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

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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 research guide 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 military 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.

1862–1973 Record Group 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General
Records through 1970

1973–1985 Record Group 15, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs
Records beginning 1970. The VA took over this program in 1973 but inherited records dating back to 1970.

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
- **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

**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

*NARA’s web site is http://www.archives.gov*

**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  
Added instruction “Give complete dates (month, day, year) if desired on inscription.”

Aug. 1977

July 1980

*Probably other versions....*

 Aug. 2009  

**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**  
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. Available online at Ancestry.com as part of the “Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963” database. Most applications are online twice: Black and white images were scanned from the microfilm; color images were scanned from the original paper records.  
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.

*NARA’s web site is http://www.archives.gov*
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.

1941–1949

National Archives Microfilm Publication M2113, Applications for Headstones for U.S. Military Veterans, 1941–1949. 278 rolls. Contains over 331,000 applications. Available online at Ancestry.com as part of the “Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963” database. Most applications are online twice: Black and white images were scanned from the microfilm; color images were scanned from the original paper records.

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.

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.

St. Louis Contact Information: National Archives at St. Louis (RL-SL), 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO, 63132-5100. Fax: 314-801-9187; Email: mpr.center@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

NARA’s web site is http://www.archives.gov
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). Two bound volumes containing typed lists of headstones provided for both private (nonfederal) and U.S. military post cemeteries. The information recorded includes each veteran’s name, rank (if above private), company, regiment, and name and address of person to whom the headstone was shipped. The date the headstone was ordered is not indicated. These lists were originally in an envelope but at some time (before coming to the National Archives) were pasted into these volumes. The fact that the lists are typed suggests the lists were compiled after 1910. Duplicate lists were pasted facing each other. Vol. 1, pp. 1–62, military posts; pp. 62–90, private cemeteries, California–Kansas. Vol. 2, pp. 1–150, private cemeteries, Kansas–Wisconsin; pp. 150–205, mix of military posts and private cemeteries in various states and territories.

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.

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.

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

NARA’s web site is http://www.archives.gov

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). Records for Fiscal Year 1912. 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, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, and New York. See Series 184 for FY 1912 records for other states. Records in series 600, 184, and 596 should be in one record series, but National Archives staff in the 1960s (or earlier) misidentified them as separate record series.

**1911–1912 NM-81, Series 184, List of Inscriptions for Headstones for Private Cemeteries, Furnished Under the Contract with Gross and Deely of Lee, Mass., 1911–1912.** ARC ID 4529735. 1 box (Archives 1). Records for Fiscal Year 1912. 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: Illinois, Indiana, New Mexico, 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. See Series 600 for FY 1912 records for other states. Records in series 600, 184, and 596 should be in one record series, but National Archives staff in the 1960s (or earlier) misidentified them as separate record series.

**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. Records in series 600, 184, and 596
should be in one record series, but National Archives staff in the 1960s (or earlier) misidentified them as separate record series.

**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.


**BOX 2 Private Cemeteries: FY 1913:** 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 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 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).

*NARA’s web site is http://www.archives.gov*
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. (St. Louis). 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.

1925–1970
**Applications for Headstones, 1925–1970** (A1, Series 1942A and 2100C). ARC ID 596118 (St. Louis). Arranged by time period, then alphabetically by name. **Note:** 1954 and later fiscal years each have a section or 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 the main alphabetical sequence of the expected year.

1925–1941. Microfilm M1916 (see page 3) at Archives 1 or Archives 2. **Available online at Ancestry.com as part of the “Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963” database.** Most applications are online twice: Black and white images were scanned from the microfilm; color images were scanned from the original paper records.

1941–1949. Microfilm M2113 (see page 4) at Archives 1. **Available online at Ancestry.com as part of the “Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963” database.** Most applications are online twice: Black and white images were scanned from the microfilm; color images were scanned from the original paper records.

**The following time periods are available online at Ancestry.com as part of the “Headstone Applications for Military Veterans, 1925-1963” database:**

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

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


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. 1978–Sept. 1979
• NOTE: Post-1981 records must be screened for personal privacy information under 5 U.S.C. 552 (b) (6) prior to public release.

Bibliography


NARA’s web site is http://www.archives.gov
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.abmc.gov

State Veterans Cemeteries
Some have information online; some do not.