

NATIONAL CEMETERY ADMINISTRATION HISTORY PROGRAM

1. PURPOSE

This notice outlines the authority, objectives and activities of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) National Cemetery Administration (NCA) History Program. The information contained in this notice will serve as the basis for development of additional guidance on program policies and implementing procedures to be followed throughout NCA.

2. BACKGROUND/MISSION

a. The "*National Cemetery Administration Strategic Plan FY2001-2006*" directed that a History Program be established to "ensure that a comprehensive and professional historical record of NCA exists for future generations." In response, a new history program office was created in February 2001 under the Communications Management Service.

b. The mission of the NCA History Program is to:

(1) Actively record, collect, preserve, and protect records and artifacts related to NCA historical and cultural materials and resources;

(2) Perform research using materials of NCA, its predecessor (the Department of the Army), related agencies, and other historical sources;

(3) Initiate and advance activities that promote an understanding of and appreciation for NCA history by staff, veterans, and the public; and

(4) Ensure that the processes involved in the evaluation, study, collection, and handling of all historical and cultural materials and resources at all NCA facilities conform to established standards for appropriateness, quality, accountability, preservation, display, security, and other considerations.

3. NCA HISTORY PROGRAM AREAS

Historic Preservation and Cultural Resource Management (HP/CRM)

a. History Program staff will develop, oversee, and promote preservation programs that collect, identify, evaluate, preserve, and plan for the long-term protection of NCA's wide variety of historic properties, resources, and materials. All NCA History Program employees directly responsible for NCA preservation program efforts will meet the professional requirements as defined in the National Historic Preservation Act (Sections 110 and 112) applicable for any Federal agency undertaking.

(1) HP/CRM interests are related (but not limited) to the following types of historic resources:

(a) Archaeological Resources and Artifacts - Historic sub-surface elements, structures, or resources; including former or existing burial sites or roads; developed or undeveloped property.

(b) Architectural Resources and Artifacts - Historic above-ground buildings, structures, walls, components, or appurtenances, sculptures, including monuments, memorials, fences, gates, curbing, etc.

(c) Landscape Resources - Historic landscape elements or features including trees, gardens, groves, hedges, walkways, paths, fountains, ponds, etc.

b. HP/CRM activities may include (but are not limited to) the following:

(1) Providing guidance regarding preservation, conservation, and restoration required for the National Environmental Preservation Act, National Historic Preservation Act (Sections 106 and 110), etc., or as requested by other NCA Central Office or field staff, or others;

(2) Serving as the primary office responsible for conducting surveys of historic features and inventories of monuments, and otherwise identifying, documenting and participating in the evaluation of historic resources and artifacts;

(3) Monitoring, assessing and reporting on environmental conditions for historic resources and artifacts;

(4) Participating (as requested) in the Federal processes required to evaluate, study and determine the appropriate adaptive use or demolition of any historic structure or building located on NCA property, or any non-NCA property in which the agency has a formal role/action.

c. HP/CRM activities will be conducted in accordance with legal, regulatory and professional standards established by the Library of Congress, the Department of the Interior - National Park Service, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and other relevant professional groups and/or repositories.

Historic Collections Management (HCM)

a. History Program staff will:

(1) Serve as stewards for historic materials under NCA ownership or control; and

(2) Develop, manage, and promote preservation and management programs that collect, identify, evaluate, preserve, and plan for the long-term protection of NCA's archival and historic collections.

b. The History Program office will serve as the official repository for those historic materials not yet under the legal jurisdiction of NARA and those not stipulated to be sent to NARA. Examples of potential NCA Archives and Historic Collections include (but are not limited to):

(1) Archival Collections - Any documentary material that records the activities of NCA or its predecessor (the Department of the Army) in any format. Includes records, manuscripts, in-house studies, briefing materials, oral history, transcripts, photographs, cartographic records, film, ephemera, multimedia materials, etc.

(2) Library Collections - Reference books, dictionaries, encyclopedias, journals, or any other type of publication relevant to NCA history.

(3) Artifacts and Museum Object Collections - Any cultural object or material removed from its original or historic context for the purposes of preservation, study, education, or exhibition.

c. HCM activities will be conducted in accordance with standards published by the Library of Congress, Society of American Archivists, American Association of Museums, the Oral History Association, Association of Moving Image Archivists, and other professional groups/repositories.

Research, Scholarship, and Publication (RSP)

a. History Program staff will:

- (1) Conduct original research;
- (2) Engage in professional scholarship activities; and
- (3) Draft and publish original materials, or review and approve those prepared by others.

b. RSP activities may include (but are not limited to) the following:

(1) Public representation - Presenting monographs, papers, etc., to academic/professional audiences, serving as panelist(s), organizing/assisting with or representing NCA at national conferences and events;

(2) Publication - Publishing or assisting in the publication of papers, reports and other material(s) in professional or scholarly journals, publishing or editing research for inclusion in books, collaborating with other individuals or institutions on book projects; and

(3) Preservation - Recording of modern historical events and activities of NCA.

c. RSP activities will be conducted in accordance with standards adhered to by the National Council for Public History, Organization of American Historians, Society for History in the Federal Government, and other similar professional organizations.

