

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Houston National Cemetery

other names/site number Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery

2. Location

street & number 10410 Veterans Memorial Drive

city or town Houston

state Texas code TX county Harris code 201 zip code 77038

not for publication

vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

x national statewide local

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Department of Veterans Affairs

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

Texas Historical Commission

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply.)

☐	private
☐	public - Local
☐	public - State
☒	public - Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box.)

☐	building(s)
☒	district
☐	site
☐	structure
☐	object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10	6	buildings
1	1	sites
24	0	structures
16	0	objects
51	7	Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

FUNERARY/cemetery

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete

walls: concrete

roof: concrete

other: marble, granite, bronze

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Houston National Cemetery, located at 10410 Veterans Memorial Drive, was established in May 1963 when land was purchased by the federal government for the burial of veterans. The cemetery is located in a mixed-use area in north Houston approximately two-tenths of a mile south of the Sam Houston Tollway. Veterans Memorial Boulevard and Aldine-Western Road bound the cemetery property to the west and north, respectively. Fallbrook Subdivision abuts the cemetery's southern boundary. Undeveloped agricultural land borders the cemetery to the east. T.C. Jester Boulevard cuts through the northwestern corner of the cemetery between Aldine-Western Road and Veterans Memorial Boulevard and divides the cemetery – the cemetery proper on the east and an undeveloped, triangular section to the west. The cemetery consists of a total of 419.214 acres – 244 acres are currently developed. The additional 175.214 acres consists of undeveloped agricultural land.¹ The cemetery exhibits a plan characterized by a series of concentric circular paved roadways along which burial sections are arranged. The burial sections are designated A-U (including expansions of sections such as M1 or U2), H-A, and H-B. One memorial section, designated MA, contains no burials; markers memorialize veterans whose remains were not recovered or identified, are buried at sea, donated to science, or whose cremated remains have been scattered. The burial and memorial sections are connected by a series of concrete sidewalks. The cemetery's present appearance predominantly reflects the original 50-acre concentrically-arranged core and design principles of the 1985 master plan. The cemetery contains 90,968 interments: 74,763 full-casket burials, 10,644 cremains placed in the columbaria throughout the cemetery, and 5,561 cremains placed in the ground (as of June 2016).

Narrative Description

The primary point of entry into Houston National Cemetery is via T.C. Jester Boulevard. Granite signs inscribed with "Houston National Cemetery" are located at the north and east corners of the intersection of Veterans Memorial Drive and T.C. Jester Boulevard within the cemetery perimeter fences. One enters the cemetery proper via the primary entrance at the intersection of T.C. Jester Boulevard and Military Drive. Military Drive consists of two, one-way lanes – one inbound and one outbound. At the cemetery entrance is a granite sign inscribed with "Houston National Cemetery" on a grassy island separating the lanes of Military Drive. The entrance is also marked by an arced granite wall with openings at the inbound and outbound lanes. On the outer portions of the entry walls are bronze plaques that read "Houston National Cemetery" and on the central section of the wall on the island is a bronze plaque that reads "Lest Ye Forget." Between the granite cemetery sign and the central wall is a metal flagpole flying the POW-MIA flag. Military Drive meanders in a

¹ In 2010, NCA had a title survey done for the 32.4 acre parcel south between the cemetery's southern boundary and Ruellen Lane; this appears as a wooded area in the aerial photographs taken 1978- 2012. The parcel is not included in the acreage aggregate (419.214, with 175.214 undeveloped) because the donation has yet to occur. If completed, the donated parcel would increase the cemetery land to 451.6 acres, with 207.6 of that total undeveloped. "Boundary Survey and Monumentation Project," Title Survey, January 18, 2010, NCA History Program Map Collection. (Figure 10)

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serpentine fashion from the entry gate in a southeasterly direction. Either side of the drive is flanked by burial sections characterized by slightly hilly terrain. Burial sections in the northwestern portion of the cemetery are accessed from Military Drive via Lakeside Street. The grassy median of Military Drive is planted with a variety of native trees and shrubs. (Photograph 6) Approximately halfway into the cemetery, a short transverse street connects the inbound and outbound lanes of Military Drive. A wooden kiosk with binders for locating gravesites sits on the north side of the short street in the median. (Photograph 41) At Oak Street, the inbound lane of Military Drive expands to accommodate a funeral cortege staging area where processions stop to be greeted by cemetery staff before proceeding to a committal shelter. The Public Information Center (PIC) is also strategically located adjacent to the cortege staging area; it serves as a welcome center for visitors to the cemetery. (Photograph 9) In addition to a reception room, it features restrooms, water fountains, and an electronic gravesite locator. Beyond the PIC is a concave, granite Service Seal Wall embedded with five bronze plaques, each of which is inscribed with the seal of a branch of the military. (Photograph 48) The administration building, constructed during the cemetery's original building phase, is located behind the Service Seal Wall to the southeast.

Military Drive continues past Oak Street and crosses Veterans Circle and Thomas Circle – the two innermost rings of the cemetery's concentric arrangement of circular streets. The grassy median of Military Drive located between Veterans and Thomas circles is referred to as the "Mall." (Photograph 15) The tomb of Albert Thomas (1898-1966), U.S. Congressman from Texas, who was instrumental in the establishment of Houston National Cemetery (and for whom Thomas Circle is named), is located on the Mall just west of Thomas Circle. (Photograph 14) Inside Thomas Circle, at the epicenter of the cemetery, is the hemicycle complex. It consists of a hemicycle – a horseshoe-shaped structure formed by two arched porticoes, a chapel, and a carillon bell tower/speakers platform. The open end of the hemicycle complex is approached from Military Drive and the Mall via a paved concrete pad flanked by a flagpole on each side, one flying the U.S. flag, the other the State of Texas flag. A grassy lawn is located at the center of the hemicycle. The hemicycle complex forms the primary focal point of Houston National Cemetery. The grassy lawn surrounding the hemicycle complex inside Thomas Circle (Sections H-A and H-B) is reserved for the interment of Medal of Honor recipients. Two parking lots, north and east of the hemicycle complex, are accessed via Thomas Circle.

Directly northeast of the hemicycle complex, Memorial Drive—which consists of two, one-way lanes—extends from Veterans Circle to provide access to the northeastern section of the cemetery's developed acreage. Military Drive (between Veterans Circle and Thomas Circle), the hemicycle complex, and Memorial Drive form an alignment that echoes the original axial progression from the cemetery's former primary entry on Veterans Memorial Drive. Woodlawn Street and Patriot Drive, two additional curvilinear roads in the east portion of the cemetery's developed acreage, provide access to burial sections in those areas. Oak, Pine, and Freedom streets serve as "spokes" in the cemetery's concentric plan, connecting the various circular/semi-circular roads.

The bulk of the cemetery consists of burial sections with flat or slightly hilly terrain. Generally, the flat areas (Sections A-L) are located in the immediate vicinity of the hemicycle complex; between Veterans and Thomas circles; between Veterans Circle and Woodlawn Street; and in the area bounded by the service area, Woodlawn Street, and Freedom Street. These sections (the cemetery's earliest, developed between 1964 and 1979) contain flush-to-the-ground granite markers. (Photograph 26) The western-, northern-, and easternmost burial sections (Sections M-Z developed from 1996 to the present) contain upright granite markers.² (Photographs 7-8 and 45) These hilly areas also feature a number of ponds that assist with proper drainage and provide aesthetic beauty.³ Each of the ponds has one or more fountains at its center. (Photographs 37, 40, and 43-44) Four committal shelters are placed strategically throughout the cemetery to provide covered space for burial services. The newer burial sections in the hilly areas also contain 17 columbaria, walls with niches for the interment of cremains. The cemetery also contains directional signage in the form of concrete posts with recessed numbers and lettering to identify the burial sections and the cemetery's named roadways, and with signs regarding cemetery and traffic rules and regulations. Various types of monuments are dispersed throughout the cemetery. Painted metal receptacles for the disposal of waste and flowers grouped with faucets for non-potable water are located at regular intervals throughout the cemetery. (Photograph 38) The cemetery also contains many painted metal benches for visitor use. These are typically along the concrete sidewalks in the vicinity of the columbaria.

² Per P.L. 99-576, title IV, § 411, Congress determined that grave markers shall be upright for interments that occur on or after January 27, 1987, in national cemeteries, with certain exemptions.

