National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name  Camp Nelson National Cemetery

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number  6890 Danville Road

□ not for publication  N/A

city or town  Nicholasville

state  Kentucky  code  KY  county  Jessamine  code  113  zip code  40356

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets □ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally □ statewide □ locally. ( □ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title  Officer

Department of Veterans Affairs

Date  7/30/98

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets □ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( □ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official/Title

David L. Morgan, SHPO and Executive Director, KHC

Date  7-25-98

State of Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

☑ entered in the National Register

□ See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register

□ See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

□ removed from the National Register

□ other, (explain:)

Signature of Keeper  Edison H. Reall

Date of Action  9-3-98
5. Classification

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<td>(Check only one box)</td>
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<td>□ object</td>
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Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Civil War Era National Cemeteries

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

<table>
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7. Description

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<td>walls Brick, wood</td>
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<td>roof Asphalt</td>
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<td>other Granite, marble, iron</td>
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Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☐ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☒ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Military

Architecture

Period of Significance
1866-1948

Significant Dates
1866

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Meigs, Montgomery C.

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☒ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☒ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository

Department of Veterans Affairs
Camp Nelson National Cemetery
Name of Property

Jessamine County, Kentucky
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 30.2

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 16 | 711540 | 4184550 3 16 | 711240 | 4184420
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
2 16 | 711540 | 4184500
4 16 | 711220 | 4184540

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Therese T. Sammartino, Staff Assistant, National Cemetery System

organization Department of Veterans Affairs date August 3, 1998

street & number 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W. telephone (202) 565-4895

city or town Washington, D.C. state state zip code 20420

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner
(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Department of Veterans Affairs

street & number 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W. telephone

city or town Washington, D.C. state zip code 20420

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Camp Nelson National Cemetery is located at 6890 Danville Road, 7 miles southeast of Nicholasville, Kentucky, in Jessamine County. The original cemetery, containing three acres, is located in the northeastern corner and includes Sections A, B, C, and D. The ground was subsequently enlarged to the north and west (Sections E, F, and G), and then contained eight acres. Of this tract, about 7¼ acres comprised the cemetery proper, the remaining forming the driveway which extended from the Lexington and Danville Turnpike (now called Danville Road) to the main entrance to the grounds. The cemetery has been expanded over the years by acquisition of land to the west of the original cemetery, extending as far west as Danville Road, and now contains 30.2 acres. The main entrance to the national cemetery is located at the east side of the grounds and is protected by an iron gate supported by stone columns, constructed in 1969. One must travel approximately .3 mile to the older section of the cemetery where the lodge, now used as an office, and three utility buildings are located. The original entrance gate to the national cemetery, constructed in 1875, has been removed, but the stone posts and iron pedestrian gates on each side remain. When entering these gates, a drive leads to a circle upon which the flag was located. The flagpole has been relocated to near Section P in the newer area of the cemetery. A stone wall, four feet high and two feet wide at the top, with heavy coping set in cement, constructed in 1867, encloses the original eight acres, and the remainder of the cemetery is enclosed by chain link fencing. A gate in the chain link fencing provides equipment access to the maintenance area containing three buildings. A committal service shelter is located between Sections N and O.

Graves were originally marked by headboards or stakes, which were later replaced with upright marble headstones. Graves in one section, Section I, are marked with flat granite markers. In 1982, a policy decision by the Department of Veterans Affairs provided for the use of flat markers in national cemeteries. This decision was later reversed by the passage of Public Law 99-576, which mandated that for all interments that occur on or after January 1, 1987, the grave markers will be upright. As of April 30, 1998, there were 8,894 sites used for the interment of 9,455 casketed remains and 169 sites used for the interment of 199 cremated remains. As of April 30, 1998, there were 680 gravesites (46 reserved) available for the interment of casketed remains and 202 sites available for the interment of cremated remains. The cemetery is expected to remain open until 2027.

Records indicate that in 1870, the superintendent's lodge was a wooden cottage and was situated in the south side of the cemetery near the main entrance. The present lodge, constructed in 1875, was designed by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs. In 1995, the lodge was restored based on the original drawings and photographs. The Second Empire style house features a red brick first floor with brick quoins at the windows and corners as well as a mansard roof second floor. A one-story open entry porch with a flat roof nestles in the elbow of the L. The upper story dormer windows are wood casement, with three lights in each casement. The first floor windows are six-over-six lights
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (Continued)

with massive stone lintels and smaller sills. In 1929, a one-story brick kitchen was added, and the original frame porch was replaced with a concrete porch and steps. Cemetery superintendents or directors resided in the lodge until the late 1980’s. Since then, the lodge has been used for administrative office space.

The maintenance area contains three buildings:

(1) A brick and concrete utility building with an asphalt roof, constructed in 1928. This building was originally a stable for horses used in cemetery maintenance. A brick chimney was constructed on the outside in 1939, and new garage doors were installed in 1968. This building contains public restrooms and the employee break room.

