

Research Guide for Headstone Records for U.S. Military Veterans Buried in Nonfederal Cemeteries, 1879–1985

Claire Kluskens, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC
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Please direct inquiries to the appropriate reference unit

Overview

Significant federal involvement in permanent recognition of the final resting place of deceased U.S. military personnel began with the establishment of the first national military cemeteries in 1862. This lecture focuses on records of headstones provided for U.S. military veterans buried in *nonfederal cemeteries*, 1879 and later; NARA has records for 1879–1985. Some of the record series in this handout are also relevant to burials in *certain federal cemeteries* (those at posts or national soldiers' homes).

Important Definitions

- “Nonfederal (“private”) cemeteries”** Any cemetery maintained by a state, county, city, village, township, church, family, or private organization.
- “Post cemeteries”** Cemeteries at military posts (forts, etc.). Headstone applications for veterans buried at post cemeteries are often interfiled with those for private cemeteries.
- “National cemeteries”** Federally operated. Originally established for Civil War dead; burial privilege later extended to all honorably discharged veterans. Also called National Military Cemeteries. Discussion of the records related to these burials is beyond the scope of this research guide.

Records Timeline. Records in the National Archives are arranged by Record Group (RG) then in the manner in which the creating agency arranged and maintained the records.

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| 1862–1973 | Record Group 92, Records of the Quartermaster General
<i>Records through 1970</i> |
| 1973–1985 | Record Group 15, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs
<i>Records beginning 1970. The VA took over this program in 1973 but inherited records dating back to 1970.</i> |
| 1985–present | Records remain with the Department of Veterans Affairs |

Headstone Design Styles

Shield	1873–present. Since 1925, usually for Civil War and Spanish-American War
Plain Upright	May 1925–present. Granite or marble option added in 1942. Granite eliminated in 1947.
Religious Symbol	May 1925–present (Originally: Christian, Hebrew, or none. Expanded symbol options added circa 1973 and later.)
Confederate	1929–present
Flat (stone)	Feb. 1937–present. Granite or marble option added in 1940.
Flat Bronze	July 1940–present, except July 1942–Nov. 1945.
Birth Date	June 1944–present
Flat Veterans Admin.	1973–present. Religious symbol (or space) at bottom, brass, beveled edge.

Versions of Headstone Application Form – with significant changes noted

OQMG Form 623

Aug. 12, 1913	Full size sheet of paper application form adopted
Sept. 24, 1923	Half-size card form size application adopted
May 12, 1925	Option for religious symbol added (Christian, Hebrew, none)
July 15, 1929	
May 18, 1931	Dates of enlistment and discharge added
Feb. 15, 1937	Pension number and option for flat headstone added
May 1, 1939	Veteran's army serial number added
July 1, 1940	Choice of 4 marker types: upright marble, flat marble, flat granite, bronze
July 1, 1942	Choice of 4 marker types: upright marble, upright granite, flat marble, flat granite
June 1, 1944	"Date of birth" added
Sept. 2, 1944	
Mar. 15, 1945	
Nov. 6, 1945	Choice of 5 marker types: upright marble, upright granite, flat marble, flat granite, bronze
Apr. 15, 1947	Choice of 4 marker types: upright marble, flat marble, flat granite, bronze
July 6, 1948	
Feb. 8, 1949	

QMC Form 646

Oct. 13, 1952	Form number changed
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DA 1815

Aug. 1, 1956	Form number changed
June 1, 1957	
May 1, 1959	

DD 1330

Dec. 1, 1961	Form number changed
Nov. 1, 1962	

VA 40-1330

- Jan. 1974 Form number changed. SSN of decedent and phone number of applicant added.
Change to "year" of birth and "year" of death *instead* of "date of birth" and "date of death"
- Dec. 1974
- Aug. 1977 **Added instruction "Give complete dates (month, day, year) if desired on inscription."**
- July 1980
Probably other versions....
- Aug. 2009 Current version. Online at <<http://www.va.gov/vaforms/va/pdf/VA40-1330.pdf>>

Headstone Records—Microfilm

These records relate to headstones requested for veterans buried in private (nonfederal) cemeteries and at national homes for disabled volunteer soldiers.

