forever.

Part III: Features of National Cemeteries



Elevation drawing, main gate at Golden Gate National Cemetery, San Bruno, CA, 1940. (NCA History Collection)

Parts I and II of this booklet have provided a history of the national cemetery system through World War II and an overview of America's WWII burial program. Part III will provide a broad overview of the design and common features of the cemeteries that enshrine American Veterans.

Design

The design of national cemeteries that emerged in the 1860s under the Quartermaster Department developed in tandem with the commemorative landscapes found in private and municipal cemeteries. Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs was aware of those cemetery planning projects and the need to establish a federal presence to honor the nation's fallen during Reconstruction. He consulted the nation's leading landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, who advised that "the main object [of the national cemeteries] should be to establish permanent dignity and tranquility," with national cemeteries becoming "sacred groves." At the time, the trends in site layout were shifting from eclectic monuments and gently rolling landscape of the Rural Cemetery Movement to the low, flat simplicity and uniform grave markers in the Lawn Park and Memorial Park settings. The quartermaster's construction program of enclosing walls and ornamental gates, axial pathways, central flagstaffs, superintendent lodges, rostrums, and standard headstones

defined the tangible character of a national cemetery and the permanent dignity and tranquility that Olmsted endorsed. They are, historically, very secular landscapes, and chapels built around the mid-twentieth century in a handful of cemeteries were even short lived. Instead, committal shelters offer space for non-denominational funeral services.

Grave Markers

The government-issued headstones marking graves of World War I and II dead in national cemeteries are the “General” type adopted in 1922 and still used today. In size and features it is distinctly different than its nineteenth century predecessor.

General Orders No. 75 codified U.S. Army burial practices in September 1861, requiring that all Civil War dead be recorded in ledgers with a corresponding grave number. In 1867, Congress authorized the War Department to replace the failing wooden headboards with a permanent stone marker or block at graves in national cemeteries (this benefit was extended to Veterans buried in private cemeteries in 1879). The first “durable” marble upright headstone was approved in 1873 with a rounded top. From 1873 to 1903 graves of unknown dead were identified by a 6-inch-square marble block; thereafter upright headstones were used.

By the 1890s, a recessed-shield design with raised lettering for the inscription became the standard. The same headstone was used for Veterans of the Spanish-American War, with that conflict inscribed to distinguish them from Civil War service. In 1903, stones were widened by two inches and the recessed shield formalized. Around the same time, graves of Confederate POWs buried in cemeteries overseen by the Army were first marked with a headstone with a pointed top and inscribed with “C.S.A.” for Confederate States of America.

Headstone appearance remained consistent until World War I, when in 1918, a new design was introduced for those who served in the Great War. An upright marble slab with the same rounded top as the original design, but inscriptions were incised and included the first “emblems of belief.” Initially the Army approved only two emblems, a cross for the Christian faith or a Star of David for the Jewish faith (ABMC adopted far different headstones for their overseas cemeteries—upright Latin crosses or Stars of David). The initial design was quickly replaced by a more

substantial version, 42 inches long, 13 inches wide, and 4 inches thick, in 1922. This became known as the “General” type. Inscriptions on the General include emblems of belief above the Veteran’s name, highest military rank held, regiment, and grave number, in addition to life dates, conflict, and home state. The General headstone remains standard for Veterans from WWI to the present. Additional emblems of belief were adopted after WWII. Today many faith systems are represented. General headstones are also used to mark the graves of foreign nationals who died in the United States during training and for WWI and WWII prisoners of war, who died while imprisoned on U.S. soil.

Commemorative practices in the twentieth century evolved and the flat grave marker used in Lawn Park and Memorial Park cemeteries became popular. Requests from Veterans to the War Department for flat markers led to their initial approval for use in private cemeteries that did not allow upright headstones. This was expanded to national cemeteries in the mid-1930s. The “flats” measure 12 inches by 24 inches and were produced first in marble, then in granite, and finally bronze in 1940. The WWII-era saw the exclusive use of flat markers at new national cemeteries in Hawaii, Oregon, and Puerto Rico.



“General” type and flat grave markers at Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery, San Diego, CA, ca. 2017. (NCA Photo)

Burial Sections

The majority of Civil War-era cemeteries and post cemeteries were less than 10 acres, while the inter-world war and World War II cemeteries were several hundred acres in size. Regardless of scale, topography and aesthetic trends influenced the layout. Within the enclosing walls, interments are organized within burial sections identified with a number or letter. Individual graves are numbered within each section. By design or practice, the U.S. Army initially identified burial sections to segregate officers and enlisted men, white and black service members, POWs, and the unknowns. As time passed, gravesites were increasingly assigned regardless of rank and regiment.