³ In 2016 there are 13 ponds with fountains as described plus a detention pond in the northwestern most corner of the property across T.C. Jester Boulevard. This count includes the ponds added in the new burial sections in the eastern part of the cemetery grounds. (Figure 8)

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A secondary means of entry to the cemetery from Veterans Memorial Drive, primarily to accommodate the service/maintenance area in the southwestern corner of the cemetery, is located at Woodlawn Street. The service area, also accessible from Military Drive via Oak Street, contains several buildings that house offices, equipment, and facilities for equipment maintenance and storage at Houston National Cemetery – the service (maintenance) building (erected 1964-1965 with a 1977 addition), maintenance garage (erected between 1988 and 1996), and maintenance storage building (erected between 1998 and 2010). In 2012 another maintenance storage building was constructed on the parking pad in front (northeast) of the service building. (Photographs 11, and 49-50)

The cemetery contains another utilitarian area along Aldine-Western Road, in the northeast corner of the developed property. A service gate provides access to the area from Aldine-Western Road; within the cemetery, the area is accessed by Memorial or Patriot drives. Inside a chain-link fence enclosure is Well Pump House No. 1, a concrete-block building built in 1964-1965 that protects well equipment. Immediately south of the well house enclosure is the Soils Storage Building. (Photograph 51) Well Pump House No. 2 and a transformer pad (both built from 1964-1965) are located in a chain-link fence enclosure north of Section O. (Photograph 46)

The developed acreage of the cemetery is surrounded by fencing. A metal fence runs along the east side of T.C. Jester Boulevard and along Veterans Memorial Drive. A vinyl-clad metal fence is present along Aldine-Western Road. The eastern boundary of the cemetery's developed acreage is marked by a chain-link fence. A chain-link fence also is located at the cemetery's southern property boundary. The eastern property boundary is delineated by a row of trees perpendicular to the dead-end of Aldine-Western Road. In addition to the primary entry from T.C. Jester Boulevard, Houston National Cemetery contains two secondary means of egress via gated service entries: one off of Veterans Memorial Drive in the southwest corner of the property which opens onto Woodlawn Street within the cemetery, and the other off of Aldine-Western Road in the northeast corner of the developed property near Section Z and Well Pump House No. 1 and the new soils storage building. The triangular portion of the cemetery to the northwest is surrounded by a vinyl-clad chain-link fence and is accessed via a gated entry from T.C. Jester Boulevard.

Houston National Cemetery retains its original overall layout of a core of concentric roads around which are burial sections with gravesites arranged in grid system. (Figure 8) This concentric arrangement has been retained despite several expansions that have increased the amount of area available for burial within the cemetery's boundaries. The site is characterized by grassy plains and slightly rolling hills among which the burial sections and detention ponds are located. The repetitive arrangement of the upright granite markers and the low profile of the flat granite markers emphasize the topography of the cemetery. The newer burial sections are connected by meandering concrete sidewalks. Houston National Cemetery is well-shaded, planted with native trees and shrubs. Houston National Cemetery is recognized as a green space that provides a habitat for various wild animals with its unique ecosystem of ponds, wildflowers, and native plants. Overall, the cemetery exhibits a tranquil environment with a park-like feel appropriate for a national cemetery.

Contributing Resources (51)

Buildings (10): Administration Building; Hemicycle, Chapel, and Carillon Tower/Speakers Platform; Service (Maintenance) Building; Well Pump House No. 1; Well Pump House No. 2; Maintenance Garage; Maintenance Storage Building; Public Information Center (PIC); Maintenance Storage Building; Soils Storage Building

Site (1): 244.0 developed acres

Structures (24): Main Entry Wall and Fence, Perimeter Fence, Columbaria (17), Committal Shelters (4), Service Seal Wall

Objects (16): Flagpoles (3); "Bivouac of the Dead" Plaque; Memorial Section Marker; 4th Marine Division Monument; 36th Infantry Division Monument; 1st Marine Division Association Monument; Texans Korean War Veterans Monument; China-Burma-India Veterans Monument; Members of Ceremonial Details Monument; In Memory of all Veterans (VFW Post No. 581) Monument; Honor Degree, Veterans of Foreign Wars Monument; U.S. Submarine Veterans World War II Monument; The Veterans Underage Military Service Monument; Gettysburg Address Tablet

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Buildings (10)

Administration Building (Building No. 1, Building No. 1001) (Photograph 10): The administration building, originally designated as Building No. 1, was started in 1964 and completed in 1965 as the administrative headquarters for the cemetery. It was designed and constructed by Veterans Administration staff. The building was sited facing north, adjacent to the south, one-way entrance boulevard into the cemetery. While the approach to the building is less direct with the relocation of the cemetery's main entry gate, re-routing of cemetery entry roads, and construction of the Public Information Center, it remains one of the first buildings that cemetery visitors encounter. The building has a concrete slab foundation, pre-cast concrete walls with an exposed course aggregate finish, and plate glass doors and windows. At the west end of the north façade, a simple engraving with the year that construction on the administration building started serves as the cornerstone. The roof overhang serves as a porch covering around the perimeter of the building.

When initially erected, the administration building contained a large central lobby, public restrooms, offices for the cemetery director and receptionist, a viewing room, a mortuary touch-up room, the honor guard locker assembly room and toilet, as well as spaces for records storage and mechanical equipment. The records storage room was split into two offices at an unknown date. When the administration building was renovated in 1977, the honor guard locker and assembly room was divided into two offices accessed by a narrow corridor, and several of the spaces received new Venetian blinds at the windows. Later, the interior spaces of the building were further subdivided to accommodate additional offices, workstations, and a multi-purpose room. The honor guard assembly room was shifted from the northeast corner of the building to the southwest corner. In 2011, as part of the Phase IV expansion project, the lobby was further portioned to accommodate another office, and the multi-purpose room was expanded with the removal of the honor guard assembly room. Despite the changes made to the interior, few changes have been made to the exterior of the administration building. Exceptions are the removal of the five bronze service seal emblem plaques from the north façade and the insertion of an electronic gravesite locator in the east façade during the Phase IV expansion project. Otherwise, the administration building retains its original appearance and is in excellent condition.

Hemicycle, Chapel, and Carillon Tower/Speakers Platform (Building Nos. 3 and 2) (Photograph 16): The hemicycle was constructed during the cemetery's initial building program; it was completed in May 1970.⁴ It is a 200-foot-diameter, horseshoe-shaped structure formed by two arched porticos. The floor of the hemicycle is formed by the concrete-slab foundation. The two arcs are supported by pre-cast concrete columns. The outer edge of each trapezoidal-shaped bay forming the porticos is enclosed by a pre-cast concrete wall panel. The inner edges remain open to the grassy courtyard at the center of the hemicycle where visitors are seated for special events and commemorations. The upper level of each portico is an accessible roof deck reached by staircases from the lower level. (Photographs 17-18) The lower level contains men's and women's restrooms, refurbished in 1988, in the north and south wings, respectively. Work at the hemicycle during the Phase II project in 1996-1999 included removal and patching of spalling, cleaning and resealing of all construction joints, and refurbishing doors in the stairwells and restrooms.

As the hemicycle is approached from Military Drive, one encounters bronze commemorative plaques on the end walls. At the north wing is the **Houston National Cemetery Sound System Dedication Plaque**, at the south wing, the **Albert Thomas Memorial Plaque**. The first commemorates the dedication of the hemicycle's sound system on May 6, 2000. It is located on the south façade of the hemicycle's north wing. The plaque lists all of the donors and the sound system manufacturer, Dynasty Sounds. The other bronze plaque is located on the north wall of the southeast wing of the hemicycle. It is dedicated to the life and work of U.S. Congressman Albert Thomas (1898-1966). The raised lettering on the plaque describes Thomas as a "soldier," "humanitarian," and "statesman" "whose concern for America's veterans has made possible the placement of this cemetery here on the hallowed ground where honored dead sleep in Texas soil." Thomas was interred at the cemetery after his death on February 15, 1966.

The western opening of the hemicycle was originally oriented on an axis with the entrance boulevards from Veterans Memorial Drive. The hemicycle is used for ceremonies on Memorial Day and Veterans Day.

The chapel is located at the keystone of the hemicycle—where the two halves meet at the northeast. (Photograph 19) The two-story, trapezoidal-shaped, flat-roofed building is constructed of pre-cast concrete panels with an exposed quartz aggregate finish.⁵ Above the bronze double doors at the main entry in the east façade is Rice University art professor David Parsons' 20-foot by 6-foot pre-cast concrete sculpture of a fallen soldier supported by two fellow soldiers.

⁴ RVI, *Gravesite Expansion and Cemetery Development Schematic Design and Design Development Services Phase IV, Site Characteristics and Schematic S1 Recommendations Report*, July 8, 2009, 18.

⁵ Sandra M. Webb, *Houston National Cemetery, National Register of Historic Places Determination of Eligibility form*, 1981.

