



APPENDIX B: MILITARY MARKERS

MILITARY MARKERS

- Wooden Headboards
- Union Shield Tablet
- General Tablet
- Military Plaque
- "Unknown" Soldiers
- Confederate Tablet
- Confederate Medallion

Military Section, Laurel Grove Cemetery, Chatham County.

Military Markers

Prior to the establishment of the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) in 1862, military commanders were compelled to bury dead servicemen and women either where they died, in burial grounds on post, or in a nearby community.¹ Lacking standardization, a variety of markers were used on military installations across the U.S. In 1861, General Orders 75 authorized the Quartermaster General of the Army to provide wooden headboards to commanders for the purpose of marking the graves of Union servicemen.² A serviceman's name, registration number, and unit affiliation were frequently painted or carved into these markers. When the NCA determined that the costs of replacing these non-durable markers over 10 years and at five-year intervals would exceed one million dollars, wooden headboards were gradually replaced with more durable stone markers.³

In 1873, the Union war dead in National Cemeteries were issued a standardized tablet marker, known as a Union Shield Tablet, that was four inches thick and 10 inches wide.⁴ Above the Mason-Dixon line, they were 42 inches long; below it, they were cut to 36 inches.⁵ All headstones were set to expose 12 inches of stone above the ground's surface. They exhibited a rounded/arched top and a union shield cut into the face. Initially the grave number, identity, rank, unit, and home state were placed inside the shield in bas-relief.

In 1879, the Union Shield Tablet was authorized for unmarked veterans buried in private cemeteries.⁶ The same stone form was used for veterans of the Spanish-American War, Revolutionary War, American Indian Campaigns, Mexican-American War, and the War of 1812, with the appropriate conflict added to the stone. Markers lacking a conflict inscription mark are Civil War veterans.

Around the turn of the century, modifications were made to the Union Shield Tablet. In response to a durability study, the stone's dimensions were changed to 39 inches tall, four inches thick and 12 inches wide in 1903.⁷ Rather than bas-relief, the shield and inscriptions were inscribed into the stone's face. Birth and death dates were also added.

Initially the Union Shield Tablet was issued in white marble or granite, although some variations in stone form are known to exist.⁸ Degradation of the marble led to the

phasing out of the stone around 1924. It is likely that the more durable Georgia Marble was the preferred stone of choice during the period from 1924-1941. Stones issued between 1941 and 1947 were made exclusively of granite.⁹ The program was discontinued after granite stones could not be procured within budget guidelines; however, the granite tablet was reintroduced in January of 1994.¹⁰

Following the end of World War I (WWI), the federal government adopted a new military marker for all post-Spanish-American War veterans, known as the General Tablet.¹¹ The first version of these stones were 40 inches tall, two inches thick and 10



WOODEN HEADBOARDS

- Used from 1862 to 1873.
- Included name, registration number, and unit.
- Information painted or carved into marker face.
- Eventually replaced with more durable stone markers.
- No wooden military issued headboards are known to survive in Georgia's National Cemeteries.

Wooden grave markers in the Andersonville Cemetery. (Image courtesy of Andersonville National Historic Site).

Military Markers (continued)

UNION SHIELD TABLET

Civil War Type

- Used from 1873 to 1879.
- For Union war dead buried in National Cemeteries.
- Four inches thick and 10 inches wide.
- 42 inches tall above the Mason-Dixon Line, 36 inches tall below, with 12 inches of stone exposed above the ground.
- Rounded arched top.
- Recessed Union shield.
- Included grave number, name, rank, and unit carved in bas-relief.
- Marble or granite.



Post Civil War Type

- Used from 1879 to the turn-of-the-century.
- Authorized for veterans of all conflicts, including those buried in private cemeteries.
- Conflict added to stone; Stones lacking a conflict inscription mark are Civil War veterans.
- Same dimensions as previous stone.
- Recessed Union shield.
- Includes name, rank, unit, and conflict, carved in bas-relief.
- Marble or granite.