Public Programs and Outreach (PPO)

a. History Program staff will establish partnerships to develop, facilitate, manage, and promote programs to educate, involve, or benefit VA or NCA staff or the general public about United States veteran/military cemeteries. The partnerships may be with local or State governments, other Federal entities, private organizations or institutions. Cemetery features covered in such programs would include buildings/structures, landscape features/layout, memorials, headstones, or markers.

b. PPO activities may include (but are not limited to) the development, creation, and/or oversight of:

- (1) NCA collections (accessible through searchable on-line catalogs/databases);
- (2) Exhibits (in-house, on-line, and traveling);
- (3) Internship or fellowship programs;

(4) Lectures, presentation of papers, etc., to the general public and special-interest groups;

(5) Publications (using a variety of formats and media (e.g., interpretive signs or brochures, posters, tour handouts, newsletters, or publication in VA, NCA, or general audience periodicals) and broadcasts to inform VA and NCA staff and the general public about and promote the history of NCA, national cemeteries, or related subjects);

(6) On site tours;

(7) Videos;

(8) Workshops; and

(9) Educational materials such as curricula.

c. PPO activities will be conducted in accordance with the standards and professional group/repository guidelines already stated.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

a. The **Director, Communications Management Service**, manages the NCA history program and directly supervises the NCA Senior Historian and staff, providing oversight and guidance in the development and implementation of policies and procedures designed to collect and maintain a comprehensive and professional historical and cultural record of NCA; promote understanding and appreciation of NCA history and facilities by NCA staff, veterans, and the public; provide professional guidance as NCA resources are created, expanded, or otherwise modified; meet legal requirements for conservation and preservation of records and artifacts related to NCA historic resources; and represent NCA and VA in Federal and other history-related activities.

b. The **Director, Office of Field Programs**, through the Memorial Service Network (MSN) Directors, oversees the actions of all Cemetery Directors and staff related to history program activities.

c. The **Director, Office of Construction Management**, oversees the actions of all NCA architects/engineers related to history program activities.

d. **NCA History Program staff** will:

(1) Collect, preserve, conserve, study, loan, advise on acceptance of donations, and appropriately dispose of or maintain historical or cultural materials related to the history of NCA;

(2) Work through appropriate management and supervisory staff to

(a) Advise NCA staff on all activities related to historic materials and resources at all NCA facilities; and

(b) Review all proposed actions related to historical and/or cultural materials to ensure activities meet established professional standards and practices, Department of Veterans Affairs and NCA policies, and all applicable laws and regulations.

(3) Represent NCA in VA history-related activities and work with history professionals in all VA administrations and other federal agencies, when appropriate, including participating in task forces, meetings and special studies; and responding to reporting requirements such as the Heritage Assets List;

(4) Will update, as necessary, the list of NCA's historic buildings, structures, objects, archeological sites, and artwork contained in VA's Capital Asset Inventory (CAI) system;

(5) Provide technical guidance to other NCA offices in the establishment of NCA policies and procedures affecting historic resources and cultural landscapes where NCA has direct (e.g., national cemeteries and soldiers' lots) or indirect (e.g., Government-furnished headstones in private cemeteries) jurisdiction;

(6) Develop guidance and implementing procedures in areas including (but not limited to):

- Archival Collection and Management
- Exhibitions
- Public Programs for Historical Interpretation
- Publications
- Research
- Historic Resource Survey/Inventory Programs

(7) Provide advice and guidance on policies and procedures related to historic materials prepared by others in areas such as:

- Memorials Conservation/Renovation/Restoration
- Gifts and Donations
- Historic Headstone/Marker Evaluation/Replacement
- Historic Building Maintenance/Renovation/Restoration
- Cemetery Construction and Development

5. REFERENCES

a. Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, Public Law 96-95, as amended (Title 16, United States Code (U.S.C.), Section 470 *et seq*) *

b. National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, Public Law 91-190, as amended (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq*) *

c. National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, Public Law 89-665, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq*) *

d. Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, Public Law 101-601 (25 U.S.C. 3001 *et seq*) *

e. "Preserve America" Executive Order 13287, March 3, 2003 (available electronically at http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/executive_orders/2003.html)

f. Veterans' Health Programs Improvement Act of 2004, Public Law 108-422, Section 412 (available electronically at <http://thomas.loc.gov/bss/d108/d108laws.html>)

* Available electronically at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/> under "Legislative Resources"

6. RESPONSIBLE OFFICE: NCA, Communications Management Service, Senior Historian, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington DC 20420, is responsible for the contents of this notice and publication of future guidance. Questions may be directed to the NCA Senior Historian at 202-565-6326.

7. EXPIRATION: This notice will expire February 2006; however, the information contained will remain in effect until changed by a future notice or incorporation into other official publications as appropriate.

/s/
Richard A Wannemacher, Jr.
Acting Under Secretary
for Memorial Affairs

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