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(Photograph 20) Inside the narthex is a central entry vestibule with marble walls and a terrazzo floor. The vestibule is flanked by a transformer room that also contains a spiral staircase to the mezzanine level at the south and an anteroom, unisex restroom, and janitor's closet at the north. Solid-core wood double doors with vision panels and birch veneer and battens provide access from the vestibule to the nave. The nave of the chapel features marble-clad walls and terrazzo floors. Three window bays are located on both the north and south walls. At the first floor on each wall, the northernmost bay contains bronze egress doors faced with birch veneer and battens on the interior; the other bays contain birch wall paneling with battens. Mosaic-cut stained glass windows at the second level of each window bay depict seals of the five branches of the U.S. military and of the Veterans Administration. (Photographs 24-25) The central aisle is flanked by rows of birch pews. Steps lead up from the nave to the chancel. The north and south walls of the chancel are also veneered with birch paneling and battens; the south wall features large square tiles of marble veneer. The center of the chancel is occupied by a marble altar in front of which a birch pulpit is situated. To the north and south, the altar area is flanked by sacristies which have been used for various functions (i.e. organ room, vestry). (Photograph 23)

The chapel retains much of its original appearance despite some renovations. In the late 1980s, the north part of the narthex was altered with the insertion of a janitor's closet and women's restroom. In 1996, the same spaces were again renovated and taken back to almost their original configuration. Also at this time, many of the interior doors and furnishings were refurbished, and the flagpoles flanking the Bell Tower were removed from the chapel's west elevation. At present, the chapel's terrazzo floors are covered with carpet.

The carillon bell tower and speakers platform, located inside the hemicycle at the west end of the chapel, was part of the initial construction phase of the cemetery from 1964 to 1965. The 75-foot tower is built of cast-in-place concrete walls with pre-cast concrete facing panels. Inside the tower, a metal spiral staircase provides access to the center section of the interior via a scuttle door. The 330-bell Schulmerich "Americana" carillon was installed in the tower in 1970. The speakers platform, constructed of precast concrete walls with an exposed fine aggregate finish, wraps around the tower. Stairs from ground level on either side of the Bell Tower provide access to the top of the platform. The Department of Veterans Affairs seal is embedded in the west wall of the platform. During the Phase II project from 1996-1999, the bell tower was reroofed and the original metal, hip-roofed demountable shelter on the speakers platform was removed and replaced with a metal canopy supported by tie rods. Additional work on the bell tower included replacing misaligned or bowed concrete panels, cleaning and resealing construction joints, replacing the stationary louvers, and restoring the stairway. Also at this time, a chairlift was installed on the south side of the speakers platform. (Photograph 17)

There are two dedication plaques for the Bell Tower. The **Carillon Dedication Plaque** is a square bronze plaque located on the southwest wall of the speakers platform. It notes that the carillon was dedicated by the American Veterans of World War II (AMVETS) on March 20, 1994. The **Carillon Bells Dedication Plaque** is located on the southwest façade of the chapel narthex. This rectangular bronze plaque commemorates the dedication of the carillon bells for Houston National Cemetery to the Veterans Administration by the Veterans Memorial Carillon Committee on May 30, 1970. The bronze plaque includes the names of individuals, groups, or organizations for whom or by whom one or more of the 350 carillon bells was donated. The name of the carillon manufacturer, Schulmerich Carillons, Inc. of Sellersville, Pennsylvania, is noted at the bottom of the plaque.

Service (Maintenance) Building (Building No. 4, Building No. 3001) (Photograph 12): The service building was initially built from 1964-1965. The original portion of the northeast-facing building was constructed of stuccoed concrete masonry and featured three overhead garage doors at the northeast façade. In 1977 a three-bay concrete masonry unit addition with overhead garage doors was added at the southwest end of the service building to accommodate equipment storage, equipment maintenance, and an area for flammable material storage.⁶

As part of the Phase IV expansion project in 2010-2012, the service building was again expanded and now is referred to as the maintenance building, or Building No. 3001. At the original portion of the building, the garage door bays were enclosed with an aluminum frame storefront window and stucco-finished concrete masonry unit walls. Other exterior doors and windows were replaced at this time. A new concrete step and walk with handicapped-accessible ramp was added to the northeast façade; it is protected by a painted steel canopy supported by steel tie rods. The interior spaces were reconfigured to accommodate offices, locker rooms, rest rooms, and a break room and kitchen for maintenance staff as well as a locker room for the Honor Guard. The 1976 addition was not altered.

⁶ United States Government Memorandum, Chief Memorial Affairs Director to Administrator, n.d.

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Well Pump House No. 1 and No. 2 (Building Nos. 9 and 10): The well pump houses are utilitarian buildings that protect well pump equipment and associated electronic equipment. Built during the initial 1964-1965 cemetery construction, both are rectangular-plan buildings with flat roofs constructed of painted concrete masonry blocks. Well Pump House No. 1 is located northeast of Section Z. Well Pump House No. 2 is located north of Section O. Both are surrounded by chain-link fencing.

Maintenance Garage (Photographs 11 and 13): The maintenance garage, located adjacent to the maintenance building at the southwest was erected between 1988 and 1996. The four-bay, gable-roof building is constructed of pre-engineering metal with overhead garage doors at each bay. It houses a maintenance office, equipment storage, a hydraulic rack for vehicle maintenance and a crane for engine hoisting.⁷

Maintenance Storage Building (Photographs 11 and 13): The maintenance storage building was erected after 1998. The steel building has a flat metal roof and is enclosed on three sides with metal siding. The front (northeast) façade is open. The maintenance storage building is used to store cemetery equipment.⁸

Public Information Center (PIC) (Building No. 1401) (Photographs 9 and 47): The Public Information Center (PIC) was constructed in 2011 during the early stages of the Phase IV Gravesite Expansion and Cemetery Improvement Project and designated as Building No. 1401. With the diminished public lobby and removal of public restrooms in the administration building, the PIC serves as the cemetery's visitors' center. The PIC, constructed of poured-in-place concrete columns spanned by pre-cast concrete wall panels, is composed of two wings separated by a breezeway. The breezeway is covered by a roof structure of a poured-in-place concrete vault supported by concrete columns. The east wing of the PIC consists of a large reception room with large aluminum-frame fixed windows. The west wing contains men's and women's restrooms, as well as closets for janitorial and electrical equipment, and has fixed aluminum-frame clerestory windows. The foundation for the entire building is concrete slab. Under the PIC breezeway are an electronic gravesite locator inserted into the west wall of the reception wing and water fountains mounted on the east wall of the restroom wing. Sited in front of the administration building, adjacent to Memorial Drive at the newly expanded funeral cortege staging area, the PIC is the first building with which visitors to the cemetery come into contact.

Maintenance Storage Building (Building No. 3002) (Photographs 49 and 50): In 2012 the maintenance storage building was constructed on a portion of the former parking lot in front (northeast) of the service building. The steel frame building—a standing-seam metal gabled roof, lower concrete stem walls, and upper metal-paneled walls—contains four bays with overhead door enclosures at the east and west façades as well as a fifth, open vehicle wash bay at the southeastern end. This new building necessitated the demolition of the pneumatic tank house and transformer pad erected at this location in 1964-1965.

Soils Storage Building (Building No. 3003) (Photograph 51): The soils storage building was constructed in 2012 and is located in the northeastern portion of the cemetery's developed area along Aldine-Western Road. The three-bay, rectangular-plan is open on one side and constructed of cast-in-place concrete walls capped by metal panels and a standing-seam metal shed roof. The soils storage building and yard replace the materials storage barn constructed on this site between 1988 and 1996.

Structures (24)

Main Entry Wall and Fence (Photographs 2-3): The entrance wall and fence was built from 1996-1999 during the Phase II expansion project. The arced, poured-in-place concrete wall is in three sections. The central section sits on the middle of the median between the inbound and outbound lanes of Military Drive. The outer sections curve from the outer edge of each lane. A painted aluminum fence then curves from each outer wall to T.C. Jester Boulevard. Solid concrete columns with recessed sides and pyramidal cast-stone caps mark the ends of each of the three wall sections. They are also placed at regular intervals in the aluminum fence. The areas outside of the main entry are formally landscaped.

The central section of the main entry wall contains one of three **Houston National Cemetery Signs** identifying the site. This sign was installed during the Phase II expansion project, and it consists of a linear concrete wall with end columns that feature recessed panels on the exposed sides and cast-stone caps. Centered between the columns on each side of the wall is a cast-aluminum panel inscribed with "HOUSTON NATIONAL CEMETERY."

⁷ RVi, 18.

⁸ *Ibid.*

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Affixed to the inner edge of each main entry outer wall section are two bronze plaques. The **Main Entry Wall Plaques** have beveled edges and raised lettering that reads "HOUSTON NATIONAL CEMETERY." The symbol of an eagle is depicted above the phrase.

Perimeter Fence: The entire cemetery is surrounded by a variety of fencing. A painted metal fence, installed during the Phase II expansion project (1996-1999) is located along the eastern side of T.C. Jester Boulevard and along Veterans Memorial Boulevard to Woodlawn Street (a small portion of the fence adjacent to Section S3 was pre-existing). An electronic gate in the fence provides access to the service area from Veterans Memorial Boulevard via Woodlawn Street. A pedestrian gate is also present in this fence, adjacent to the Administration, to provide access to a mailbox on Veterans Memorial Drive. A vinyl-clad chain-link fence is located at the northern cemetery boundary on Aldine-Western Road; two gated openings are present in this fence north of Section R and at Woodlawn Street. The eastern boundary of the developed section of the cemetery is marked by a chain-link fence that is rebuilt or relocated as the cemetery is expanded. The southern cemetery boundary is also delineated by the cemetery's original (1964-1965) chain-link fence along Veterans Memorial Drive south of Woodlawn Street and north of the Fallbrook Subdivision. The undeveloped northwest section of the cemetery is bound by a vinyl-clad chain-link fence installed in the 1996-1999 expansion.

