

**TYPES AND STYLES OF GOVERNMENT-FURNISHED  
HEADSTONES/MARKERS/MEDALLIONS**

**1. REASON FOR ISSUE:** This update clarifies information about headstones, markers, and medallions available from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

**2. SUMMARY OF MAJOR CHANGES:** This update adds “medallions” to the title, reorders BACKGROUND entries, adds information about a new “retro” Confederate headstone under development, clarifies information about memorial headstones/markers and Group Memorial Monuments, and adds pictures to illustrate the types/styles.

*NOTE: New/revised information is indicated by a line in the left margin.*

**3. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE:** National Cemetery Administration, Memorial Programs Service, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, is responsible for the material contained in this handbook.

**4. RELATED PUBLICATIONS:**

a. NCA Directive 3000 – Operational Standards for VA National Cemeteries (January 5, 2010)

b. NCA Directive 3210/1 – Eligibility Requirements (January 18, 2011)

c. NCA Handbook 3315 – NCA Procedures for Ordering Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers (August 14, 2009)

d. NCA Handbook 3320 – Receipt and Inspection of Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers at VA National Cemeteries (August 14, 2009)

e. NCA Notice 2011-03 – Headstone/Marker Program Updates FY 2011 (May 5, 2011)

f. Automated Monument Application System (AMAS) User Guides

g. Burial Operations Support System (BOSS) User Guides

**5. RESCISSIONS:** NCA Handbook 3305 – Types and Styles of Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers (June 14, 2009) and Change 1 (January 18, 2011) are rescinded.



**6. RECERTIFICATION:** This publication is scheduled for recertification in November 2014.

/s/  
Steve L. Muro  
Under Secretary  
for Memorial Affairs

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## **SECTION I – INTRODUCTION**

### **1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE**

a. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) administers the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) headstone/marker program, furnishing Government headstones/markers to mark the final resting place or to commemorate the memory of an eligible veteran or group of veterans (except for those interred in cemeteries administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission) and eligible spouses and dependents. Headstones/markers for eligible spouse/dependent(s) may be placed only in a Federally-administered national or State veterans cemetery. VA also provides medallions for eligible veterans for affixing to a privately-purchased headstone/marker in a private cemetery.

b. This handbook provides physical descriptions of the basic types and styles of Government-furnished headstones/markers (including flats, uprights, 6"x6" unknowns, niche covers, and niche markers), medallions, and memorial wall markers.

c. The statutory authorities for the policies contained in this handbook are found in title 38, United States Code, section 2306 and chapter 24. Implementing regulations are published in title 38, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), part 38.

d. Any variance from the policies or procedures expressed in this handbook must be approved in writing by the Director, Memorial Programs Service (MPS).

### **2. BACKGROUND**

a. VA has no jurisdiction over policies established by other than VA national cemeteries. The types and styles of headstones/markers furnished for placement at non-VA cemeteries will be in accordance with all known applicable local and State requirements. The appropriate type and style of headstone or marker will be used to ensure consistency in appearance, layout, and size with existing headstones/markers. If a VA Form 40-1330 (Application for Standard Government Headstone or Marker - available electronically at [http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm\\_hm.asp](http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/hm_hm.asp)) is used for ordering, whenever possible, a cemetery official or duly authorized representative of the cemetery should sign the form certifying that the type/style of headstone/marker requested is appropriate for placement in the section of the cemetery where the grave is located.

b. Medallions to signify the deceased's status as a veteran are available for veterans who died on or after November 1, 1990, and have been interred in a private cemetery in a gravesite that is marked with an existing privately-purchased headstone/marker. Eligible deceased veterans are entitled to either a Government-furnished headstone/marker or a medallion, but not both. Medallions may not be affixed to privately-purchased headstones/markers in a Federal or State veterans cemetery.

c. Special headstone/marker styles are available for use at the graves of unknowns, or those who served in the Civil War or Spanish-American War.

d. NCA may memorialize eligible decedents whose remains have not been recovered or identified; were buried at sea, donated to science, or were cremated and the ashes scattered without interment of any portion of the ashes.

