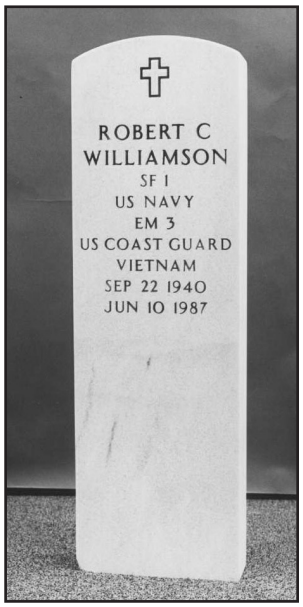
Department of Veterans Affairs
National Cemetery Administration

Communications & Outreach Support Division (41C2)
Washington, DC 20420
(202) 461-6240
FAX (202) 273-6698

www.cem.va.gov
public.inquiry@va.gov

Government Furnished Headstones, Markers & Medallions

Upon request and at no charge to the applicant, VA will provide a headstone, marker or medallion for the grave of any deceased eligible Veteran in any cemetery in the world. For deaths occurring before Nov. 1, 1990, VA may furnish a headstone or marker only for graves that are not marked with a private headstone.



Upright Marble Headstone

Headstones and markers are furnished for eligible spouses and dependents of Veterans only in a national, military base, or state/territorial or tribal Veterans cemetery. Spouses and dependents buried in a private cemetery are not eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker.

Flat bronze, granite or marble markers and upright granite and marble headstones are available. The style chosen must be consistent with existing monuments at the place of burial and applicants must receive approval from cemetery management. Niche markers are also available to mark columbaria used for inurnment of cremated remains. If desired, a bronze medallion may be furnished in lieu of a traditional Government headstone or marker for those Veterans whose death occurred on or after Nov. 1, 1990, and whose grave in a private cemetery is marked with a privately purchased headstone or marker. The medallion is designed to be affixed to an existing privately purchased headstone or marker to signify the deceased's status as a Veteran. The medallion is available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches and 1 ½ inches and is inscribed with the word “Veteran” across the top and the branch of service at the bottom.

ELIGIBILITY

Any deceased Veteran discharged from the U.S. armed forces under conditions other than dishonorable is eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker. Service after Sept. 7, 1980, must be for a minimum of 24 consecutive months or be completed under special circumstances (e.g., death on active duty.) Persons who have only limited active duty service for training while in the National Guard or Reserves are not eligible unless there are special circumstances (e.g., death while on duty or as a result of training.) Persons with 20 years of service in the National Guard or Reserves who are entitled to or will be entitled to retired pay at age 60 are also eligible for a government headstone or marker. A copy of the Reserve Retirement Eligibility Benefits Letter must accompany the application. Active duty service (other than active duty for training) while in the National Guard or Reserve also may establishe eligibility.

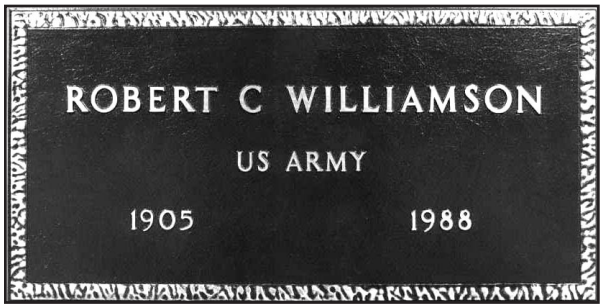
For deaths occurring on or after Nov. 1, 1990, any deceased active duty service member or eligible Veteran of the U.S. armed forces with a qualifying discharge is entitled to a government-furnished

headstone, marker or medallion. If the death occurred before Nov. 1, 1990, by law, VA may only furnish a headstone or marker if the grave is unmarked.

Further information concerning eligibility can be accessed from the National Cemetery Administration web site at www.cem.va.gov.

HOW TO ORDER A GOVERNMENT HEADSTONE OR MARKER

In a VA National Cemetery, at the time of burial, a VA National Cemetery representative will assist the next-of-kin (NOK) or authorized representative in ordering the headstone or marker. The applicant may also request a new emblem of belief for the headstone or marker during this process.