Group Burials

Despite the efforts of the AGRS and the improvement of identification techniques through the world wars, it was often impossible to separate remains of those killed in airplane crashes or naval tragedies. As with the graves of Americans who served in the Second Seminole War in 1835, or the men who died in Mexico in 1846-1848, group burials from twentieth century wars are marked by a shared headstone or monument. With DNA identification techniques available today, group burials are primarily a phenomenon of the past.



Marker for a group burial of USS *Minneapolis* Sailors at Fort McPherson National Cemetery, NE, on September 1, 1949 (Section R, Grave 6). (NCA Photo)



USS Minneapolis (CA 36)

On the night of November 30, 1942, USS *Minneapolis*, flagship of Task Force 67, intercepted Japanese ships reinforcing Guadalcanal in the Battle of Tassafaronga. American ships attacked first, sinking one enemy destroyer. More practiced at night battles, the Japanese outmaneuvered their attackers and unleashed a devastating salvo of torpedoes. Two struck the forward port side of *Minneapolis*, ripping her bow nearly off. Thirty-six engineers were instantly trapped in a deluge of oil and water, only one escaped. The dead could not be confirmed until the ship entered drydock much later for repairs. Thirteen of these Sailors, 9 known and 4 unknown, were interred as a group burial in Fort McPherson National Cemetery, NE, on September 1, 1949 (Section R, Grave 6).

Columbaria

Columbarium, a structure containing niches designed to hold cremated remains, became an increasing and practical feature of national cemeteries starting in the 1980s, after the majority of Army cemeteries fell under VA management. However, between the two world wars, the first and only indoor columbarium in the cemetery system was built at Los Angeles National Cemetery in 1940. In 2019, a contemporary columbarium was dedicated to again provide interments there. Riverside National Cemetery, California, contains the first outdoor columbarium, constructed in the late 1970s. They quickly became standard elements of new cemeteries or in expansion projects as they provided a means to inter Veterans and eligible family members at cemeteries with limited or no new space for in-ground burials. They are adaptable to terrain that is unusable for traditional grave sites or can be placed against walls. As of 2020, almost half of all interments in NCA cemeteries are cremated remains.

Walls, Gates, Flagstaffs

In 1867, the Act to Establish and Protect National Cemeteries directed the enclosure of the burying grounds with masonry walls and the installation of ornamental iron gates at the entrances. Commonly, on axis with the entrance gate was the flagstaff. The walls, gates, and U.S. flag overlaid the cemeteries with an air of permanence and the sanctity of the Union in perpetuity. Masonry walls and metal picket

fences define the boundaries of the inter-world war and World War II period cemeteries, as well. In keeping with the architectural vocabulary of the first national cemeteries, substantial gates mark the entrance to the newer national cemeteries.

Superintendent Lodges

The lodges constructed by the U.S. Army are a catalog of American housing types that spans a century, and they are the dominant building in the first century of national cemeteries. Between 1867 and 1960, the Quartermaster Department built lodges for cemetery superintendents that were both home and office. The dual purpose defined early floorplans and architectural design. The function also determined placement of the lodges near the entrance gates of visitor access. Construction in the 1930s reflected regional building trends, which was a departure from the nearly identical Victorian lodges built after the Civil War. Superintendent lodges were not required buildings after the 1950s.

Rostrums

The rostrums built in national cemeteries have served as speakers' stands for ceremonies from the 1870s to the present. They are the second-most character-defining cemetery structure because of their public function. The platforms were developed in response to keen public patriotism and the adoption of national cemeteries as places of commemoration in the aftermath of the Civil War, especially Decoration Day (later named Memorial Day) at the end of May. Two standard designs—octagonal or rectangular with a roof or trellis—were the basis for all rostrums constructed in the nineteenth century. The phase of new cemetery construction from the late 1930s through WWII featured larger rostrums in regional, neoclassical, and revival styles, or as open spaces for assembly.

Monuments and Tablets

Approximately 1,350 memorial monuments are found in the national cemetery system today, and more are donated each year. They honor service in specific or multiple conflicts, states, events, military units, and more. Nineteenth century monuments were often sculptural and with a figure mounted on a stone plinth, or an obelisk. Cannon and anchors were also folded into the commemorative landscape. Twentieth century monuments assumed standard forms.

Important features in the national cemeteries contribute to the memorial setting but they are not monuments. Cast-iron tablets include a verse from the poem "Bivouac of the Dead" by Theodore O'Hara. President Abraham Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" was placed in all national cemeteries in 1909 to commemorate the centennial of his birth. Other tablets provide practical or historic information to visitors.