Two of the three signs identifying the site are located within the perimeter fences at the north and east corners of the intersection of Veterans Memorial Drive and T.C. Jester Boulevard. (Photograph 1) Both **Houston National Cemetery Signs** are constructed of concrete-masonry units finished with stucco and consist of a concave middle wall flanked by short perpendicular end walls. The walls are topped with a cast stone cap. At the wall intersections and ends are concrete-masonry unit columns finished with stucco; each column has recessed panels on the exposed sides and cast stone caps. These two signs were constructed in 2011 as part of the Phase IV expansion project. A cast aluminum panel inscribed with "HOUSTON NATIONAL CEMETERY" is centered on the curved wall of each sign.

Columbaria (17) (Photograph 39): Houston National Cemetery contains 17 columbaria for the interment of cremains. Niches in the columbaria walls hold the cremains and are closed off with granite tablets inscribed with the person's name and other information. Eleven of the columbaria (C1-11) were built from 1996 to 1999 in the northern sections of the cemetery during the Phase II expansion project. These units are arced and consist of eight bays with prefabricated concrete niched walls that graduate in height. The outer ends of each columbarium are marked by concrete wing walls. Between each bay and the wing walls is a concrete column with recessed panels on the exposed sides and a pyramidal stone cap. Bronze medallions with raised letters and numbers identify the columbaria rows and columns for ease in locating graves.

Two, double-sided, zigzagged columbaria (C12-13), each with three bays, were built north of Sections T1 and U2 in 2008. They are similar in structure to the arched columns, but the straight walls are placed at angles to one another, and the recessed panels on the exposed sides of the concrete columns separating the bays are finished with stucco. Four units (C14-17) were built north of Section U2 on the east side of a detention pond in 2012; they are also the zigzagged type. (Photographs 52 and 53)

Committal Shelters (4) (Photographs 33-34): The cemetery contains committal shelters to accommodate funeral services. The three shelters constructed from 1996 to 1999 during the Phase II expansion are located at Burial Section R1 along Lakeside Street (Committal Shelter A), at Section N3 along Woodlawn Street (Committal Shelter B), and south of Section M2 along Woodlawn Street (Committal Shelter C). The shelters are identical; each features four cast-in-place concrete columns supporting a pyramidal standing-seam metal roof. A quoin made of insulation is adhered to the top of each column. Each shelter is open on three sides and has a small room that serves as an end wall on the fourth side. The room serves as equipment and electrical storage. A cast-in-place concrete bier sits on the concrete-slab floor in front of the end wall. A ceiling fan is located in each committal shelter. The three committal shelters received a fresh coat of paint in the summer of 2012 when the fourth committal shelter (Committal Shelter D) was constructed. Committal Shelter D is located in the expanded portion of the cemetery just north of the south property line. It was built as part of the Phase IV Expansion and Cemetery Improvements project. (Photographs 54 and 55)

Service Seal Wall (Photograph 48): The Service Seal wall was completed in 2011. The concave two-foot thick, concrete wall is five-and-a-half feet high above-grade. Embedded into the north face of the wall are five, two-foot wide, bronze plaques, each with a service emblem of the five branches of the U.S. military from left to right: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. These plaques were originally attached to the northwest façade of the administration building.

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Objects (16)

Flagpoles (3): The cemetery contains three steel flagpoles. One flagpole stands in front of the central wall at the cemetery's entry. It flies the POW/MIA flag. The exact date of this flagpole is undetermined, but it was erected after the relocation of the entry in 1999. Located on the center wall behind the POW/MIA flagpole is a bronze sign with raised lettering; this **POW/MIA plaque** contains the phrase "Lest Ye Forget" in a cursive font. The names of the donors are also included at the bottom of the plaque. (Photographs 2-3) The two steel flagpoles at the open end of the Hemicycle were relocated to their present location flanking the concrete pad in front of the hemicycle in 1976. They originally flanked the wider portion of the concrete pad but were adjacent to Thomas Circle. The northeast flagpole flies the U.S. flag; the one to the southeast features the State of Texas flag. (Photograph 15)

"Bivouac of the Dead" Plaque: Located on the north side of the concrete pad leading to the PIC breezeway, this bronze tablet is mounted on a granite pedestal with rough sides and a smooth, slanted top. The plaque contains a stanza from the poem *Bivouac of the Dead* by Theodore O'Hara. Historically, plaques containing verses were installed in national cemeteries throughout the United States.

Memorial Section Marker: This monument is located near the south corner of the administration building. The bronze plaque, mounted on a granite base, is installed flush to the ground under a group of crepe myrtle trees. The raised lettering on the plaque reads in all caps: "The markers in this memorial area honor veterans whose remains have not been recovered or identified, were buried at sea, donated to science or cremated and the ashes scattered." The marker was installed in 1976 when Section MA was established.

4th Marine Division Memorial (Photograph 28): Located in the center of the median of Memorial Drive north of the Hemicycle, the 4th Marine Division Monument is a four-sided, obelisk-shaped pedestal of polished granite. The monument honors the United States Marine Corps 4th Marine Division which served in the Pacific during World War II. A flush-to-the-ground tablet in front (southwest) of the marker proper notes that the monument was dedicated on June 14, 1997, by members of the Houston Chapter of the Fourth Marine Division Association.

36th Infantry Division Memorial (Photograph 31): The 36th Infantry Division Memorial is an upright polished granite pedestal with an angled top. Located on the north side of the sidewalk between Burial Section M2 and Committal Shelter C, the monument honors the 36th Infantry Division of the United States Army and Texas Army National Guard. The top of the monument is inscribed with the numbers of infantry regiments and artillery battalions that served during World War II. The 36th Infantry Division shoulder sleeve insignia is also inscribed on the top, front, and sides of the monument.

1st Marine Division Association Memorial (Photograph 32): Located on the north side of the sidewalk between Burial Section M2 and Committal Shelter C, this monument consists of a bronze plaque with raised lettering attached to an upright rough granite tablet. Presented by the First Marine Division Association, it is "dedicated to those men of the 1st Marine Division, FMC, who gave their lives in the service of their country" during the World War II, the Korean War, and Vietnam and in southwest Asia. It features the 1st Marine Division insignia at the top of the plaque and the United States Marine Corps insignia flanking both sides of the plaque text.

Texans Korean War Veterans Memorial (Photograph 42): This monument, consisting of a bronze plaque affixed to the top of an upright polished granite pedestal with an angled top and rough base, is "dedicated to the more than 289,000 Texans who served in the Korean War June 25, 1950-July 27, 1953 and honoring the 1723 Texans killed or missing in action." Bronze Service emblems of the five branches of the U.S. military service are inset into the front of the base. The Texans Korean War Monument is located on the west of the sidewalk leading from Lakeside Street toward Columbarium C1.

China-Burma-India Veterans Memorial: The China-Burma-Indian Veterans Monument consists of three granite slabs arranged to form a bench. The bench is mounted to a concrete slab. The China-Burma-India Veterans Association insignia, in color, and "China-Burma-India Veterans" are inscribed on the front face of the bench (a portion of the central red stripe is missing).

Members of Ceremonial Details Memorial: Located in the island of the loop formed by Lakeside Street, this monument is a granite pedestal with a rough base and sides and a polished and angled top face. It is "dedicated by the Veterans of

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Foreign Wars to the members of the ceremonial details whose dedicated service continues to provide the honors so richly deserved by those herein interred." Above the inscription is a metal plate with an engraving of six men in ceremonial dress flanked by the American flag and the insignia of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

In Memory of all Veterans (VFW Post No. 581) Memorial: This monument is located on the south side of Lakeside Street. It is a granite pedestal with a rough base and sides and a polished, angled top. The dedication "in memory of all veterans who served their country with honor and pride" is inscribed on the top face. The monument was donated by Houston's Herbert D. Dunlavy Post 581 of the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

Honor Degree, Veterans of Foreign Wars Memorial: This monument is located between Military and Burial Section P. The granite pedestal with a rough base and sides and a polished, angled top sits on a landscaped island surrounded by sidewalks leading from Military Drive and to the north and south of Burial Section P. It is dedicated to the Houston Chapter (Pup Tent 11) of the Military of the Cootie of the United States, a non-profit Veterans Service Organization that is also known as "The Honor Degree of the VFW." Members are comprised of officers and leaders of the Veterans of Foreign Wars recognized for outstanding service to the VFW; they provide social and entertainment programs to VFW members and their families. Above the inscribed dedication are several symbols significant to the Honor Degree.