(1) Memorial headstones/markers will have "In Memory Of" as the first line of inscription. There are statutory and operational restrictions on where such headstones/markers can be placed, for example, memorial wall markers are available only for placement in VA national and State veterans cemeteries where memorial wall features exist.

(2) In accordance with established regulations (38 CFR 38.633), VA may furnish an appropriate Government Group Memorial Monument, only for placement in a VA national cemetery, to commemorate two or more active duty servicemembers who died in a sanctioned common military event and whose remains are unavailable for interment. This monument is different from memorial headstones or markers used for individuals and group burial headstones or markers used at interment of multiple remains.

e. The types and styles of headstones/markers furnished for placement in VA national cemeteries must be consistent with existing headstones/markers at the place of burial, and any applicable statutory requirements. Appropriate headstone/marker types/styles have been pre-determined for those cemeteries that use the electronic Burial Operations Support System/Automated Monument Application System (BOSS/AMAS). The system will not allow completion/approval of a request for a type/style of headstone or marker for which a particular cemetery does not have an active contract.

## SECTION II – PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS

### 1. GENERAL

a. The following paragraphs list the generally available types/styles of Government-furnished headstones/markers in current use. Requests for other types/styles will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

b. There may be variations in marble or granite stone color. Marble stones may contain light to moderate veining as long as it does not interfere with the legibility of the inscription. Please note that some of the illustrations show lithochromed inscriptions. In January 2009 the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs signed a memorandum “Lithochrome-free Marble Headstones, Markers and Niche Covers” which set new ‘no lithochrome’ policy for upright marble headstones and marble columbarium niche covers at all new cemeteries and at newly constructed columbaria with marble niche covers in existing national cemeteries. (Cemetery Directors have the option, at their discretion, to place lithochrome-free new or replacement marble headstones, markers and niche covers in existing sections where older stones may have had lithochrome that has faded.)

c. For allowable tolerances in dimensions, color, inscription depth, etc., refer to NCA Handbook 3320 – Receipt and Inspection of Government-Furnished Headstones/Markers at VA National Cemeteries.

### 2. STANDARD UPRIGHTS

*Standard Uprights* are made of marble or granite, with a curved top.

Dimensions: 42 inches (106.7cm) long, 13 inches (33cm) wide, and either 3 (7.62cm) or 4 inches (10.2cm) thick.

Weight: Approximately 173 pounds (78.5kg) for the 3 inch thick and 230 pounds (104.3kg) for the 4 inch thick.



### 3. RECESSED SHIELD CIVIL WAR/SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR UPRIGHTS

*Recessed Shield Civil War/Spanish-American War Uprights* are made of marble or granite, have a sunken shield and raised lettering, and a curved top.



Dimensions: 42 inches (106.7cm) long, either 12 (30.5cm) or 13 inches (33cm) wide, and 3 (7.62cm) inches thick; or 39 inches (99 cm) long, 10 inches (25.4 cm) wide, and 3 inches (7.62 cm) thick.

Weight: Approximately 160 pounds (72.6kg) for the 12 inch wide, 173 pounds (78.5kg) for the 13 inch wide, and 124 pounds (56.2kg) for the 10 inch wide.

#### 4. CONFEDERATE UPRIGHTS

*Confederate Uprights* are made of marble or granite, with a pointed top.

Dimensions: 42 inches (106.7cm) long, 13 inches (33cm) wide, and 4 (10.2cm) inches thick.

Weight: Approximately 230 pounds (104.3kg).



Historic headstone for which a “retro” version is being developed (see **NOTE**).

**NOTE:** The “retro” headstone style is being developed for historic Prisoner of War-related cemeteries managed by NCA (e.g., Rock Island, Camp Chase).

#### 5. FLATS

*Flats* are made of marble, granite, or bronze.

##### a. Flat marble

Dimensions: 24 inches (61cm) long, 12 inches (30.5cm) wide, and 4 inches (10.2cm) thick.

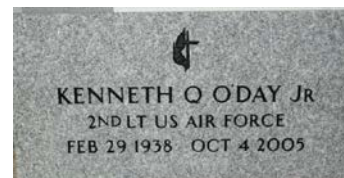
Weight: Approximately 130 pounds (59kg).