- 1879–1903 **National Archives Microfilm Publication M1845, *Card Records of Headstones Provided for Deceased Union Civil War Veterans, ca. 1879–ca. 1903.*** 22 rolls. Over 166,000 records. *Also available online at Ancestry.com.*

Includes some War of 1812 veterans. 3-inch by 4-inch cards arranged alphabetically by name. They include some or all of the following information about each soldier: rank, company, and regiment; place of burial, including the cemetery's name, and the city or town, county, and state in which it is located; grave number, if any; date of death; name of contractor who supplied the headstone and the date of the contract under which the stone was provided. Most burials occurred in private cemeteries, but some were at National Homes for Disabled Volunteers Soldiers.

Sometime in the past, a paper cutter was used to cut off, en masse, the top one-eighth inch of each card. The upper parts of some names were cut off; as a result, they may be difficult to read. Sometimes the names were re-written below the original writing of the name.

Be sure to also check **Series 594** (described under textual records), since there may be an additional record.

- 1925–1941 **National Archives Microfilm Publication M1916, *Applications for Headstones for U.S. Military Veterans, 1925–1941.*** 134 rolls. Contains over 290,000 applications.

Not online. Arranged alphabetically by name. Most died during 1925–41, but also includes many veterans who died before 1925, including Civil War Union and Confederate veterans, and a few Revolutionary War soldiers. Indians are filed separately in a section called "Indian Scouts." Several versions of the application, OQMG Form No. 623, were used. Quartermaster personnel annotated the front of the form with corrections to the veteran's name and military service to ensure the information on the headstone would be consistent with information in government records. Be sure to also check **Series 1942** (described

under textual records), since there may be additional records. M1916 is available for public viewing at the National Archives Building, Washington, DC; National Archives at College Park, MD; and National Archives regional archives at San Bruno, CA; Denver, CO; Atlanta, GA; Boston, MA; Kansas City, MO; Philadelphia, PA; Fort Worth, TX; and Seattle, WA. See our website, www.archives.gov for more specific address information.

- 1941–1949 **National Archives Microfilm Publication M2113, *Applications for Headstones for U.S. Military Veterans, 1941–1949***. 278 rolls. Contains over 331,000 applications. Not online. Most died during 1941–49, but there are also some for veterans who died before 1941. Most served in World War I or World War II, but there are also veterans of earlier eras, including Union and Confederate Civil War veterans. Indians are filed separately in a section called "Indian Scouts." Several versions of the application, OQMG Form No. 623, printed between 1931 and 1949 were used by applicants. Quartermaster personnel annotated the front of the form with corrections to the veteran's name and military service to ensure the information on the headstone would be consistent with information in government records. M2113 is available for public viewing at the National Archives Building, Washington, DC; and selected rolls are available at National Archives regional archives at San Bruno, CA, and Chicago, IL. See our website, www.archives.gov for more specific address information.

Headstone Records—Textual Records (paper) (Record Group 92)

These records relate to headstones requested for veterans buried in nonfederal ("private") cemeteries and at national homes for disabled volunteer soldiers.

Archives I Contact Information: Archives I Reference Section, National Archives Building, 700 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC, 20408. Phone: 202-357-5385; Fax: 202-357-5936; Email: Archives1reference@nara.gov.

Archives II Contact Information: Archives II Reference Section (Military), National Archives at College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD, 20740-6001. Phone: 301-837-3510; Fax: 301-837-1752; Email: Archives2reference@nara.gov.