Flat Bronze Grave Marker

For Veterans buried in a private cemetery, the NOK or authorized representative may apply for a headstone, marker or medallion by completing VA Form 40-1330, *Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker.* The NOK may also request a new emblem of belief for a headstone or marker at the time they complete this form. The form must be completed and submitted along with a copy of the Veteran's military discharge documents. Do not send original documents, as they will not be returned.

VA Form 40-1330 and additional application information may be obtained from any VA regional office or national cemetery or by calling 1-800-827-1000. A printable copy of the form and instructions are available on the NCA Web site at www.cem.va.gov/hm/hmorder.asp. Completed applications and documents may be faxed toll-free to 1-800-455-7143 or mailed to:

Memorial Programs Service (41A1)
Department of Veterans Affairs
5109 Russell Road
Quantico, VA 22134-3903

INSCRIPTIONS

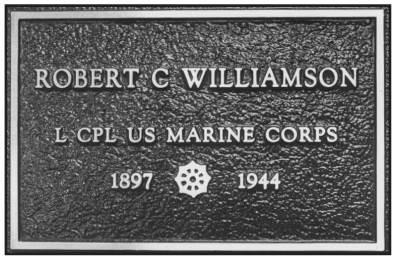
Government-furnished headstones and markers must be inscribed with the legal name of the deceased, branch of service and the year of birth and death, in this order. Memorial markers must also include " In Memory Of " at the top. If space is available, the inscription may also contain any or all of the following: Veteran's rank, war service, military decorations, awards and month and day of birth and death. <u>All of these items must be inscribed in English</u>.

If desired, headstones and markers may also include an emblem of belief. VA's current list of emblems of belief is available on page 5 of this fact sheet. Updates may also be posted on the NCA Web site at www.cem.va.gov/hm/hmemb.asp. A listing is also on the back of the application form (VA 40-1330). Additional emblems may also be requested during the application process. An emblem of belief is an emblem that represents the decedent's sincerely-held belief that constituted a religion or the functional equivalent of religion and was believed and/or accepted as true by the decedent in his or her life. The belief represented by an emblem need not be associated with or endorsed by a group or organization.

Additional personalized inscriptions such as terms of endearment ("beloved brother and son," "loving wife and mother," etc.), nicknames ("Poppy," "Funny Face," etc.), affiliation with military components

or organizations ("Women's Army Corps," "WAC," "WAVES," etc.) or Veterans groups may be added at the bottom of the headstone or marker with VA's approval, if space is available and the requested inscription is respectful and in good taste.

Civilian titles such as Doctor or Reverend, or any other additions to the legal name, are not permitted on the mandatory name line of the headstone or marker, but may be added as part of the additional inscription at the bottom of the marker.



Bronze Columbarium Niche Plaque

Additional inscriptions may be in any language so long as they are inscribed using characters of the Latin alphabet (A, B, C, 1, 2, 3, etc.) Both letters and numbers may be used, and where appropriate, accent marks such as the tilde, ampersand, parentheses, colon and hyphen may also be used. If requesting an additional inscription in any language other than English, the request must include the proper English-language translation of the inscription.

No graphics such as logos or symbols, are permitted on government-furnished headstones and markers other than approved emblems of belief, the Civil War Union Shield, the Civil War Confederate Southern Cross of Honor, and the Medal of Honor insignias.

Documentation must be provided with **VA Form 40-1330, Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker**, when requesting military awards in the inscription. In most cases this information is provided on the Veteran's military discharge documents. Military awards and decorations (including those from foreign governments) other than those listed in Block 8 of the application should be requested in Block 27 and may be added if space is available. Awards and decorations will not be included without documentation to support the request.

A Veteran's spouse or other non-Veteran dependent buried in a private cemetery is not eligible for a government-furnished headstone or marker. However, if requested on the application, space may be reserved below the Veteran's inscription so that the non-Veteran's information can be inscribed later by private arrangement at private expense. Or, if requested on the application, the non-Veteran dependent's name and date of birth can be included, as an additional inscription at government expense and the date of death may be added later at private expense.

CHECKING YOUR HEADSTONE OR MARKER ORDER STATUS

It generally takes from 30 to 60 days to process each application and have the headstone or marker produced and delivered. We request your patience and ask that you please allow sufficient processing time before calling to check on the status. To check on the status, call the Applicant Assistance Line toll-free at 1-800-697-6947 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, or e-mail mps.headstones@va.gov.

