

HEADSTONES AND BURIALS

National Cemeteries

If you are researching a veteran you believe may be buried in a National Cemetery you should first consult the Department of Veterans Affairs National Cemetery Administration web site www.cem.va.gov and use their “Nationwide Gravesite Locator.” You can access the page directly at http://gravelocator.cem.va.gov/j2ee/servlet/NGL_v1.

The site allows researchers to search for burial locations of veterans and their dependents who are buried in Veterans Affairs National Cemeteries, state veterans cemeteries, and various other Department of Interior and military cemeteries. The search can be conducted with as little information as a first and last name, and you can choose between a basic search versus an advanced search. With the advanced search you can provide the veteran’s last name, first name, middle name, date of birth, date of death, and name of cemetery. If you cannot locate the person you are searching for, please provide the following information on each individual: full name, including any alternate spellings; date and place of birth; date and place of death; state from which the individual entered active duty; and military service branch. Most requests take approximately four weeks for a reply. Be sure to include your return mailing address, phone number, and e-mail address with your request and send it to: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, (41C1), Burial Location Request, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

National Archives Building

Early headstone applications are found in RG 92, entry 628, Card Records

APPLICATION FOR HEADSTONES.

To the Quartermaster General, U. S. Army,
Washington, D. C.

Headstone. Following is a list of names of private citizens, soldiers, sailors, and marines for which headstones are desired, it being understood that if they are furnished and delivered at Government expense, proper payment, in suitable notes or standard banking indicated below, they will be promptly returned and not set up at public expense.

(When the contractor is every person, after filing the application, a notice from him giving his permanent address and stating that he will promptly receive the headstone from the depot when necessary for the application.)

NAME	RANK	COMPANY	DATE OF DEATH	PLACE OF BIRTH	NAME OF CONTRACTOR	DATE OF CONTRACT
Walter H. Slesper	Private	F	3 rd Reg. Inf.	Andover, Mass.	Silver Lake	Atbol, Mass.
Charles H. Burdette	"	C	23 rd Mass.	Andover, Mass.	"	"
Jessie A. Safford	"	B	56 th Reg. Inf.	Andover, Mass.	"	"
Charles B. Clark	"	F	4 th Reg. Inf.	Andover, Mass.	"	"

For headstones upon all graves for the Army of 1861 in private cemeteries, or other cemeteries subject to public control.

To be shipped to: Charles W. Brown at Atbol - Silver Lake - Mass.

To be paid by contractor with this application. Approved by: Charles W. Brown

Date of application: July 21st 1921

125 Silver Lake St. Atbol, Mass.

Headstone application, dated July 21, 1921, for four veterans buried in Silver Lake Cemetery located in Athol, Massachusetts. (RG 92)

of Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, ca. 1879–1903. These records have been reproduced on M1845, *Card Records of Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, ca. 1879–1903*.

The Quartermaster General’s office created three-by-four-inch cards to keep track of headstones ordered for private cemeteries, mostly for soldiers who died between 1861 and 1903. Because some cemetery superintendents and relatives of veterans of previous wars applied for and received headstones, records of headstones for veterans of earlier wars, including the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Mexican War, are scattered throughout the collection of the 166,000 cards as well as a few relating to the Spanish-American War and Philippine Insurrection. The cards record the name, rank, company, and regiment or vessel of the veteran (both Army and Navy), the name and location of the cemetery, the date of death, the company that supplied the headstone, and the date of contract. The cards are arranged alphabetically.



Burying the dead at Fredericksburg, Virginia. (111-B-71)

Another good series to consult is the Applications of Headstones in Private Cemeteries, 1909–1924, found in RG 92, entry 592. The headstone applications were often completed by superintendents of cemeteries and therefore do not contain next-of-kin information. Although the starting date of the series is 1909, many applications were submitted for veterans already buried in cemeteries prior to 1909. Like the card records of headstones, applications can also be found for veterans of earlier conflicts.

The basic information on the applications is similar to the headstone card records and provides the name of veteran, rank, company, regiment or vessel, date of death, the name and location of the cemetery, and the date of application. Applications for headstones in private cemeteries are arranged by state and thereunder by county.

National Archives at College Park, Maryland

Additional records relating to headstones and burials can be found at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland. In 1925 the quartermaster

revised the look of the headstone application, although the information requested did not substantially change. The full sheets of paper were exchanged for eight-by-five-inch cards and are found in RG 92, entry 2110C, Applications for Headstones, 1925–1963. The cards ask for name, rank, branch of service, company, regiment or ship, years of birth and death, date of application, name of honorably discharged veteran, if the veteran died while on active duty, dates of enlistment and discharge, address of cemetery, religious emblem (if designated), and the name and address of applicant and relationship to deceased. As on the older applications, some handwritten notations by the quartermaster clerks may be found, but the frequency and value of the markings diminish as the date of the applications grows more recent. Later applications also include the service number. These cards are organized roughly by year, thereunder alphabetically. The key to finding the desired application is by knowing the date it was submitted. The first set within this entry encompass the years 1925–41. This segment has been reproduced as M1916, *Applications for Headstones for U.S. Military Veterans, 1925–1941*. The second segment covers the years 1942–48, thus a rough estimate of the year is all that is necessary to find an application. Segments thereafter are confined to two- or three-year spans. The applications for 1964–70 found in RG 92, entry 1942A, are organized strictly by government fiscal year and thereunder alphabetically. The information and organization reflect the earlier series. However, unlike the headstone applications for private cemeteries, the headstone applications for this series reflect burials in national cemeteries.