- 1879–1886 **NM-81, Series 594, List of Headstones for Soldiers Buried in Private Cemeteries During 1861–1866, 1879–?** [*sic*]. ARC ID 607868. 1 box containing 4 volumes. (Archives 1). This series is poorly titled. It should be called: "Register of Headstones Ordered for Veterans Buried in Private Cemeteries, 1879–ca. 1886." Arranged by order number (sometimes referred to as "office mark"). Multiple gravestones are sometimes listed under one order number. Information given: name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, cemetery, and state.
- Vol. 1, Orders 1–3500
 - Vol. 2, Orders 3501–5400
 - Vol. 3, Orders 5401–6297
 - Vol. 4, Orders 6298–7732

- 1886 **NM-81, Series 597, List of Inscriptions for Headstones Furnished Under Contract with Gross Brothers, 1886.** ARC ID 607872. 1 box containing 2 volumes. (Archives 1). Typed lists. Both headstones for private cemeteries and military posts. Date of order for headstone not indicated. These lists were originally in an envelope but at some time (before coming to the National Archives) were pasted into a volume. Typing suggests these were compiled after about 1910. Duplicate lists were pasted facing each other.
- 1909–1923 **NM-81, Series 591, Applications for Headstones, Soldiers' Homes, 1909–1923.** ARC ID 607865. 4 boxes. (Archives 1). Arranged by state, then by soldiers' home. Applications with related correspondence for one or more veterans made by Soldiers' Home officials. (Now most (or all) are "National Cemeteries"). For earlier and later records, see M1845, M1916, M2113, Series 1942, (and so forth).
- 1909–1924 **NM-81, Series 592, Applications for Headstones in Private Cemeteries, 1909–1924.** ARC ID 607866. 316 boxes. (Archives 1). Arranged by state, then by county. Applications with related correspondence for one or more veterans made by family members or by veterans' organizations. In the last box, after Wyoming, is a folder containing lists of deceased Navy personnel buried in various states whose service the Navy was requested to verify in 1919.
- 1909–1911 **NM-81, Series 598, Lists of Headstones Under Contract...for Unmarked Graves of U.S. Soldiers, Sailors, & Marines, 1909–11.** ARC ID 607874. 3 boxes. (Archives 1). Boxes 1 and 2 contain printed lists giving name, rank, and unit of veteran, and name and address of person to whom the headstone was shipped. Arranged by time period in which the application for headstone was **completed**, then by state of burial, then alphabetically by name.
- Box 1**
- FY 1908, List 1: Completed Oct. 1, 1907–Mar. 1, 1908
 - FY 1909, List 2, Completed Mar. –June 1908
 - FY 1909, List 3, Completed July–Oct. 1908
 - FY 1910 & 1909, List 1, Completed Nov. 1908–Feb. 1909
 - FY 1910, List 2, Completed Mar. –May 31, 1909
 - FY 1910, List 3, Completed June–Aug. 1909
 - FY 1910, List 4, Completed Sept.–Oct. 1909
 - FY 1910, List 5, Completed Nov.–Dec. 1909
 - FY 1910, List 6, Completed Jan. 1910
 - FY 1910, List 7, Completed Feb. 1910
- Box 2**
- FY 1911, List 1, Completed Mar.–Apr. 1910
 - FY 1911, List 2, Completed May 1910
 - FY 1911, List 3, Completed June 1910
 - FY 1911, List 4, Completed July–Sept. 1910
 - FY 1911, List 5, Completed Oct. 1910
 - FY 1911, List 6, Completed Nov.–Dec. 1910
 - FY 1911, List 7, Completed Jan. 1911
 - FY 1911, List 8, Completed Feb. 1911
 - FY 1911, List 9, Completed Mar. 1911
 - FY 1911, List 10, Completed Apr. 1911
 - FY 1911, List 11, Completed May 1911

FY 1910, Post Cemeteries

FY 1911, Post Cemeteries

Box 3 June–August 1911, individual folders arranged alphabetically by state. Contains full-size or half-size sheets of paper. State of burial and date ordered in upper right corner. Veteran's name, company, regiment. Name and address of person to whom the headstone was shipped. Some full size sheets contain information about multiple veterans.

