United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  

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

<table>
<thead>
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<th>historic name</th>
<th>Keokuk National Cemetery</th>
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<td>other names/site number</td>
<td>____________________________</td>
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2. Location

<table>
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<tr>
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<td>Keokuk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>state</td>
<td>Iowa</td>
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<tr>
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<td>111</td>
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<td>52632</td>
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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

☐ 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 80. In my opinion, the property ☑ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant.

<table>
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<tr>
<td>Signature of certifying official/Title</td>
<td>Department of Veterans Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signature of commenting or other official/Title</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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☐ In my opinion, the property ☑ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

<table>
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<tr>
<td>State or Federal agency and bureau</td>
<td>STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF IOWA</td>
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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

removal from the National Register

☐ other, (explain:)

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5. Classification

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<tr>
<td>Total</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

6. Function or Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Late Victorian: Second Empire

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
Foundation: Stone; Concrete
Walls: Brick
Roof: Slate; Asphalt
Other: Metal: Iron, bronze, copper; Stone: Marble, granite

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Funerary: Cemetery

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
Funerary: Cemetery

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
Statement of Significance

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Military

Period of Significance
1862-1937

Significant Dates

1862

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.

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
10. Geographical Data

Acres of Property: 21.7

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

1  A  |  635560  |  4473370  
Zone   |   Easting  |   Northing  
2  B  |  635590  |  4473130  

3  C  |  635530  |  4473100  
Zone   |   Easting  |   Northing  

4  D  |  635410  |  4473100  

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: May 5, 1997

Street & Number: 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Telephone: (202) 565-4895
City or Town: Washington, D.C.
State: Zip Code: 20420

Additional Documentation
Submit 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 FPQ for any additional items)

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

Name: Department of Veterans Affairs
Street & Number: 810 Vermont Avenue, N.W.
Telephone: 
City or Town: Washington, D.C.
State: Zip Code: 20420

Parks and Recreation 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 Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Keokuk National Cemetery is located at 1701 J Street, Keokuk, Iowa, in Lee County. two miles west of the city of Keokuk. The cemetery is divided into two sections, the eastern section and the western section. Each section has its own entrance gate and each contains a flagpole. The superintendent's lodge is located in the eastern section, and the administration/service building is situated just inside the entrance to the western section.

The cemetery was established in 1862. Graves were originally marked by headboards, painted white with black lettering, and are now marked by upright marble headstones. As of March 31, 1997, there were 3,299 graves used for the interment of 3,705 casketed remains and 125 sites used for the interment of 195 cremated remains. Interments of casketed remains in occupied graves and reserved graves continue. As of March 31, 1997, there were 1,917 gravesites available (28 reserved) for the interment of casketed remains and 167 sites available for the interment of cremated remains. The cemetery is expected to remain open until beyond the year 2030.

The eastern section, which is the original cemetery, is located adjacent to the Oakland Cemetery, owned and operated by the city of Keokuk. The entrance gate to this section is located on 18th Street and is protected by wrought-iron gates supported by stone posts. In 1871, the grounds were enclosed by a wrought-iron picket fence, four and one-half feet in height. In 1949, the entry gates, pillars, and fence were replaced by the standard design being constructed in national cemeteries at that time.

The superintendent's lodge was constructed in 1870 and was designed by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs from the original standard plan for Civil War era national cemeteries. It is a one and one-half story brick and stone cottage, Second Empire design, with a slate mansard roof and dormer windows. The first floor windows are arched (rusticated brick arches with six-over-three windows). This is a unique feature to the standard Meigs lodge that occurs only in the Keokuk National Cemetery. The second floor windows, replaced in 1954, are six-over-six dormer windows. The first floor contains an office, living room, dining room and kitchen, and the upper level contains 2 1/2 bedrooms and a bath. The corners of the lodge have rusticated quoins. There is a basement and an enclosed porch. A brick addition to the kitchen was constructed in the 1930's.