When inquiring by e-mail, be sure to include the Veteran's full name, social security number (and/or service number), date of death and any other information regarding the Veteran's service that may be helpful in researching our records. Please allow at least three business days for a response. Our telephone and e-mail customer service representatives do not have access to information about other VA benefits. To inquire about other VA benefits, please call 1-800-827-1000.

SHIPPING AND SETTING GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

Government-furnished headstones and markers are shipped free of charge.

Cemetery staff in all national, military post or base cemeteries will set the headstone or marker free

of charge. However, some state Veterans' cemeteries and most private cemeteries charge a fee for setting a government headstone or marker. This is a non-reimbursable expense.

Bronze Medallion

REPLACEMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

Government headstones and markers may be replaced at government expense when badly deteriorated, illegible, stolen or vandalized. The government may also replace a headstone or marker: if it is damaged; the material or workmanship are of poor quality; it contains inscription errors, it is different from what was requested on the application; or it is not permitted by the cemetery. If cemetery personnel damage a government headstone or marker in a private cemetery, it should be replaced at the cemetery's expense.

If a marble or granite headstone or marker is permanently removed from a grave, it must be destroyed beyond legibility. Bronze markers must be returned to the contractor for recycling. (**Please contact Memorial Programs Service at 1-800-697-6947** or by e-mail at **mps.headstones@va.gov** for guidance concerning the return of bronze markers.)

MEMORIAL HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

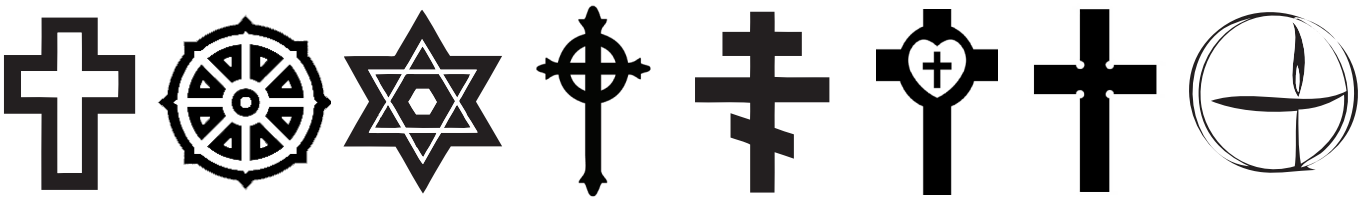
Memorial headstones and markers, for individuals or groups, are furnished for eligible deceased active duty service members and for Veterans whose remains are not recovered or identified, are buried at sea, donated to science or whose cremated remains have been scattered. Memorial headstones and markers may also be furnished in national, military base or state, territorial or tribal Veterans cemeteries for eligible spouses or other dependents whose remains are unavailable for interment, whether or not they predecease the eligible Veteran. These headstones and markers bear the inscription "In Memory Of" as their first line and must be placed in a recognized cemetery. Memorial headstones and markers for spouses or other dependents are not available for placement in private cemeteries.

CIVIL WAR ERA HEADSTONES AND MARKERS

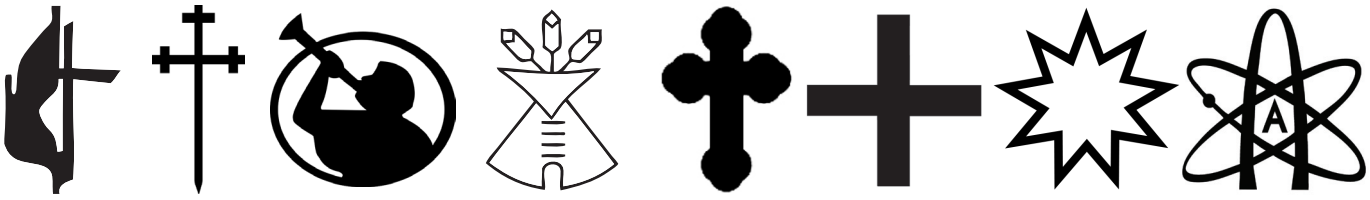
There are specific styles of upright headstones and flat markers to mark the graves of Union and Confederate Civil War and Spanish-American War dead. Proof of military service prior to World War I requires detailed documentation, such as muster rolls, extracts from state files, pension documents or land warrants, to be considered for a government headstone or marker.