Early 20th-Century Type

- Used from around the turn-of-the-century until after WWI.
- Dimensions changed to 39 inches tall, four inches thick and 12 inches wide in 1903.
- Information carved into stone; no more bas-relief.
- Birth and death dates added.
- Rounded arched top.
- Marble or granite.
- Used to replace earlier markers that had worn out.



(All 3, Right) Marietta National Cemetery, Cobb County.

GENERAL TABLET

- From 1922 to present.
- For all post Spanish-American War veterans.
- 42 inches tall, 13 inches wide, and four inches thick.
- Marble or granite.
- Rounded arched top.
- Religious affiliation, name, home state, rank, unit, conflict, birth and death dates.
- Still issued by the Office of Veteran's Affairs for use in national and civilian cemeteries today.

(Right) Smyrna Methodist Cemetery, Cobb County.



inches wide. They were deemed unsatisfactory, and in 1922, the dimensions were changed to 42 inches tall, 13 inches wide, and four inches thick. The marker has a rounded/arched top, like its predecessors. Stones issued between 1920 and 1941 were made from white marble. As noted above, markers distributed between 1941 and 1947, and after January of 1994 were made of granite.¹² Modern versions of the U.S. Code Title 38 (II:2306c) allow general tablets to be made from materials that are "aesthetically compatible" so that they will match other monument materials used in the cemetery.

The inscription on the General Tablet includes name, rank, military unit affiliation, birth and death dates, and home state all placed in straight-line text. An emblem identifying the service member's religious affiliation was added in 1922. Initially limited to Christian

and Jewish faiths, no less than 25 additional religious preferences have since been added.¹³ In 1944, the soldier's date of birth was added. In 1945, following the end of World War II (WWII), military conflict (WWI or WWII) was added to the inscription.¹⁴ With the outbreak of the Korean War, the term "Korea" was added to war casualties in 1951, but saw more widespread use in 1954 to honor veterans who served in this conflict's theater of operations.¹⁵ Similarly, the words, Vietnam, Lebanon, Granada, Panama, Somalia, and Persian Gulf have been added to honor service in these conflicts. In 1988, the Director of Monument Services (Department of Veterans Affairs) authorized the addition of "POW" and "MIA" to applicable monuments. The "General" tablet is still issued by the Office of Veteran's Affairs for use in national and civilian cemeteries.

MILITARY PLAQUE

- A response to requests to mark the graves of veterans buried in memorial park cemeteries where vertical monuments were prohibited.
- Federal government approved use of a flat marble marker in 1936 and granite plaques in 1939.¹⁶
- 12 inches wide, 24 inches long, and 4 inches deep; Reduced to 3 inches deep in 1948 and reset to 4 inches in 1974.¹⁷
- Name, rank, military organization, date of death, home state, religious affiliation, and conflict inscribed into the stone.
- Bronze markers approved in 1940; 24 inches in length, 12 inches wide, and 3/16 inch thick; typically mounted on a stone or concrete base.¹⁸
- Inscriptions on bronze markers were cast in relief.
- In 1973, religious emblem was moved to the base of the inscription, and the former, block-angled bronze margins were beveled.¹⁹
- Still issued today by the Office of Veteran's Affairs for use in national and civilian cemeteries.
- Markers can be issued retroactively for veterans of Revolutionary War and other conflicts.



A New Marker Made of Marble. Memory Hill Cemetery, Baldwin County.



One of the Bronze Markers Approved in 1940. Memory Hill Cemetery, Baldwin County.

"UNKNOWN" SOLDIERS MARKERS

- No policy for marking the graves of unidentified servicemen existed before 1873.
- It was estimated that almost 42 percent of all military graves contained the remains of unidentified servicemen.²⁰
- In 1873, Secretary of War William Belknap approved a small stone designed specifically to mark unknown graves.²¹
- Marble pillar, 6 inches square and 30 inches long with a grave number inscribed into the marker's flat top.
- Discontinued in 1903.
- Replaced with the same Union Shield marker provided to all veterans, inscribed with "Unknown."
- Modern markers for unidentified servicemen and women now include flat bronze and marble plaques.