1911–1912 **NM-81, Series 600, List of Inscriptions for Headstones for Private Cemeteries, Furnished Under the Contract with Gross and Deely of Lee, Mass., 1911–1912.** ARC ID 607895. 1 box. (Archives 1). Contains 8 inch by 5.25 inch carbon copies. State of burial and date ordered [shipped?], in upper right corner. Veteran's name, rank (if above private), company, regiment, war (if not Civil War). Name and address of person to whom the headstone was shipped. Arranged by location: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, **Canada**, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, **Guam**, Idaho.

1912–1916 **NM-81, Series 596, Lists of Headstones, 1912–1916.** ARC ID 607870. 7 boxes. (Archives 1). Date span is actually January 1911–June 1917. Contains 8 inch by 5.25 inch carbon copies. State of burial and date ordered [shipped?], in upper right corner. Veteran's name, rank (if above private), company, regiment, war (if not Civil War). Name and address of person to whom the headstone was shipped. Fiscal years began in July, such that FY 1917 ran from July 1916–June 1917.

BOX 1 National Cemeteries: Calendar Year 1912, Calendar Year 1913, Calendar Year 1914, Calendar Year 1915, Calendar Year 1916.

Post Cemeteries: Calendar Years 1911 and 1912 under contract with Gross & Deely, Lee, Mass.; Calendar Year 1912; Calendar Year 1913; Calendar Year 1914; Calendar Year 1915, Calendar Year 1916.

Private Cemeteries: FY 1912: Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York. **FY 1913:** Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, **Canada, China**, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, **Guam**, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana,

BOX 2 Private Cemeteries: FY 1913: Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, **Philippine Islands**, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

BOX 3 Private Cemeteries: FY 1914: Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, **China**, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, **Guam**, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. **FY 1915:** Alabama, Arizona, California, **Canada**, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois.

BOX 4 Private Cemeteries: FY 1915: Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina,

South Dakota, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. **FY 1916:** Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California.

BOX 5 Private Cemeteries: FY 1916: Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina.

BOX 6 Private Cemeteries: FY 1916: North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming. **FY 1917** – Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa.

BOX 7 Private Cemeteries: FY 1917: Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, **Philippine Islands**, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin, Wyoming.

1911–1924 **NM-81, Series 593, Applications for Headstones for Sailors, Marines, and Soldiers Buried Outside the United States, 1911–1924.** ARC ID 607867. 1 box. (Archives 1). Applications made by military commanders for headstones for men who died while in service who were buried overseas at these locations: Alaska, China, Cuba, Guam, Hawaii, India, Ireland, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, Panama Canal, Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Spain (Gibraltar).

1915–1939 **NM-81, Series 1942, Correspondence, Reports, Telegrams, Applications, and Other Papers Relating to Burials of Service Personnel ("Burial Case Files"), 1915–1939.** (Archives 2). ARC ID 595318. Arranged alphabetically by name. **However:** For some common names, there is one or more "group" files before individual files begin. Thus, there is a Williamson, A-K file; Williamson, L-Z file; and *then* individual Williamsons who have their own files. Must check group files as well as individual files. "Individual" files may have one or more people with the same name (i.e., several William Williamsons). Applications plus related correspondence.

1950–1963 **A1, Series 2100C, Applications for Headstones, 1925–1963.** ARC ID 596118 (Archives 2). Arranged by time period, then alphabetically by name. **Note:** 1954 and later fiscal years have a section at the end (after the letter Z) that says "Applications Prior to F.Y. [current year]," so these are additional places to check if an application cannot be found in the main alphabetical sequence of the expected year.

1925–1941. Microfilmed as M1916 (see page 3). Use the microfilm at Archives 1 or Archives 2.

1941–1949. Microfilmed as M2113 (see page 4). Use the microfilm at Archives 1.