Memorial markers are not usually provided for Civil War soldiers. That the whereabouts of a grave is unknown is not sufficient reason to furnish a memorial marker. If, however, documentation shows the soldier was buried in a mass grave, but the actual location of the body is unknown, VA will furnish a memorial marker for placement in a national, state Veterans' or private cemetery.

AUTHORIZED EMBLEMS OF BELIEF FOR PLACEMENT ON GOVERNMENT HEADSTONES AND MARKERS



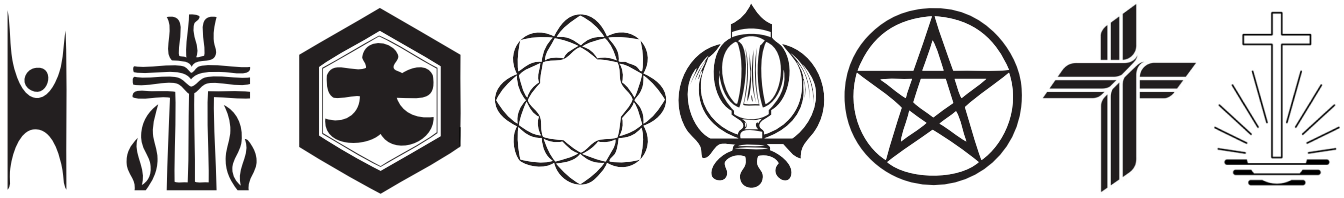
(1) CHRISTIAN (2) BUDDHIST (3) HEBREW (Star of David) (4) PRESBYTERIAN CROSS (5) RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CROSS (6) LUTHERAN CROSS (7) EPISCOPAL CROSS (8) UNITARIAN (Flaming Chalice)



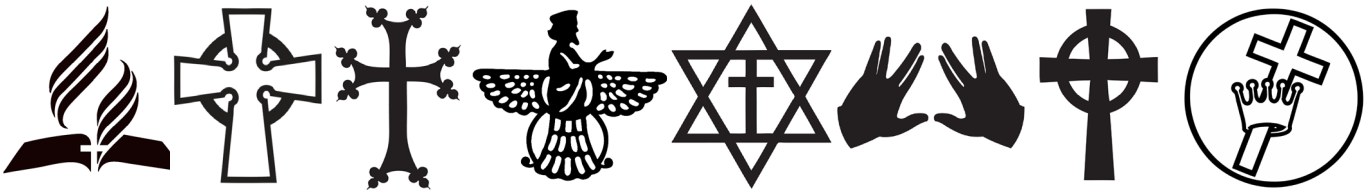
(9) UNITED METHODIST (10) AARONIC ORDER CHURCH (11) MORMON (Angel Moroni) (12) NATIVE AMERICAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA (13) SERBIAN ORTHODOX (14) GREEK CROSS (15) BAHAI (9-Pointed Star) (16) ATHEIST

(17) MUSLIM (Crescent and Star) (18) HINDU (19) KONKO-KYO FAITH (20) COMMUNITY OF CHRIST (21) SUFISM REORIENTED (22) TENRIKYO CHURCH (23) SEICHO-NO-IE

(24) THE CHURCH OF WORLD MESSIANITY (25) UNITED CHURCH OF RELIGIOUS SCIENCE (26) CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH (27) UNITED MORAVIAN CHURCH (28) ECKANKAR (29) CHRISTIAN CHURCH (30) CHRISTIAN & MISSIONARY ALLIANCE (31) UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



(32) HUMANIST EMBLEM OF SPIRIT (33) PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH (USA) (34) IZUMO TAISHAKYO MISSION OF HAWAII (35) SOKA GAKKAI INTERNATIONAL (USA) (36) SIKH (KHANDA) (37) WICCA (Pentacle) (38) LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD (39) NEW APOSTOLIC



(40) SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH (41) CELTIC CROSS (42) ARMENIAN CROSS (43) FAROHAR (44) MESSIANIC JEWISH (45) KOHEN HANDS (46) CATHOLIC CELTIC CROSS (47) FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST (Cross & Crown)

Emblem (98) MUSLIM (Islamic 5-Pointed Star) is not shown due to copyright.