A brick and concrete maintenance building, 16 feet by 24 feet, with a shingle roof, was constructed in 1937 and is located near the lodge. The roof was asbestos lap shingle which was replaced in 1957. This building is now used for storage.
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (Continued)

There is one commemorative monument in the Keokuk National Cemetery located in Section D in the eastern section of the cemetery. It was erected in 1912 by the Women's Relief Corps of Keokuk. It consists of a tall granite shaft, suitably inscribed, and surmounted by a life-size figure of a Civil War soldier standing at parade rest on the top. The monument measures 5 feet 9 inches square at the bottom and 2 feet 4 inches square at the top, and is inscribed as follows:

IN
MEMORY
OF THE
UNKNOWN DEAD
1861-1865

ERECTED
BY THE
WOMAN'S RELIEF
CORPS
AND THE
STATE OF IOWA
A.D. 1912

In Section B in the eastern section of the cemetery is a copper case with a glass top containing the cornerstone of the old Estes House (hotel) that stood on the corner of 5th and Main Streets in the city of Keokuk. This Estes House was turned into a general hospital during the Civil War and was the largest of the Keokuk military hospitals maintained during the Civil War. The building was razed in 1929, and the cornerstone was removed and brought to the cemetery in memory of those who died in the hospital. An inscription reads as follows:

CORNERSTONE OF THE OLD ESTES HOUSE
FIFTH & MAIN KEOKUK, IOWA
SITE OF ARMY HOSPITAL APRIL 17, 1862 - OCT. 1, 1865
ERECTED TO THE MEMORY OF THE SOLDIERS WHO
DIED IN THE OLD GENERAL HOSPITAL AT KEOKUK
AND ARE BURIED IN THE NATIONAL CEMETERY
A bronze wreath erected by the American War Dads and Auxiliaries of Iowa is located in Section D and is inscribed as follows:

DEDICATED TO THE
UNKNOWN SOLDIER
BY THE
AMERICAN WAR DADS
AND AUXILIARIES
OF IOWA

An octagonal-shaped frame and stone rostrum was located at the north end of the grounds. The date of construction is unknown, but this structure was removed in 1936, and a new octagonal-shaped iron and concrete rostrum was constructed near the center of the west side. This rostrum was removed in 1950.

A brick stable and public toilet, as well as a brick and stone toolhouse with a slate roof, all constructed in 1871, were subsequently removed. The toolhouse was removed in 1933.

A document in the National Cemetery System microfilm records quoting information from a report of the inspector of national cemeteries for the year 1874 states that the cemetery (eastern section) contained a handsome summer house with seats for visitors. At the cemetery entrance were two gun monuments, one on each side. The flagpole was surrounded by four field pieces mounted on their carriages. Records further show that three of the gun monuments were constructed in 1871 (two were located near the main entrance and one in the northeast corner of the cemetery). In June 1927, four additional gun monuments were built and located around the base of the flagpole. A gun house had been erected for storing these guns during the winter months. There are no longer any gun monuments in the cemetery, and the summer house and gun house have both been demolished, the dates unknown.

The land for the western section was acquired in 1949, and development began in 1978. The entrance gate to the western section is located on J Street and is protected by wrought-iron gates supported by stone posts. The grounds are enclosed by wrought-iron fencing and chain link fencing.

The brick administration/maintenance building, located in this section, was constructed in 1982. The roof is metal.
NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (Continued)

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

**Buildings:** Lodge

**Sites:** Cemetery

**Structures:** Gates (2)

**Objects:** Flagpole, unknown monument, cornerstone of old Estes House

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

**Buildings:** Administration/service complex, storage building

**Structures:** Committal service tent

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Keokuk 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 prototypical 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.

The period of significance ends in 1937, the year of construction of the maintenance building.

The location of Keokuk at the confluence of the Des Moines and Mississippi Rivers afforded facilities for transportation of the produce of Iowa farms so necessary for the war’s execution. Many young men from Iowa farms and villages passed through Keokuk enroute down the “Father of Waters” (Mississippi River) to the battlefields of the South.
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

The first Civil War camp in Iowa was Camp Ellsworth, established near Keokuk in May 1861. It was here on May 14, 1861, that members of the First Iowa Volunteer Infantry were mustered into service. Three other military assembly centers, Camp Rankin, Camp Halleck and Camp Lincoln were also established at Keokuk, in 1861 and 1862. The Third Regiment of the Iowa Volunteer Infantry was mustered into service in June 1861. Between August 30 and September 14, the Third Regiment Iowa Volunteer Cavalry was formed. In 1862, the 17th and 19th regiments of the Iowa Volunteer Infantry were organized and mustered in at Keokuk.