##### b. Flat granite

Dimensions: 24 inches (61cm) long, 12 inches (30.5cm) wide, and 4 inches (10.2cm) thick.

Weight: Approximately 130 pounds (59kg).



##### c. Thin flat granite

Dimensions: 24 inches (61cm) long, 12 inches (30.5cm) wide, and 3 inches (7.62cm) thick.

Weight: Approximately 98 pounds (44.5kg).

##### d. Small flat granite

Dimensions: 18 inches (45.7cm) in length, 12 inches (30.5cm) wide, and 3 inches (7.62cm) thick.

Weight: Approximately 73 pounds (33.1kg).

##### e. Flat bronze \*

Dimensions: 24 inches (61cm) long, 12 inches (30.5cm) wide, with a 3/4 inch (1.9cm) rise.

Weight: Approximately 18 pounds (8.2kg).



\* Mounting bolts, nuts and washers for fastening to a base are furnished with bronze markers. The Government does not furnish a base for mounting bronze markers placed in a private cemetery.

### f. Old style flat bronze \*

Dimensions: 24 inches (61cm) long, 12 inches (30.5cm) wide, with a 3/4 inch (1.9cm) rise.

Weight: Approximately 18 pounds (8.2kg).



## 6. NICHE MARKERS

*Niche Markers* are made of bronze, and are normally used to mark placement of cremated remains in columbaria or in-ground terrace garden niches, or casketed remains entombed in a mausoleum.

### a. Regular style bronze niche/terrace marker \*

Dimensions: 8 1/2 inches (21.6cm) long, 5 1/2 inches (14cm) wide, with a 7/16 inch (1.1cm) rise.

Weight: Approximately 3 pounds (1.4kg).



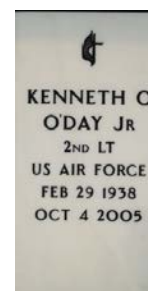
### b. Special style bronze niche marker \* (Los Angeles National Cemetery only).

Dimensions: 6 1/2 inches (16.5cm) long, 5 3/4 inches (14.6cm) wide.

Weight: Approximately 7 ounces (0.2kg).

## 7. NICHE COVERS

*Niche Covers* are made of granite or marble, and are normally used to mark placement of cremated remains in columbaria. Color scales and materials used for niche covers vary by cemetery but generally match what is currently used at a national cemetery or State veterans cemetery. Niche covers are used in a portrait configuration and mounting holes are pre-drilled in each corner. Niche covers may also be used on memorial walls in certain VA national cemeteries (see paragraph 12) to memorialize eligible decedents whose remains are not available for interment.



Dimensions: 15 3/4 inches (40cm) long, 11 1/4 inches (28.6cm) wide, and 3/4 inch (1.9cm) thick, or 7/8 inch (2.2cm) thick for Arlington National Cemetery only.

Weight: Approximately 15 pounds (6.8kg).



**NOTE:** Some cemeteries use a stone niche cover with a regular style bronze marker centered between the rosettes holding the stone cover in place.



\* Mounting bolts, nuts and washers for fastening to a base are furnished with bronze markers. The Government does not furnish a base for mounting bronze markers placed in a private cemetery.

## 8. UNKNOWNNS



Prior to 1903, the graves of *Unknowns* in Federally-administered cemeteries were usually marked by 6 inch square marble blocks. Generally, these *Unknown* types are made of marble.

Dimensions: 30 inches (16.2cm) long, 6 inches (15.2cm) wide, and 6 inches (15.2cm) thick.  
Weight: Approximately 120 pounds (54.4kg).



After 1903, the graves of *Unknowns* in Federally-administered cemeteries were marked by standard headstones or markers.

**NOTE:** *In order to maintain consistency in appearance when replacing Unknowns, cemeteries will use a type/style of headstone/marker that matches as closely as possible those placed at adjacent gravesites.*

## 9. GROUP BURIAL MARKERS

*Group Burial Markers* are used to mark the gravesite where multiple remains are interred. The markers are specially designed based on the number of decedents and information included. Eligibility must be established for all veterans named on the headstone/marker. The material used and headstone/marker thickness will be consistent with existing headstones/markers in the cemetery.