U.S. Submarine Veterans World War II Memorial: The "SUBVETS WWII" monument is dedicated to the 3,617 officers and men and 52 submarines that were in patrol during World War II. The polished granite pedestal, with a rough base and angled top, was dedicated by the U.S. Submarine Veterans of World War II. A bronze seal with the organization's insignia is affixed to the top of the pedestal; the dedication is inscribed on the front face. It is located in the island formed by the loop of Lakeside Street.

The Veterans of Underage Military Service Memorial: The Veterans of Underage Military Service Monument is located between on the east of the sidewalk leading from Lakeside Street to Columbarium C1. It is a granite pedestal with a slanted top and rough base. The bronze seal of the Veterans of Underage Military Service is affixed to the top of the pedestal while the dedication is inscribed into the front face.

Gettysburg Address Tablet: The Gettysburg Address Tablet is located on the southwestern end of the median of Memorial Drive, north of the Hemicycle. It consists of a cast-iron tablet attached to an upright granite block. The plaque features Abraham Lincoln's 1863 Gettysburg Address. The tablets were originally added to national cemeteries in 1909 to commemorate President Lincoln's birth. The tablet at Houston was erected in 2009.

Non-contributing Resources (7)

Buildings (6): Single-family Ranch Style residence, dairy barns (2), agricultural building, unidentified agricultural/storage buildings (2)

Most if not all of the buildings were located on the property at the time of purchase in 1963 and are related to a family dairy business on the site. Early plans note that they were to be demolished; however, they have been leased for agricultural purposes for the last 40-plus years. They have never been used by the cemetery and are therefore considered noncontributing resources for the purposes of this nomination. Their significance has only been considered as it relates to the national cemetery.

Site (1): 175.214 acres of undeveloped acreage⁹

⁹ Note: with the proposed donation of 32.4 acres, the undeveloped acreage is 207.6 acres. The donation has not yet taken place.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Military

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1963-present

Significant Dates

1963-1965, 1973, 1974, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1979,
1985, 1996-1999, 2008

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Parsons, David

Miller, W.S.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ B removed from its original location.
- ☐ C a birthplace or grave.
- ☒ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☒ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The beginning date of 1963 corresponds to the year that the property that would eventually become Houston National Cemetery was purchased by the federal government for use as a VA cemetery. Present is used as the end date as the National Register has determined that "present" is most consistent with the Congressional intent of the federal laws establishing the national cemeteries and with the National Register policies for evaluating properties of continuing exceptional importance.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Houston National Cemetery, established in 1963 as Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery, is the only government cemetery that was constructed in the United States in the 1960s and the only national cemetery established during the Vietnam War (1955-1975). It was the first new Veterans Administration (VA) cemetery that was not built on the grounds of a VA hospital. The cemetery was designed solely by VA staff. When the National Cemetery Act was passed in 1973, Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery was transferred to the National Cemetery Service (a new agency within the VA) along with 82 Army-operated national cemeteries and 21 VA medical center-operated veterans cemeteries. At that time, it was renamed Houston National Cemetery. The hemicycle at Houston National Cemetery is the only hemicycle in a government cemetery administered by the NCA. The chapel features artwork by noted Houstonians; David Parsons completed the bas-relief sculpture over the entry at the exterior façade, and W. S. Miller fabricated the mosaic stained-glass windows.

The National Park Service, as manager of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), states that all national cemeteries are to be considered eligible for the NRHP "as a result of their Congressional designation as nationally significant places of burial and commemoration."¹⁰ In addition, cemeteries are primarily eligible under Criterion A for their association with the military history of the United States and the history of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA). Additionally, those having artistic or architectural significance as designed landscapes or for the design of memorials, monuments, or historic buildings, may also be documented under Criterion C. Therefore, Houston National Cemetery is eligible for inclusion as a historic district in the NRHP under Criteria A.

Houston National Cemetery serves as a memorial to the sacrifices of the U.S. military, and is a reflection of the expanded burial and memorial mission established during the Civil War with the earliest national cemeteries. For these reasons, Criteria Consideration D is also satisfied.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Establishment of Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery

Funds for the "...maintenance, operation and acquisition of ... burial grounds" was given to the Veterans Administration under the Independent Offices Appropriation Act of 1963, passed October 3, 1962 (P.L. 87-741).¹¹ The change in the language of the act to include "burial grounds" under VA expenses for medical care was reputedly at the behest of Congressman Albert Thomas, a U.S. Representative from Houston.¹²

Prior to the development of the Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery on property purchased with funds authorized by P.L. 87-741, more than 5,000 Houston and Harris County veterans were interred in more than 50 cemeteries in the Houston metropolitan area.¹³ Every year, members of various veterans groups conducted a Memorial Day pilgrimage around the city, placing flags on the graves of known veterans in the disparate cemeteries. With the growth of the Houston area—including the city's emergence as a major medical center and the increase of the city's veteran population—in the midst of Vietnam War (1955-1975), interest was raised in the construction of a veterans cemetery to service the Houston

¹⁰ For the Keeper's Clarification, see

http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/pdf/Final_Eligibility_of_VA_cemeteries_A_Clarification_of_Policy_rev.pdf.

¹¹ *Independent Offices Appropriation Act, Statutes at Large* 76, sec. 716, 732 (1973).

¹² Thomas was also Chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Independent Offices.

¹³ "A Flag for Every Veteran's Grave," unidentified newspaper article, May 1953, from Houston Veterans Administration Scrapbook, compiled by Alwin D. Farrior, 1964-1967 (presented May 30, 1967).

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area. In addition, the city boasted a Veterans Administration hospital (established south of the downtown area in 1955 as a naval hospital).

In lieu of explicit authorization for a VA cemetery to be built at Houston, the unspecified authorization of P.L. 87-741 allowed for a cemetery to be built to fulfill the needs of veterans in the Houston area despite the fact that the VA followed the same non-expansion policy employed by the Army in regard to national cemeteries at the time.¹⁴ The VA "was convinced that a situation existed in Texas that was unique and presented that information to the Bureau of the Budget. It was approved on the basis and understanding that it was a unique situation and that there would be no further exceptions to the policy."¹⁵ In January 1963, VA officials inspected and reported on eight sites in the Houston area for the location of a cemetery.¹⁶ Of the choices, Site #6 was deemed the most suitable with about 415 acres being offered at \$1,650 per acre; at only 5.6 miles from the city limits it was closer to the city than the other inspected sites.¹⁷ On February 4, 1963, A. H. Monk, VA Associate Deputy Administrator approved the recommendation of Site #6 for final purchase; prior to his approval a 90-day option to purchase the property had been executed between the land owners and the VA.¹⁸ On May 2, 1963, 419.214 acres of land was purchased by the U.S. government from John F. and William Lewis Montague for \$691,701.45.¹⁹ The property was located in a rural area and was surrounded by agricultural fields and grazing livestock. The site selected for the new veterans cemetery was not on or near a Veterans Administration hospital or medical center as was typical. Houston Veterans Administration Hospital (present-day Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center) was located on the other side of downtown Houston, some 15 miles to the south. At 419.52 acres, the Houston cemetery was only slightly smaller than Arlington National Cemetery's approximate 450 acres. The next largest government-owned cemeteries at this time were in Los Angeles, California (114.47 acres, established 1887) and Leavenworth, Kansas (113.15 acres, established 1886).

Design and Construction of Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery

When it was built, Houston VA Cemetery had the distinction of being "the only [cemetery] ever designed and developed by the VA" and was "the first major cemetery originating in the VA's design service in Washington and built under their supervising personnel."²⁰ VA staff derived the design elements for Houston National Cemetery—a core of concentric burial sections and streets, with buildings including an administration building, hemicycle, and chapel—directly from Manila American Cemetery in the Philippines.²¹ Manila American Cemetery was authorized in 1948 and completed in 1960,²² three years before legislation was approved for the formation of the VA cemetery at Houston. The cemetery in Manila, designed by San Francisco architect Gardener A. Dailey, features concentric rings of semi-circular roads that form the boundaries of curved burial sections. At the core of the ring are two hemicycles with a chapel at the southern ends of the hemicycles. The entry to the cemetery is arranged axially with the hemicycle and chapel; they are joined by a road, with a grassy mall separating traffic. The visitors' building is located to the left of the entry. All of these design elements were carried out in the original design of Houston National Cemetery (see "Additional Documentation"). (Figure 1)

The hemicycle at Houston National Cemetery (actually composed of two hemicycles) remains the largest memorial and built work on the site. It is one of three known hemicycles in federally owned (military or veteran) cemeteries, with the others at Arlington and Manila, and is the only hemicycle managed by NCA.²³ A hemicycle is simply a semi-circular building or structure. In the late 1920s, William Mitchell Kendall of the East Coast architecture firm McKim, Mead and

¹⁴ U.S. Congress, House, *Hearings before the Subcommittee on Hospitals of the Committee on Veterans' Affairs House of Representatives*, 89th Cong., 2nd sess., June 7, 1966.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 4074. The Bureau of the Budget (present Office of Management and Budget) was a Cabinet-level office thing the Executive Office of the President of the United States. Additional explanation on the exception for a cemetery in Houston is found in Letter from John S. Gleason, Administrator of Veterans Affairs, to Bob Dole, U.S. Representative, August 7, 1963 and Letter from William J. Driver, Administrator of Veterans Affairs, to William T. Cahill, U.S. Representative, June 17, 1965.