As the war progressed, casualty lists of the sick and wounded brought a more somber aspect to the war effort activities at Keokuk. Five Army general hospitals, capable of accommodating more than 1,500 sick and wounded soldiers, were established to care for casualties brought up the Mississippi River from the battlefields of the South.

The Keokuk National Cemetery was originally established for the interment of soldiers who died at the general hospitals located in Keokuk during the Civil War. The cemetery originally formed a part of Oakland Cemetery, a city cemetery, and interments of Union soldiers were made there as early as 1861. In 1868, the cemetery was in charge of Captain J. W. Pearman, Assistant Quartermaster of volunteers, who resided in Davenport, Iowa. It is believed to have operated in conjunction with this city cemetery, and the interment of soldiers who died in the hospitals was made by contract until May 20, 1870, when Mr. Clayton Hart was assigned as the first superintendent.

Original burials in the Keokuk National Cemetery were from the five general hospitals in the city. At that time, the military cemetery was known as “Soldiers Burial Ground” and was a part of the Oakland Cemetery. The first burial was Private Pat Sulillivan, 9th Iowa, whose marker bears the date October 16, 1861.

During June 1948, the remains of persons interred in the post cemetery at Fort Des Moines were reinterred in the Keokuk National Cemetery (45 soldiers, 3 wives, 4 children, and 1 civilian).

In 1908, subsequent to abandonment at the post cemetery at Fort Yates, North Dakota, 73 remains were brought to Keokuk for reinterment (49 known soldiers, 3 unknown soldiers, 12 children and 9 civilians). An account in the Daily Constitution Democrat (Keokuk) of Friday, November 13, 1908, describes in some detail the reverent tribute paid by the citizens of Keokuk as the flag-draped boxes containing the remains were escorted to the national cemetery by members of the Grand Army of the Republic, Spanish-American War veterans, members of the Daughters of the American Revolution.
NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

and the Sons of the American Revolution, and city dignitaries. The following tribute by Miss Mary C. Collins, who had been an Indian missionary and preacher at Fort Yates, fittingly eulogized the services of those who had served in the frontier outpost at Fort Yates:

We are prone to think of soldiers only as brave when they have been drawn up in battle line before an enemy and have been killed in the heart of battle. Have any of you soldiers here ever been stationed on a frontier post, with nothing but the wheezing little steamer coming once a month with new troops or hardtack or coffee to relieve the monotony? There is no excitement, there is nothing to make the blood run hot. These men died on a frontier post, poor homesick boys and men grown gray, serving in silence on the frontier. Some of them were veterans of the Civil War; others have died in service on the frontier. They have all died in the service of their country.

There is one Medal of Honor recipient buried in the national cemetery:

**John F. Thorson, Private First Class, U. S. Army, Company G, 17th Infantry, 7th Infantry Division** - He was an automatic rifleman on October 28, 1944, in the attack on Dagami, Leyte, Philippine Islands. A heavily fortified enemy position consisting of pill boxes and supporting trenches held up the advance of his company. His platoon was ordered to out-flank and neutralize the strong point. Voluntarily moving well out in front of his group, Private Thorson came upon an enemy fire trench defended by several hostile riflemen and, disregarding the intense fire directed at him, attacked singlehandedly. He was seriously wounded and fell about six yards from the trench. Just as the remaining 20 members of the platoon reached him, one of the enemy threw a grenade into their midst. Shouting a warning and making a final effort, Private Thorson rolled onto the grenade and smothered the explosion with his body. He was instantly killed, but his magnificent courage and supreme self-sacrifice prevented the injury and possible death of his comrades, and remains with them as a lasting inspiration. He is buried in Section D, Grave 71.