World War II Monument at Fort Snelling National Cemetery, MN, erected 2002. Fort Snelling opened in 1939 and contains one of the highest concentrations of WWII burials. (NCA Photo)

Other National Cemeteries

Three other federal agencies oversee government-owned cemeteries: the American Battle Monuments Commission (26), the National Park Service (14), and the U.S. Army (2). The ABMC was established in 1923 to care for cemeteries created overseas as a result of World War I. In the 1930s, the NPS received custodianship of Civil War-era cemeteries adjacent to national battlefield parks during the reorganization of the Executive Branch of government under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Some NPS cemeteries, such as Gettysburg and Antietam, hold the remains of repatriated WWII dead. In 1973, the U.S. Army transferred 82 national cemeteries to the VA and retained oversight of just two, Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia and the U.S. Soldiers' Home (known today as the Armed Forces Retirement Home), in Washington, D.C. The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency continues to exhume and identify previously unknown remains, some of which are WWII remains interred in NCA cemeteries.

Recommended Reading and Sources

Visit <https://www.cem.va.gov/cem/history/index.asp> for resources in addition to those cited here.

Current Plan for Return of American Dead and Establishment of Overseas and United States Cemeteries. Washington, DC: War Department, September 1945.

Harrison, Michael R. *National Cemeteries, Superintendent's Lodges.* Historic American Landscapes Survey Report, 2013. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Harrison, Michael R. *National Cemeteries, Rostrums.* Historic American Landscapes Survey Report, 2013. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Holt, Dean W. *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to the Hallowed Grounds of the United States, including Cemeteries Overseas.* Second edition. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co., 2010.

Leach, Sara Amy. "World War I Veterans and Their Federal Burial Benefits." *AGS Quarterly – Bulletin of the Association for Gravestone Studies* 41, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 36-41.

Steere, Edward, and Thayer M. Boardman. *Final Disposition of World War II Dead 1945-51.* Washington, DC: Historical Branch, Office of the Quartermaster General, 1957.

Steere, Edward. *Shrines of the Honored Dead: A Study of the National Cemetery System.* Washington DC: Office of the Quartermaster General, 1954.

Inter-World War National Cemeteries, 1934-1939. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination Form, 2015. National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, DC.

U.S. Army in World War II Series. U.S. Army Center of Military History.



Department of the Army U.S. National and Confederate Cemetery Installations 1963



National Cemetery Administration

As of June 2020, VA's National Cemetery Administration administers 143 national cemeteries. Nearly 4.9 million people, including Veterans of every conflict in which Americans have fought – from the Revolutionary War to the Global War on Terror – are honored by burial in VA's national cemeteries. More than a hundred of these properties are listed on the National Register of Historic Places regardless of age as being "exceptionally significant as a result of their Congressional designation as nationally significant places of burial and commemoration." More than 22,000 acres and growing, from Hawaii to Maine and from Alaska to Puerto Rico, are devoted to the memorialization of those who served this nation.

In addition to providing a gravesite and a grave liner, VA opens and closes the grave, and provides as benefits a headstone or marker, a Presidential Memorial Certificate, a U.S. flag, and perpetually cares for the grave at no cost to the Veteran's family. As of 2020 there are more than 22 million living Veterans who have earned the honor of burial in a national cemetery. Veterans who have met minimum active-duty service requirements, as applicable, and with discharges other than dishonorable, their spouses and dependent children, may be eligible for burial in a VA national cemetery by virtue of their service. Those who die on active duty may also be buried in a national cemetery. Reservists who are called to active duty and fulfill the term of service for which they were called and those who retire with pensions are also eligible.

For more information or to confirm eligibility, please contact the nearest national cemetery or visit www.cem.va.gov.



Acknowledgments and Credits

Special thanks to Robert L. Wilkie, Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and Randy C. Reeves, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, for their support and contributions to this publication from the National Cemetery Administration's (NCA) History Program, Office of Engagement and Memorial Innovation (OEMI).

Credit for all public-domain photos in the sidebars belongs to NCA or the associated military service with two exceptions. Permission to use the photos of Roger Romine and James Atterberry was graciously provided by the Oakland Technical School, CA, and Mr. Robert Houston, respectively. The 1963 Army map of national cemeteries was provided by Arlington National Cemetery.

NCA contributors: Project Lead Richard Hulver, Historian; Sara Amy Leach, Senior Historian; Jennifer Perunko, Historian; Virginia Price, former NCA Historian; Les' Melnyk, Chief, Public Affairs; Daniel Devine, Executive Director, OEMI; and Timothy Nosal, Deputy Director, OEMI.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

On Fame's eternal camping-ground
Their silent tents are spread,
And Glory guards, with solemn round,
The bivouac of the dead.

Theodore O'Hara,
"Bivouac of the Dead"



National Cemetery Administration
www.cem.va.gov