¹⁶ William Z. Bowie, VA Chief of the Real Estate Division, to VA Assistant Administrator for Construction, January 22, 1963.

¹⁷ A.H. Monk, VA Associate Deputy Administrator, to VA Assistant Administrator for Construction, February 4, 1963.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Letter from the Office of the Attorney General to John S. Gleason Jr., August 7, 1963.

²⁰ "New VA cemetery here is unique," unidentified and undated newspaper article.

²¹ Whitney Ashbridge, VA Assistant Administrator for Construction, to VA Associate Deputy Administrator, October 23, 1963.

²² The American Battle Monuments Commission, *Manila American Cemetery and Memorial*, n.d., 9-10.

²³ The others are managed by the Department of the Army (Arlington) and the American Battle Monuments Commission (Manila).

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White designed a Neoclassical-style hemicycle to serve as a new ceremonial entry to Arlington National Cemetery that was necessitated by the construction of the Arlington Memorial Bridge and the new Memorial Drive connecting the Virginia side of the bridge to the cemetery.²⁴ The Arlington Hemicycle and new bridges and roads were among many improvements and memorials planned in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area to celebrate the bicentennial of George Washington's birth in 1732. Unlike the hemicycles at Arlington and Manila, the Houston hemicycle has a usable roof deck that can be accessed by visitors. Additionally, whereas the chapel at Manila American Cemetery is simply a small room, the chapel at Houston National Cemetery is a complete building with narthex, nave, altar, and auxiliary rooms. David Goode Parsons (born 1911), sculptor and former Rice University art professor, designed the sculpture above the cemetery entry. The chapel's mosaic stained-glass windows were designed and fabricated by W. S. Miller who also gifted them to the cemetery. Miller, co-owner of the Texas Art Glass Company in Houston, was recommended for the job by fellow Houstonian and philanthropist Ima Hogg, the only daughter of Texas' first native-born governor James Stephen Hogg.²⁵ Miller was an Army captain who had previously been a patient at the Houston Veterans Administration Hospital.²⁶

The ceremony for the laying of the administration building's cornerstone was held on October 24, 1964.²⁷ The first 50 acres to be developed were improved with trees and shrubs native to the area. St. Augustine and Bermuda grasses were planted in the gravesite sections.²⁸ William Spivey was named as the first director of the cemetery. The total cost of construction, completed November 30, 1965, was \$2,077,087.²⁹ (Figures 5 and 6)

Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery, 1965-1972

The first burial in the cemetery was that of World War II veteran Jeff F. Evans. Evans earned several military citations for his wartime service. He died at the Houston Veterans Administration Hospital on November 6, 1965, and was interred at Houston National Cemetery on November 9, 1965.³⁰ Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery was officially dedicated on December 7, 1965, the 24th anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Shortly thereafter, one of the most renowned soldiers buried at the cemetery was interred. Congressman Albert Thomas died in Washington, D.C., on February 15, 1966, and was buried at Houston National Cemetery on February 18, 1966. A plaque commemorating Thomas' military and political service, and his interment at the cemetery, is located on the west façade of the southeastern arm of the hemicycle. Thomas' interment at the cemetery prompted the interest of various individuals and veterans groups in having the Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery established as a national cemetery. Twenty-two posts of the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) in Harris County initiated a petition in late February 1966.³¹ The petition may have proved unnecessary or unsuccessful since many had erroneously assumed that only veterans who died at the Houston VA Hospital or who died in the Houston area with no next-of-kin could be buried at the cemetery.³²

On February 21, 1966, the first woman to be buried in the Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery was interred. Hazel Juanita Wilson, a housewife, was the first Houstonian to join the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) in 1943 during World War II. She was discharged in 1948.³³

In 1967, Houston's AmVets Post No. 2 initiated a \$50,000 campaign to purchase carillon bells for the tower at the cemetery.³⁴ The effort proved successful, and the 330-bell set was dedicated on May 30, 1970. In addition to the bells, the

²⁴ Arlington National Cemetery website, "The Women's Memorial," <http://www.arlingtoncemetery.net/womens.htm> (accessed July 30, 2012). The Arlington Hemicycle was dedicated in 1932. It was adapted into design of the Women's Memorial at the cemetery in 1995. Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc., "About the Memorial: History," <http://www.womensmemorial.org/About/history.html> (accessed July 30, 2012).

²⁵ Webb.

²⁶ "Ceremony Wednesday to Start VA Cemetery," *Houston Post*, October 25, 1964: 17.

²⁷ Webb.

²⁸ "Historical Highlights of the Houston National Cemetery," ca. 1983.

²⁹ Webb.

³⁰ "First to Lie in New VA Cemetery," *Houston Chronicle*, November 10, 1965: Section 5, Page 24.

³¹ "VFW Asks National Status for Cemetery," *Houston Chronicle*, February 21, 1966.

³² *Ibid.* Other related articles on the subject on the same page in the Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery scrapbook, 1964-1967.

³³ "First Houston Woman to Lie in VA Cemetery," *Houston Chronicle*, February 18, 1966: Section 1, Page 3.

³⁴ "AmVets Start Drive for Cemetery Bells," *Houston Chronicle*, November 5, 1967: Section 5, Page 2.

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system consisted of a keyboard console, 100 rolls of music, amplifiers, and speakers.³⁵ A Book of Memory and Appreciation, still housed in the administration building, lists all individuals and groups who donated \$5.00 or more toward the purchase of the bells.

Houston National Cemetery, 1973-present

In 1973, U.S. Congress Public Law 93-43 authorized that 82 national cemeteries under Department of the Army jurisdiction be transferred to the stewardship of the Veterans Administration.³⁶ This measure combined 82 Army cemeteries with 21 existing Veterans Administration cemeteries, including that at Houston.³⁷ The transfer of Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery to the National Cemetery System is further documented in a memorandum dated October 23, 1974, whereby the accountability for the cemetery acreage was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Department of Medicine and Surgery (formerly under jurisdiction of VA Hospital reservation) to the National Cemetery System.³⁸ Over the course of the next decade, the cemetery saw several renovation projects with an expansion of 15 acres (see "Developmental history/additional historic context information" narrative below). By 1983, the cemetery contained more than 14,000 interments of veterans and their eligible dependents.³⁹ (Figure 6)

As early as August 14, 1979, a master plan project existed for Houston National Cemetery.⁴⁰ Completed in 1985, several policies, procedures, standards, and requirements developed by the Veterans Administration for cemetery development and operations served as the foundation for the master plan for Houston National Cemetery:

- Gravesites are to be assigned in sequential order of use. New burial sections are to be sized to accommodate the projected needs in 5- to 7-year increments.
- The size of gravesites to be used in future sections is 4' by 8' and should be laid out in 80' by 80' monumental grids.
- All gravesites must be within 500' of a roadway and separate burial sections should be no larger than 5 acres.
- A minimum ground surface slope of 2% should be achieved in the development of all future burial sections to ensure proper drainage.
- The existing chapel and 3 future permanent shelters will be used for all services at the cemetery; temporary shelters and grave-side ceremonies will not be allowed.
- Commemorative statues, fountains, and other special features, if proposed, must be funded by veterans groups, local organizations or government agencies other than the Veterans Administration.⁴¹

Under the master development plan, design decisions centered around two major elements, a "spine road" for improved visitor orientation and vehicular circulation and a "chain of lakes" as an efficient and cost-effective means of dealing with the site's drainage problems. Further, plans emerged to expand T.C. Jester Boulevard across Steubner-Airline Road through the northwest corner of the cemetery as a new entrance. The new entrance would ameliorate traffic issues with a primary access from Steubner-Airline Road.⁴² Several firms participated in the master plan: Vernon G. Henry & Associates, Inc. (planning consultants and landscape architects), Denny, Ray & Wines (architects/planners), Calvin J. Morgan & Associates, Inc. (civil engineering consultants), and McBride-Ratcliff & Associates, Inc. (geotechnical consultants). The Master Plan drawings, dated July 1985, illustrate the means by which the design concepts of the Master Plan were to be implemented.

The Harris County Commissioners Court changed the name of Steubner-Airline Road in the vicinity of Houston National Cemetery to Veterans Memorial Drive on November 11, 1985.⁴³

³⁵ "VA Carillon Dedication Set," undated newspaper article from Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery scrapbook. 1964-1967.

³⁶ Webb.

³⁷ Houston National Cemetery Expansion Dedication Ceremony booklet, Houston, Texas, April 27, 1997.