The Keokuk National Cemetery originally consisted of a tract of land within the Oakland Cemetery (a city cemetery) and was known as "Soldiers Burial Ground." Records indicate that the cemetery was originally operated in conjunction with the Oakland Cemetery, and interments of soldiers who died in the general hospitals in Keokuk were made by contract. By deed dated August 28, 1866, Mayor William Patterson of Keokuk conveyed to the United States the section of Oakland Cemetery in which the soldiers were buried. Additional land was later purchased by the Government. By deed dated August 5, 1870, Hiram Barney and wife conveyed property to the United States for the sum of $490.00, and by deed dated August 30, 1871, John Oertel and wife conveyed land for $600.00. Mayor
Edward Jaeger of the city of Keokuk, by quitclaim deed dated December 17, 1874, conveyed land adjoining the national cemetery which was used as a Potter's field, to the United States. A document in historical records shows that, after these acquisitions, the total area contained 2.8 acres, more or less. The United States Government then acquired an additional parcel of land, said to contain 2± acres, by declaration of taking dated September 17, 1942, for the sum of $2,293.44. This brought the total acreage of the cemetery to approximately 4.8 acres. Subsequently, by deed dated August 23, 1949, the city of Keokuk conveyed to the United States an additional 16 acres, and by deed dated May 1, 1969, an additional tract of land consisting of .9 acre was acquired. The total acreage of the cemetery is 21.7 acres.

**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


**GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - UTM REFERENCES (Continued)**

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying base maps.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The National Cemetery System has used the existing boundaries of the cemetery.
KEOKUK NATIONAL CEMETERY
Lee County, Iowa
Therese T. Sammartino, photographer
Date of Photographs: August 15, 1996

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: Entrance gate, eastern section, view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 6481-6A
PHOTO 1 of 20

VIEW OF: Storage building, eastern section, south elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-11A
PHOTO 7 of 20

VIEW OF: Flagpole, eastern section, view looking north
NEG. NO. 6481-13A
PHOTO 2 of 20

VIEW OF: Storage building, eastern section, northeast elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-12A
PHOTO 8 of 20

VIEW OF: Lodge, north elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-7A
PHOTO 3 of 20

VIEW OF: Unknown Dead monument
NEG. NO. 6481-15A
PHOTO 9 of 20

VIEW OF: Lodge, west elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-8A
PHOTO 4 of 20

VIEW OF: Cornerstone, old Estes House
NEG. NO. 6481-14A
PHOTO 10 of 20

VIEW OF: Lodge, south elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-9A
PHOTO 5 of 20

VIEW OF: American War Dads Wreath
NEG. NO. 6481-18A
PHOTO 11 of 20

VIEW OF: Lodge, southeast elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-10A
PHOTO 6 of 20

VIEW OF: Cemetery, eastern section, view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 6481-24A
PHOTO 12 of 20
VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 6481-17A
PHOTO 13 of 20

VIEW OF: Entrance gate, western section, view looking east
NEG. NO. 6481-0A
PHOTO 14 of 20

VIEW OF: Flagpole, western section, view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 6481-5A
PHOTO 15 of 20

VIEW OF: Administration/maintenance building, east elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-4A
PHOTO 16 of 20

VIEW OF: Administration/maintenance building, north elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-1A
PHOTO 17 of 20

VIEW OF: Administration/maintenance building, west elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-2A
PHOTO 18 of 20

VIEW OF: Administration/maintenance building, east elevation
NEG. NO. 6481-3A
PHOTO 19 of 20

VIEW OF: Committal Service Tent
NEG. NO. 6481-19A
PHOTO 20 of 20
Sketch Map
Keokuk National Cemetery  Eastern Section
Lee County, Iowa
Name of property: Keokuk National Cemetery
Location: Keokuk, Lee County
State: IA
Request submitted by: VA Gjore Mollenhoff
Date received: 8/21/81
Additional information received:

Opinion of the State Historic Preservation Officer:

☑ Eligible  ☐ Not Eligible  ☐ No Response

Comments:

The Secretary of the Interior has determined that this property is:

☑ Eligible  Applicable criteria:

☐ Not Eligible

Comments: 36 CFR Part 63.3 Determination

☐ Documentation insufficient
(Please see accompanying sheet explaining additional materials required)

Keeper of the National Register
Determined Eligible

Date: August 25, 1981