(2) A brick utility building with an asphalt roof, constructed in 1899. This building is used for storage.

(3) A ground face masonry building of brick color with an asphalt shingle roof, constructed in 1997. This building is used as a repair area and for storage.

The committal service shelter, constructed in 1997, is located between Sections N and O. The structure, made of redwood siding with laminated wood columns, is an open pavilion and contains a storage chest. The roof is imitation slate (mineral fiber). The roof area measures 34 feet by 30 feet.

A brick and iron octagon-shaped rostrum was formerly located in the southwest corner of the enclosure to the original cemetery. A description in historical records reads as follows: "16' with 3 ½' brick foundation wall, coping stone encircles top of brick wall, concrete floor; metal roof is supported by 8 cast-iron posts, wrought-iron railing 2 feet high encloses floor; iron stairway, ground to rostrum floor. This rostrum was removed some time prior to 1973.

The numbers shown for contributing resources within the property reflect the following:

Buildings: Lodge, utility buildings (2)

Sites: Cemetery

Objects: Entry to older portion of cemetery, perimeter wall in older portion of cemetery
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The numbers shown for non-contributing resources within the property reflect the following:

**Buildings:** Newest utility building

**Structures:** Committal service shelter

**Objects:** Main entrance gate, flagpole

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Camp Nelson National Cemetery is significant under Criteria A and C and is an important component of the multiple property submission of Civil War Era National Cemeteries. It is significant under Criterion A because of its association with the Civil War and under Criterion C, because the lodge represents a distinctive design by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs, who was acclaimed as a master architect of civil works projects for the Quartermaster Corps. The cemetery is also significant beyond the Civil War era, as it includes the remains of veterans associated with every war and branch of service who have served their country throughout its history.

A variety of ways was considered to end the period of significance. Since the only contributing resources were constructed many years ago, and a reasonable date could not be defined to end the period, the date of 1948 (50 years ago) was used.

Camp Nelson was an important Union quartermaster and commissary depot, recruitment center, and hospital facility. It was the largest depot and permanent encampment in Kentucky outside of Louisville and served a critical function to the Union war effort by providing supplies, livestock and troops for the Army of the Ohio. Besides its general everyday supply functions, Camp Nelson was also critical in the support of a number of offensive campaigns into Tennessee and Virginia.

The greatest national significance of the camp, however, was as one of the largest recruitment camps for African American troops. Eight regiments of U. S. Colored Troops, as the African American regiments were designated, were founded at Camp Nelson, and three others were trained there. A refugee camp for these soldiers' families was also established at Camp Nelson. Construction of Camp Nelson was begun in June 1863, following orders from Major General Ambrose E. Burnside, commander of the newly-formed Army of the Ohio. A site at the southern tip of Jessamine County was chosen because of its location on a major turnpike and river, and because of the natural defenses
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

provided by the limestone palisades of the Kentucky River and Hickman Creed, which extended 400 to 500 feet in height.

The depot/encampment was officially named "Camp Nelson" on June 12, 1863, after the late Major General William "Bull" Nelson, who founded Camp Dick Robinson, the first Union recruitment camp in Kentucky. After completing two years at Norwich University, he was appointed a midshipman in the United States Navy in 1840, and spent twenty-one years in the naval service, rising to the rank of Lieutenant. In early 1861, Nelson contacted Lincoln (an old family friend) to discuss Nelson's recent trip to Kentucky. Lincoln, ever mindful of the sensitive local issues in Kentucky, was seeking a means to supply the pro-Unionists with arms without funneling the arms through the state government, which was pro-Confederate (supposedly neutral). Nelson volunteered for the job of distributing the weapons. Lincoln ordered 5,000 muskets and had them shipped to Cincinnati. Nelson went to Ohio, and shortly thereafter the guns found their way into the hands of the pro-Union forces. On September 16, 1861, Nelson was promoted to Brigadier General. He would serve at Shiloh, Corinth, and Chattanooga before being promoted to Major General in July 1862. He grew to be a very large man. His six-foot, four-inch, 300-pound frame contained a steel-trap mind and a prodigious memory. On September 29, 1862, in a hotel lobby in Louisville, Kentucky, Brigadier General Jefferson C. Davis shot Nelson to death in front of several witnesses. The quarrel between the two had been recent. Davis had been assigned to assist Nelson in recruiting soldiers around Louisville. After two days, Nelson was not satisfied with Davis's performance and told him so. Davis, a West Point graduate, resented this and demanded more respect from Nelson, who thereupon relieved him of his duties. The morning of this day, Davis confronted Nelson in the lobby of the Galt House Hotel, where Nelson had his headquarters, and demanded an apology, which demand was refused. Davis then threw a wad of paper in Nelson's face, and Nelson slapped him and started upstairs. Davis borrowed a pistol, followed Nelson, and called his name. When Nelson turned, Davis shot him in the chest from about three feet away. Nelson died within the hour. Davis was never tried, the affair being treated as a "matter of honor."