³⁸ Index to Title Papers, 2.

³⁹ Houston National Cemetery book, n.d.

⁴⁰ Construction Project Numbering Record.

⁴¹ Houston National Cemetery book, 10-11.

⁴² Houston National Cemetery book, 8.

⁴³ Houston National Cemetery book, 2.

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The 1985 Master Plan has been implemented over the course of the past two-and-a-half decades through several expansion and construction phases. In addition to its mission of providing for the burials of veterans and their families in a tranquil environment, Houston National Cemetery also serves as a wetland environment, with detention ponds and herbaceous plantings that contribute to the aesthetic quality of the cemetery and serve as a habitat for various species.

Headstones and Burials at Houston National Cemetery

Grave markers in the earliest sections of Houston National Cemetery reflect the post-World War II emphasis on flat markers previously only used in private cemeteries. Several decades prior to the establishment of Houston Veterans Cemetery, in the 1930s, a series of flat headstones were introduced by the War Department in order to accommodate veterans buried in private/local cemeteries that did not allow upright markers, such as the lawn park and memorial park cemeteries. Markers of "durable stone" were already authorized by Congress in 1873, thus, the Secretary of War only needed to approve a new style—flat. The first flat marble markers were produced in 1935, with flat granite markers following two years later. In the years following World War II, three new national cemeteries were established—National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific (Hawaii, 1948), Puerto Rico National Cemetery (1948), and Willamette National Cemetery (Washington, 1950)—all of which exclusively used flat granite markers. It is not clear why the VA chose to use flat markers at the new cemetery in Houston. However, the VA had begun using flat markers at many of their other veterans cemeteries in the 1950s including those at Eagle Point (1952), Prescott (1931), and Los Angeles (1889), prior to the establishment of the Houston cemetery.

Also present at Houston National Cemetery are upright headstones referred to as the "General type." This style of headstone was created and approved in the years following World War I for veterans who served after the Spanish-American War. The hallmark of the "General-type" headstone is the "Emblem of Belief" (EOB) which can be engraved in the top center of the headstone. Originally, the only EOBs permitted were the Star of David for the Jewish faith and the Latin cross for the Christian faith. Over time more EOBs have been approved for inscription; as of 2016, there are over 50 approved EOBs.

All eligible veterans, many of them servicemen and women in all major U.S. conflicts since Vietnam, along with their eligible dependents, are buried at Houston National Cemetery.

Medal of Honor Burials

Among the veterans buried are four Medal of Honor recipients. The standing grave markers of the recipients are located in a special Medal of Honor burial section around the perimeter of the hemicycle. The recipients include:

First Lieutenant Raymond L. Knight (World War II), U.S. Army Air Corps. Northern Po Valley, Italy, April 25, 1945. His remains were relocated to Houston National Cemetery on April 25, 1992 (Section H-B 11).

Staff Sergeant Marcario Garcia (World War II), U.S. Army, Company B, 22nd Infantry, 4th Infantry Division. Grosshau, Germany, November 27, 1944 (Section H-A 1).

Captain James H. Fields (World War II), U.S. Army, 10th Armored Infantry, 4th Armored Division. Near Rechicourt, France, September 27, 1944 (Section H-B 6).

First Sergeant David H. McNerney (Vietnam), U.S. Army, Company A, 1st Battalion, 8th Infantry, 4th Infantry Division. Polei Doc, Republic of Vietnam, March 22, 1967 (Section H-A 4).

Other Notable Burials

The Honorable Albert Thomas (1898-1966), the U.S. Congressman from Texas who was instrumental in the establishment of the cemetery, is also buried in Houston National Cemetery. A native of Nacogdoches, Texas, Congressman Thomas served as a Second Lieutenant in the U.S. Army during World War I. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives for the Eighth District of Harris County, Texas, from 1936-1966. While in office, Thomas played a large role in the selection of Houston for the site of NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center (present-day NASA Johnson Space Center). Thomas also wrote the legislation for the establishment of the veterans cemetery in Houston. On November 21, 1964, President John F. Kennedy and Vice-President Lyndon B. Johnson attended a testimonial dinner in Houston to urge

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Thomas to remain in Congress; the next day, Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. Representative Thomas traveled back to D.C. with President Johnson and appears in the historic photograph of Johnson's swearing in on Air Force One. Thomas died in Washington, D.C., on February 15, 1966.⁴⁴ His remains were brought to Houston National Cemetery where a funeral service and his interment took place on February 18, 1966. Thomas' gravesite, identified by a flush-to-the-ground marker, sits at the northeast end the grassy mall southwest of the Hemicycle. (Photograph 14)

In 1968, U.S. Representative George H.W. Bush introduced a bill (H.R. 10898) to rename the Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery as the Albert Thomas Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The bill was sent to the Committee on Veterans Affairs, but it did not pass. Congressman Bush re-submitted the bill in 1969 (H.R. 11616); it was again unsuccessful.⁴⁵ The Albert Thomas Convention and Exhibit Center was built in downtown Houston in Thomas' honor in the fall of 1967 (it was renovated and renamed in the 1990s).⁴⁶ No other landmarks in Houston are named after the Congressman.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

1963	May 2 – federal government acquires property for Houston VA Cemetery
1964-1965	Initial construction phase: Administration Building, Hemicycle, Chapel, Carillon Bell Tower and Speakers Stand, Service Building, Sections A-G
1970	Schulmerich "Americana" carillon bells installed in Carillon Bell Tower
1974	Internal transfer of Veterans Administration cemeteries to the National Cemetery System; Houston Veterans Administration Cemetery renamed Houston National Cemetery
1978-1979	15-acre expansion project (Phase I): Burial Sections J-L
1985	Master Plan developed; Steubner-Airline Road renamed Veterans Memorial Drive
1996-1999	Phase II expansion project: T.C. Jester Boulevard constructed and main entrance relocated; Burial Sections M1-S3 and expansions of Burial Sections G and K; Committal Shelters A-C; Columbaria C1-C11; Detention Ponds 1-7; construction of internal cemetery roads Military Drive and Memorial Drive
2008	Phase III expansion project: Burial Section T-U2 and expansion of Section R; construction of Freedom Street and Patriot Drive; Columbaria C12-13
2010-2012	Phase IV Expansion project: Public Information Center; Maintenance Storage Building; Soils Storage Building; Burial Sections V-Z; Committal Shelter D; Columbaria C14-17; three detention ponds

The U.S. government acquired the 419.214 acres in north Houston that comprise the cemetery on May 2, 1963.⁴⁷ When purchased, the property featured several existing buildings and stock tanks. The first construction phase from 1964-1965 consisted of 12 buildings and structures, including an administration building and a unique structure called a hemicycle—a horseshoe-shaped building with two semi-circular halves—as well as a main entrance gate and fence, and over four miles of circular and winding roads. (Figure 11) Initially, 50 acres were developed. An existing house and detached garage (built in 1940) on the property were inhabited by the cemetery's first superintendent for at least part of his tenure from 1965 to 1986. (Figure 3) The house and garage were demolished between 1995 and 1998.⁴⁸ Other existing ca. 1940 residential and agricultural buildings also made up the acquired property; these buildings and the land on which they are situated, as well as the undeveloped cemetery property, are presently leased for agricultural purposes.⁴⁹ Subsequent landscaping and

⁴⁴ Archie P. McDonald, "Thomas, Albert" Handbook of Texas Online, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/fth04> (accessed June 12, 2012), published by the Texas State Historical Association.

⁴⁵ E-mail correspondence with Paul Rascoe, Government Documents, Maps, and Electronic Information Services Librarian, University of Texas Libraries, June 12, 2012.

⁴⁶ Houston History, "Great Citizens – Albert Thomas," <http://www.houstonhistory.com/citizens/houstonians/history8ee.htm> (accessed July 30, 2012).

⁴⁷ In 2010, a title survey was conducted for a 32.4-acre tract to the south of the cemetery property line; the parcel was to be donated, but as this writing, was not completed. See note one above.

⁴⁸ E-mail correspondence with Jennifer Perunko, National Cemetery Administration, June 15, 2012. The buildings appear on a 1995 USGS topographic map of the area but no longer appear on a 1998 aerial of the cemetery.

⁴⁹ E-mail correspondence with Amanda Rhodes, Houston National Cemetery Assistant Director, June 14, 2012.

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building improvements in the cemetery, as well as the opening of new burial sections in the 1980s and the 1990s, accommodated the growing numbers of interments. In 2011, the most recent expansion project developed 20 additional acres for burials.