Time periods are that are not microfilmed (and thus paper records must be used at Archives 2) are:

1951–1954 (Boxes 1–93)

1954–1956 (formerly labeled 1955–56) (Boxes 1–69)

- 1956–1958 (formerly labeled 1957–58) (Boxes 1–77; prior FY apps in Boxes 76–77).
1958–1959 (FY 1959) July 1958–June 1959 (Boxes 1–39; prior FY apps in Boxes 38–39)
1959–1960 (FY 1960) July 1959–June 1960 (Boxes 1–44; prior FY apps in Boxes 44–45)
1960–1961 (FY 1961) July 1960–June 1961 (Boxes 1–47; Box 48 has "application files arranged by state" [correspondence, etc.]
1961–1962 (FY 1962) July 1961–June 1962 (Boxes 1–44; prior FY apps at end of Box 44)
1962–1963 (FY 1963) July 1962–June 1963 (Boxes 1–44; prior FY apps at end of Box 44)

- 1964–1970 **A1, Series 1942A, Applications for Headstones and Markers, 1964–70.** ID 253321. (Archives 2). Arranged by Federal Fiscal Year, *then* alphabetically by name. **Note** that **each** of these fiscal years has a box at the end (after the letter Z) that says "Applications Prior to F.Y. [current year]," so these are additional places to check if an application cannot be found in a main alphabetical sequence of the expected year.
FY 1964 (July 1963–June 1964)
FY 1965 (July 1964–June 1965)
FY 1966 (July 1965–June 1966)
FY 1967 (July 1966–June 1967)
FY 1968 (July 1967–June 1968)
FY 1969 (July 1968–June 1969)
FY 1970 (July 1969–June 1970)

Headstone Records—Textual Records (paper) (Record Group 15)

These records relate to headstones requested for veterans buried in private (nonfederal) cemeteries.

- 1970–1985 **A1, Series 52, Department of Memorial Affairs; Applications for Headstones and Markers, 1965–1985.** ARC ID {not yet assigned}. 1,380 boxes. (Archives 2). Arranged by time period, then alphabetically by name.

By Federal Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30)

- July 1970–June 1972 (Boxes 1–165; Box 166 has applications from 1965–72).
- July 1972–June 1974

By Federal Fiscal Year (extended)

- July 1974–Sept. 1976

By Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 to September 30)

- Oct. 1976–Sept. 1977
- Oct. 1977–Sept. 1978
- Oct. 1978–Sept. 1979

Claire Kluskens, "Headstone Records for U.S. Military Veterans, 1879–1985," page 9 (July 2012)

- Oct. 1979–Sept. 1980
- Oct. 1980–Sept. 1981
- Oct. 1981–Sept. 1983
- Oct. 1983–Sept. 1984
- Oct. 1984–Sept. 1985

Bibliography

Department of Veterans Affairs. "History of Government Furnished Headstones and Markers." Online at <http://www.cem.va.gov/hist/hmhist.asp>

Department of Veterans Affairs. "Pre-World War I Era Headstones and Markers." Online at <http://www.cem.va.gov/hm/hmcivil.asp>

Mollan, Mark. "Honoring Our War Dead: The Evolution of the Government Policy on Headstones for Fallen Soldiers and Sailors." *Prologue: Quarterly of the National Archives and Records Administration*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring 2003), online at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/spring/headstones.html>, with "Confederate Headstones" sidebar at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/spring/headstones-sidebar.html>

Plante, Trevor K. *Military Service Records at the National Archives, Reference Information Paper 109* (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2007), online at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/ref-info-papers/rip109.pdf>

Online Resources for Locating Veterans Buried in Military Cemeteries

National Park Service (14 sites)

Search names online at gravelocator.cem.va.gov ("Nationwide Gravesite Locator")

Individual NPS park websites may also have more detailed lists (such as Vicksburg)

National Cemetery Administration (131 cemeteries & 33 soldiers' lots)

Search names online at gravelocator.cem.va.gov ("Nationwide Gravesite Locator")

Department of the Army (Arlington National Cemetery; Soldiers' and Airmen's Home)

Search names online at gravelocator.cem.va.gov ("Nationwide Gravesite Locator")

American Battle Monuments Commission (24 cemeteries & other memorials overseas)

Search names online by war at www.ambc.gov

State Veterans Cemeteries

Some have information online; some do not.