When completed, Camp Nelson contained over 300 wooden buildings, numerous tents, and nine forts. The core of the camp covered over 800 acres on either side of the Lexington-Danville Turnpike (present day U. S. 127). The camp also contained a large hospital facility, which included ten large wards, the soldiers' home, and a prison, and had a staff of supervisory officers and over 2,000 civilian employees. Camp Nelson was generally garrisoned by 3,000 to 8,000 soldiers.
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

From its establishment, one of the missions of Camp Nelson was to recruit and train soldiers. Its great significance as a recruitment center is most closely tied to African American troops, as it was Kentucky’s largest recruitment and training center for these troops. They performed a variety of duties after their training. They did garrison duty at Camp Nelson, and were also involved in a number of larger battles and campaigns. When they entered Camp Nelson, they were often accompanied by their wives and children, who were also looking for freedom and opportunity. These family members lived either with the recruit or in hastily built shanties. There was no clear army policy regarding these family members and in November 1864, Brigadier General Speed S. Fry, the commander of Camp Nelson, ordered these refugees out of camp. The political uproar which followed this incident led directly to the February 1865 Congressional Act which freed the families of the recruits and to the establishment of a home for the refugees. This home was administered jointly by the army and the American Missionary Association.

Soon after the war ended in April-May 1865, military officials began preparing to close down Camp Nelson. The U. S. Army continued to enlist African American soldiers until December. By the summer of that year, nearly all soldiers at Camp Nelson were African Americans. In June 1866, the army finally abandoned Camp Nelson, ending the military occupation of the area. Most buildings were sold for their lumber and quickly dismantled. The buildings in the refugee camp and the cemeteries remained, and the school and administrative buildings were purchased.

The main Camp Nelson cemetery was designated a national cemetery in 1866. The remainder of Camp Nelson returned to its residential and agricultural use. The civilian houses used by the army were reoccupied, generally by the original owners, and the land returned to pasture or cropland. It remains much the same today.

Although much comfort was provided by the camp and sympathetic organizations, many men fell victim to disease and common illness, especially that of smallpox. A large hospital was located on the grounds that served not only the immediate camp but battlefield injured, but other means to separate the smallpox cases from the rest of the area had to be made. Secluded from the main camp, but within the protected area, a hospital and a graveyard were located on what was then known as the Moss property. Described in records, the location is given as follows: "Smallpox graveyard ¼ of a mile west of the Lexington-Danville Turnpike at Camp Nelson, Jessamine, Kentucky, in a ravine 100 yards on the North bank of the river on land belonging to John Moss."
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  (Continued)

Designated in the records as Graveyard #1, there were some 379 men buried there between June 2, 1863, and July 6, 1865. It is evidenced, however, that not all of these deaths can be attributed to smallpox, since no cause of death is listed and also that on one burial, a side note indicated a death resulting from a "falling tree." It is thus suspected that this graveyard was an original with the established camp and that Graveyard #2, also listed in the burial records is the present location of the national cemetery which was a later addition. From old records, it can be established that there were 1,183 men buried in Graveyard #2, whose deaths dated between July 28, 1863, and February 4, 1866. It is suspected that many of these were deaths resulting from battle wounds and also some of them were later disinterments from battlefields. There were 143 men listed in the old records as having been disinterred from surrounding towns and family plots on farms.

The earliest death listed in the old burial records is James Sexton, Company G, 1st Kentucky Cavalry, whose death was dated October 14, 1861. He was disinterred sometime between 1868 and 1870 from a farm near Stanford, Kentucky, on the Knoblock Turnpike in an old family burying ground belonging to the family, G. Lackey. The grave of the soldier was listed as having been "under an apple tree" on this farm. After the disinterment into the national cemetery, his grave is now in Section A, Grave 131.