## 10. GROUP MEMORIAL MONUMENTS

*Group Memorial Monuments* commemorate two or more identified United States Armed Forces members who died in a sanctioned common military event while in active military, naval, or air service, whose remains were buried at sea or are otherwise unavailable for interment. Such monuments are specially designed based on the number of decedents and information included. Eligibility must be established for all active duty servicemembers named on the Group Memorial Monument. Group Memorial Monuments may be made of stone, bronze or other metals, or a combination of materials. (See 38 CFR 38.633 for requirements.)



## 11. MEDALLIONS

*Medallions* are made of bronze and are available in three sizes: 5 inches, 3 inches, and 1 1/2 inches. Each medallion will be inscribed with the word VETERAN across the top and the Branch of Service at the bottom. Appropriate affixing adhesive, instructions and hardware are provided with the medallion. Up to three branches of service may be indicated on the medallion in an abbreviated format.

One and a half inch Medallion



Five or three inch Medallion





## 12. MEMORIAL WALL MARKERS

*Memorial Wall Markers* commemorate eligible individuals. Such markers are made of granite, marble, or other material as designated by the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs; and will be installed in a landscape configuration, using rosettes.

Dimensions: 7 3/4 inches (19.7cm) long, 11 1/4 inches (28.6cm) wide, and 3/4 inch (1.9cm) thick.

Weight: Approximately 7 pounds (3kg).



**SECTION III – PROGRAM/POSITION FUNCTIONS**

1. **Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs** oversees the VA headstone and marker program; and approves policies and specifications for inscriptions on Government-furnished headstones/markers.
2. **Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs** ensures that headstone/marker program responsibilities are carried out appropriately.
3. **Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning** program functions include:
  - a. Reviewing, approving, and ensuring timely obligation of funds for headstones/markers;
  - b. Ensuring that operational standards and measures align with the requirements of this handbook;
  - c. Assisting in the development and evaluation of accurate, valid and reliable data collection systems; and
  - d. Analyzing collected data to provide performance reports to responsible offices.
4. **Deputy Under Secretary for Field Programs** program functions include:
  - a. Providing guidance to field staff to ensure that headstone/marker activities meet administrative and operational requirements; and
  - b. Ensuring any problems within the program are resolved appropriately.
5. **Memorial Programs Service (MPS)** program functions include:
  - a. Administering the NCA headstone/marker program in accordance with existing policies and procedures;
  - b. Proposing and implementing changes to program policies and procedures or new products and/or materials; and
  - c. Ensuring timely and accurate provision of headstone/marker products, including the oversight of contracts for production, inscription, and transportation.
6. **Memorial Service Network (MSN)** program functions include:
  - a. Monitoring all activities associated with headstone/marker products at VA national cemeteries; and
  - b. When requested, providing assistance to next of kin or personal representatives submitting applications for headstones/markers for placement in private cemeteries.

7. **NCA Cemetery Director** position functions include:

- a. Ensuring the timely entering of information, ordering, inspection, and reordering/replacement of headstone/marker products in accordance with policies and procedures established by Memorial Programs Service and the Office of Field Programs;
- b. Acting as alternate Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR) for headstone/marker contracts that provide for on-site inscription;
- c. Reporting any problems or questions regarding contractors, products, or services through the MSN to MPS; and
- d. When requested, assisting next of kin or personal representatives submitting applications for headstones/markers for placement in private cemeteries.

8. **Memorial Programs Service Site Supervisor** position functions include ensuring timely and accurate input of headstone/marker orders and information.

9. **Supervisor, MPS Program Support Unit** position functions include:

- a. Serving as primary COTR for all headstone/marker contracts;
- b. Ensuring timely assembly of approved orders generated through BOSS/AMAS; and
- c. Timely electronic transfer of procured orders to contractors.

10. **Quantico Regional Processing Center**, Information Systems Service, program functions include maintaining, updating and upgrading the electronic programs that support the headstone/marker program.

11. **Centralized Contracting Division**, Management Support Service, program functions include soliciting and awarding contracts, as needed, for manufacture and transportation of headstones/markers and provision of local inscription services.