The Marker of an Unknown Soldier at Marietta National Cemetery, Cobb County.

Military Markers (continued)

CONFEDERATE TABLET

- In 1906, Congress approved furnishing headstones for Confederate soldiers buried in federal cemeteries.²² Prior to this, there was no standard marker.
- 15-24 inches tall, four inches thick, and 10-11 inches wide.²³
- Gable-topped and inscribed with the soldier's name (sometimes placed in a text-on-curve format), rank, death date, unit, and the designation "CSA." (Confederate States of America)
- Confederate Cross of Honor added to the top of the marker in 1930.²⁴
- Authorized for use in private cemeteries in 1929.
- Stones issued between 1941 and 1947 were made of granite.
- Modern Confederate markers may also be issued as horizontal flush plaques.



A Confederate Tablet Marker Authorized for Use in 1929 in Private Cemeteries. Oakland Cemetery, Fulton County.

CONFEDERATE MEDALLION

- Modeled after Confederate Cross of Honor, a medal originally issued during the early years of the Civil War.
- Grave medallions introduced in the early 20th century.
- Medallion design later adopted by the Sons of Confederate Veterans (SCV) as a means of marking and honoring the graves of Confederate war veterans.²⁵
- Production by independent foundries resulted in significant variation in the Confederate Cross designs across the U.S.
- At least two forms have been identified in Georgia. These are referred to in this document as Style 1 and Style 2.



Front Side (Above Left) and Back Side (Above Right); Confederate Cross of Honor Style 1. This type is still issued by the SCV. Stone Mountain Cemetery, DeKalb County.



Front Side (Above Left) and Back Side (Above Right); Confederate Cross of Honor Style 2. Myrtle Hill Cemetery, Floyd County.

ENDNOTES FOR APPENDIX B

- 1 Dean W. Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, Inc., 1992), 471.
- 2 U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, "History of Government Furnished Headstones and Markers," *National Cemetery Administration*, 2013, <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/history/hmhist.asp>.
- 3 Mark C. Mollan, "Honoring Our War Dead: The Evolution of the Government Policy on Headstones for Fallen Soldiers and Sailors," *Prologue* 35, no. 1 (2003), <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2003/spring/headstones.html>.
- 4 Jennifer Perunko, "The Evolution of Government Headstones and Markers," *National Center for Preservation Technology and Training*, 2009, <https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/blog/the-evolution-of-government-headstones-and-markers/>.
- 5 Mollan, "Honoring Our War Dead: The Evolution of the Government Policy on Headstones for Fallen Soldiers and Sailors."
- 6 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 472.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 National Cemetery Administration, "History of Government Furnished Headstones and Markers," *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, n.d., <https://www.cem.va.gov/history/hmhist.asp>.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 474.
- 12 National Cemetery Administration, "History of Government Furnished Headstones and Markers."
- 13 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 475.
- 14 National Cemetery Administration, "History of Government Furnished Headstones and Markers."
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 473.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 475.
- 19 Claire Kluskens, "Research Guide for Headstone Records for U.S. Military Veterans Buried in Nonfederal Cemeteries, 1879-1985." (Washington, DC: National Archives and Records Administration, 2013), <http://www.archives.gov/research/military/veterans/headstones-nonfederal-cemeteries.pdf>.
- 20 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 471.
- 21 Perunko, "The Evolution of Government Headstones and Markers."

- 22 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 473.
- 23 Perunko, "The Evolution of Government Headstones and Markers."
- 24 Holt, *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to Hallowed Grounds of the U.S., Including Cemeteries Overseas*, 473.
- 25 Walter Hopkins, ed., *Year Book and Minutes of the Thirty-First Annual Convention of the Sons of the Confederate Veterans in the City of Birmingham, Alabama May 18-21, 1926* (Richmond, VA: Dudley, 1926); United Daughters of the Confederacy, "Southern Cross of Honor," 2013, http://www.hqudc.org/Southern_Cross/index.htm.