The cemetery at Camp Nelson, consisting of 8.5 acres, including the approach road, was occupied in 1863. It was designed only for burial of the dead from the troops at the camp. About three acres of ground had been selected on an elevated hill near the Lexington and Danville Turnpike and laid out in the form of a rectangle, divided into four equal sections by two avenues thirteen feet wide, crossing each other at right angles. Then, when it was decided to remove to this cemetery the bodies from five civil cemeteries in the state, the ground was enlarged so as to contain 8.5 acres. It was extended on the crest of the hill to the south and west and the additional ground divided into irregular burial sections. The cemetery was designated a national cemetery in 1866. Negotiations for the purchase were unsuccessful in 1867, but the United States retained possession thereof under the provisions of Section 4, Act of February 22, 1867. The owners conveyed title thereto for the appraised value in 1872. In 1874, an additional one acre adjoining the cemetery on the west side was acquired by purchase from the heirs of Mary Scott, deceased. The cemetery closed in June 1967. In 1975, the Committee to Reopen and Expand Camp Nelson National Cemetery raised more than $30,000 to purchase an additional ten acres of land adjacent to the cemetery and donated the property to the then Veterans Administration, thus reopening the cemetery. An additional parcel of 10.4 acres was donated in 1985 by the Jessamine County Industrial Development Corporation, extending the boundary of the cemetery to U. S. Highway 27. This brought the total acreage of the cemetery to 30.2 acres.

Ewald Schneider, a discharged private of Battery H, Fifth Regiment of Artillery, was the first superintendent. His appointment was dated November 26, 1867.
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE  (Continued)

In June and July of 1868, 2,023 dead were removed from five areas of Kentucky and reburied in the Camp Nelson National Cemetery: Frankfort, Kentucky (104), Richmond, Kentucky (241), London, Kentucky (266), Covington, Kentucky (437), and from the great battle at Perryville, Kentucky, where in October of 1862, the Confederate forces suffered defeat, some 975 bodies were removed. Besides these original interments, bodies were removed from many other counties in the State of Kentucky.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

National Cemetery System Microfilm Records

Department of Veterans Affairs Historic Preservation Office

Report of Inspector of the National Cemeteries of the United States for 1869

Report of the Inspector of the National Cemeteries for the years 1870 and 1871


The Kentucky African Americans in the Civil War: A Defining Moment in the Quest for Freedom, handout booklet at an exhibit at the Kentucky State Fair, August 14-24, 1997
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - UTM REFERENCES (Continued)

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying base map.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The National Cemetery System has used the existing boundaries of the cemetery.
Base Map
Camp Nelson National Cemetery
Jessamine County, Kentucky
CAMP NELSON NATIONAL CEMETERY
Jessamine County, Kentucky
Armando A. Sammartino and Jeffrey Teas, photographers
Date of Photographs: October 16, 1997 and February 24, 1998

All negatives are stored with Technical Support Service (401B), National Cemetery System, Department of Veterans Affairs, 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20420

VIEW OF: Main entrance gate, view looking east across Danville Road
NEG. NO. 8233-2
PHOTO 1 of 24

VIEW OF: Stone perimeter wall, southwest portion of older section of cemetery
NEG. NO. 7567-15
PHOTO 7 of 24

VIEW OF: Closer view of main entrance gate
NEG. NO. 8322-1
PHOTO 2 of 24

VIEW OF: Stone perimeter wall, north of entrance to older section of cemetery
NEG. NO. 7567-17
PHOTO 8 of 24

VIEW OF: Main entrance gate, view looking west
NEG. NO. 8233-4
PHOTO 3 of 24

VIEW OF: Lodge, north elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-6
PHOTO 9 of 24

VIEW OF: Entrance to older section of cemetery
NEG. NO. 7567-16
PHOTO 4 of 24

VIEW OF: Lodge, east elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-7
PHOTO 10 of 24

VIEW OF: Service entrance
NEG. NO. 8233-21
PHOTO 5 of 24

VIEW OF: Lodge, south elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-9
PHOTO 11 of 24

VIEW OF Flagpole
NEG. NO. 8233-6
PHOTO 6 of 24

VIEW OF: Lodge, west elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-8
PHOTO 12 of 24
VIEW OF: Utility building with public restrooms, north elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-10
PHOTO 13 of 24

VIEW OF: Utility building with public restrooms, east elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-11
PHOTO 14 of 24

VIEW OF: Utility building, south and west elevations
NEG. NO. 7567-12
PHOTO 15 of 24

VIEW OF: Utility building (storage), east elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-33
PHOTO 16 of 24

VIEW OF: Newest utility building (repair area), east elevation
NEG. NO. 7567-14
PHOTO 17 of 24

VIEW OF: Committal service shelter
NEG. NO. 8233-8
PHOTO 18 of 24

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking west showing stone wall, lodge, and one utility building
NEG. NO. 8233-20
PHOTO 19 of 24

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking north
NEG. NO. 7567-18
PHOTO 20 of 24

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northeast
NEG. NO. 7567-23
PHOTO 21 of 24

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northwest
NEG. NO. 8233-18
PHOTO 22 of 24

VIEW OF: Flat marker section (Section 1), view looking north
NEG. NO. 7567-24A
PHOTO 23 of 24

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northwest
NEG. NO. 7567-24
PHOTO 24 of 24
Sketch Map
Camp Nelson National Cemetery
Jessamine County, Kentucky

Note: Numbered arrows correspond to the views in the accompanying photographs.