Headstone applications after 1970 provide the same information and are similarly organized to the headstone applications described above. Although the series is dated 1965–1985, the bulk of the collection begins in 1970. In 1972 the national cemetery system and the responsibility of providing headstones was transferred to the U.S. Veterans Administration. Divided annually by fiscal year and thereunder alphabetically, these records are found in the Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, entry 52) and include headstone applications for private cemeteries. Please note that the applications are filed by fiscal year of application, which may

differ from the fiscal year of death. Because the records are contemporaneous and provide information regarding the next-of-kin of the deceased, access to these records is limited to those who ordered the headstone. However, reference staff can make copies of such applications for researchers, redacting the sensitive information. Researchers should provide name of decedent and date of application to the reference staff of the Modern Military, Attn: Military Headstone Applications, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740. If the date of application is unknown, the staff will search the application based on date of death. Please keep in mind that due to limited resources only one search per request can be conducted.

One such series is the Interment Control Forms, ca. 1928–1962, RG 92, entry 2110B. Arranged alphabetically by the name of the decedent, these forms were used as records of control over burial lots in national cemeteries. The forms contain name of decedent; rank; units served; serial number; war of service; dates of birth, death, interment; service, including enlistment; and discharge or retirement, if applicable; the place of burial and location of gravesite; next of kin; and sometimes burial location of spouse if in the same cemetery. Much of the information on these forms is similar to that found on headstone applications, but because these records are organized alphabetically, researchers unsure of a date of application should find these records easier to use.

Researchers looking for interment information for World War II veterans buried overseas should consult Headstone Inscriptions and Interment Records in the Records of the American Battle Monument Commission (AMBC), RG 117, entry 43. The records cover 1946 to 1949, but they are easier to use than the headstone applications because they are arranged alphabetically, regardless of year. Established in 1923, the American Battle Monument Commission was founded to honor the American armed forces where they served by monitoring and advising the construction of military monuments and markers on foreign soil by other nations. After World War II, American soldiers were exhumed from their temporary burial place and moved to one of 14 sites selected by the Secretary of the Army and the ABMC, with the permission of the host country, to become eternal shrines to those who gave their lives in the course of the war.

Although not as extensive in information as the interment records and headstone applications, the ABMC headstone inscription and interment records offer name of decedent, rank, unit of service, state of residence, date of death, cemetery, and grave location. They also provide information about the next of kin and any awards earned by the deceased.

Confederates

More than 40 years after the end of the Civil War, permanent, uniform markers were authorized for the graves of Confederate soldiers buried in national cemeteries. In accordance with an act of March 9, 1906, Congress adopted the same size and material for Confederate headstones as for Union deceased but altered the design to omit the shield and give the stones a pointed rather than rounded top. In 1929 the authorization was extended



Civil War view of Arlington National Cemetery. (111-B-5304)

to graves in private cemeteries. On May 26, 1930, the War Department implemented regulations for Confederate headstones that also authorized the inscription of the Confederate Cross of Honor in a small circle on the front face of the stone above the standard inscription of the soldier's name, rank, company, and regiment. Consult headstone application records described above at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Researchers looking for burial locations of Confederates should consult M918, *Register of Confederate Soldiers, Sailors, and Citizens Who Died in Federal Prisons and Military Hospitals in the North, 1861–1865*. Completed in 1912, the register shows the location and number of the known grave of each deceased Confederate soldier and sailor and was compiled to assist the effort to mark Confederate graves. Arranged alphabetically by the name of prison or other location where the death occurred, the burial lists generally offer an individual's name, rank, company, regiment or vessel, date of death, and number and location of grave. Some entries do not provide complete information. Researchers may consult the microfilmed records in the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, and several of NARA's regional archives.

Additional Sources of Information

Mollan, Mark C. "Honoring Our War Dead: The Evolution of the Government Policy on Headstones for Fallen Soldiers and Sailors," *Prologue*, Spring 2003, Vol. 35, No. 1.

Quartermaster General's Office, *Roll of Honor: Names of Soldiers Who Died in Defense of the American Union*, (27 vols.), Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1865–1871.

Reamy, Martha and William Reamy, comp. *Index to the Roll of Honor*, Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing, 1995.