VA staff designed the cemetery with curving burial areas arranged around a series of circular roadways with connecting spurs, giving the site a concentrically-arranged plan at its core. Initially, the cemetery featured 12 numbered buildings and structures.⁵⁰

- Building No. 1 Administration Building
- Building No. 2 Chapel (Bell Tower and Speakers Platform)
- Building No. 3 Hemicycle
- Building No. 4 Service Building
- Building No. 5 Flag Staffs (not extant)
- Building No. 6 Superintendent's Lodge (not extant)
- Building No. 7 Superintendent's Garage (not extant)
- Building No. 8 Pneumatic Tank House (not extant)
- Building No. 9 Well No. 1 and Pump
- Building No. 10 Well No. 2 and Pump
- Building No. 11 Transformer Pad
- Building No. 12 Transformer Pad (not extant)

As initially built, a semi-circular entry drive ("Road A," not extant) from Steubner-Airline Road provided access to the cemetery property. A painted plywood sign that read "The Veterans Administration Cemetery" and featured the VA seal stood within the grassy island bound by Steubner-Airline Road and "Road A." Two roads ("B" and "C") separated by a grassy mall led axially from the semi-circular entry drive across the outer circular drive ("Road D") to the hemicycle at the center of the inner circular drive (not initially labeled). Roads "B" and "C" near the entry drive were flanked by a concrete pad with twin flagpoles adjacent to the northwest road ("Road B") and by the administration building adjacent to the southeast road ("Road C"). A crosswalk across the grassy median between Roads "B" and "C" connected the flagstaffs and the administration building. Two parking areas were constructed around the northeastern end of the inner circular drive. "Road H" (Present-day Oak Street), perpendicular to the administration building, led to the service area in the southwest corner of the cemetery. The service area contained the service building, a pneumatic tank house, a well, and a transformer pad. A gate in the cemetery's boundary fence at "Road I" north of the service area provided a secondary entry from Steubner-Airline Road. The first burial sections were planned southwest of the administration building (Sections A and B) between the two circular drives (Sections C, D, E, and F) and east of the service area (Section G). While a new chain-link perimeter fence marked much of the cemetery's boundary, cattle fences—both new and existing—separated the developed burial sections from the remainder of the cemetery property. The cemetery property was landscaped with a variety of native plants. The burial sections were sod with St. Augustine grass. Crepe myrtle trees lined the entry boulevards between the administration building and the hemicycle. Rings of sweet gum trees flank "Road D." Other specimen included silk trees, deodar cedar, yaupon holly, live oak, laurel cherry, star jasmine, evergreen elm, and wisteria.⁵¹ The original site and landscape plan drawings from 1964 show the location of additional planned roadways extending from the circular roadways like wheel spokes and, in the undeveloped eastern section, following the arc of the established circular roads.

Several changes to the physical appearance of the cemetery property occurred in the late 1960s and 1970s. At an unknown date before 1969, a stock tank was dug in the eastern portion of the cemetery property that was undeveloped and used for agricultural purposes.⁵² With the transfer of the cemetery to the stewardship of the National Cemetery Administration in 1974, the site saw various improvements. Plans were drawn for the relocation of the flagpoles and

⁵⁰ Drawing No. L-1, Staking Plan, June 5, 1964.

⁵¹ Planting Plan, Buildings 1, 2, 3 & 5. Drawing No. L-8, June 5, 1964; Planting Plan, Buildings 4 & 8, Drawing No. L-9, June 5, 1964.

⁵² This is labeled "Pond C" on the Phase IV Gravesite Expansion and Cemetery Improvements Drawing no. X-2 "Construction Sequencing Plan" dated June 3, 2010.

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development of the Medal of Honor section in 1974.⁵³ The flagpoles were moved from the concrete pad near the cemetery entry to either side of the entrance of the hemicycle. Two burial sections for the remains of Medal of Honor recipients, Sections H-A and H-B, with the capacity for 39 and 47 gravesites, respectively, were incorporated into the grassy median surrounding the Hemicycle. In June 1976, a small memorial area (Section MA) was developed southwest of the administration building for grave markers honoring veterans "whose remains have not been recovered or identified, were buried at sea, donated to science, or cremated..."⁵⁴ In July 1976, drawings were made for the addition of a new women's toilet room and a janitor's closet in the narthex of the chapel.⁵⁵ In 1977, the administration building was remodeled with the division of one office in the southwest corner of the building into two spaces and the installation of Venetian blinds in several offices.⁵⁶ Also at that time, the service building was expanded with a three-bay addition.⁵⁷ In the spring of 1978, 0.0039 acres of undeveloped cemetery property was purchased from the federal government by Harris County for the widening of Steubner-Airline Road.⁵⁸ Also in that year Section H was developed south of Section G for the burial of cremains.⁵⁹ Section I was developed at an undetermined date. (Figure 2)

In July 1979, the cemetery underwent a significant expansion with the development of 15 acres for burial purposes. New burial sections (Sections J through L) were established southeast of the hemicycle adjacent to Section B. The area was bound by an extension of "Road I" and a new east-west road at the new section's north edge (continuation of "Road F"). The new areas were planted with a variety of native species including red maple, Japanese red maple, white and black pine, oak, crepe myrtle, and cedar trees, as well as shrubs such as azaleas, holly, and ligustrum.⁶⁰ The new burial sections were not available for immediate use, however, since deficiencies in the work resulted in drainage problems.⁶¹ These were later corrected with the work completed on August 12, 1985.⁶² In October 1979, the landscaping in several areas of the cemetery was improved. At the median between the entry boulevard lanes, the existing crosswalk was removed; the median was planted with shade, flowering, and evergreen trees as well as shrubs.⁶³ The perimeters of the administration building and Sections A and G were augmented with new evergreen and shade trees and new flowering shrubs.⁶⁴

In August 1979, the Veterans Administration assigned the development of a master plan project for Houston National Cemetery.⁶⁵ Drawings for the plan were not completed until July 1985. In November 1985, Steubner-Airline Drive was renamed Veterans Memorial Drive in honor of the cemetery's location. No work appears to have been implemented toward the cemetery's master plan until the late 1980s when projects for the rehabilitation of the hemicycle restrooms and installation of an automatic irrigation system were completed.⁶⁶ Several utilitarian buildings were erected at the cemetery between 1988 and 1996. In the service area, a maintenance garage and maintenance storage building were built

⁵³ "Landscape Planting Plan," November 15, 1974. The plans were revised two years later per a drawing titled "Flagpole Relocation and Planting Plan" date February 6, 1976.

⁵⁴ Drawing no. NCH-1, "Memorial Area," June 7, 1976; text from Memorial Area monument.

⁵⁵ Drawing no. NCC 117-2, "Plans and Details, New Toilet Room & Janitor's Closet," July 14, 1976.

⁵⁶ Unnumbered drawing, "Plans, Schedules, Details," November 1, 1977.

⁵⁷ VA Form 08-6192 "Construction Project Numbering Record," United States Government Memorandum, Chief Memorial Affairs Director to Administrator, n.d.

⁵⁸ Letter from Robert C. Watts, Chief, Harris County Right of Way Department, to William F. Spivey, Superintendent, Houston National Cemetery, January 26, 1978; United States Government Memorandum, Director, Cemetery Service to Director, Land Management Service, March 6, 1978; United States Government Memorandum, Assistant Administrator for Construction to Department of Veterans Affairs Administrator and Assistant Deputy Administrator, no date; Quitclaim deed from the United States of America, acting by and through the Administrator of Veterans Affairs to County of Harris, State of Texas, May 22, 1978; Letter from Donovan E. Hower, Director, Land Management to William F. Spivey, Director, Houston National Cemetery, May 23, 1978.

⁵⁹ Drawing no. NCG-107.1, "Layout Plan Sections A & G," August 7, 1978.

⁶⁰ Drawing no. NCL-117.1 "Landscape Planting Plan. Building No. 1 and Sections A and G" and Drawing no. NCL-117.2 "Entrance Boulevard Plantings," October 1979.

⁶¹ Houston National Cemetery book, 2.

⁶² VA Form 08-6192 "Construction Project Numbering Record," VA Construction Project Management Information; Letter from Andrew C. Pappamihel, Project Director to John Sheehan, Director, VA Medical Center Houston, August, 30, 1984; Assignment of Construction Project, August 23, 1984.

⁶³ Drawing no. NCL 117.2, Sheet 3 of 5, "Entrance Boulevard Plantings," October 1979.

⁶⁴ Drawing no. NCL 117.2, Sheet 1 of 5, "Landscape Planting Plan, Building No. 1, Sections A & G," October 1979.

⁶⁵ VA Form 08-6192 "Construction Project Numbering Record"

⁶⁶ The projects were assigned October 6, 1985 and first funded in the FY1986 budget, VA Form 08-6192 "Construction Project Numbering Record," Drawing no. MP/1-1, Bathrooms, July 20, 1985. Drawing no. MP/L24, Irrigation, July 20, 1985; Drawing no. A-1, "Hemicycle Lower Level Plan," March 1996.

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southwest of the service building. The materials storage barn was built south of the well pump house no. 1 enclosure near Aldine-Western Road.⁶⁷ The 30-foot by 50-foot, gable-roofed building, used to store topsoil and other cemetery materials, was constructed of a metal frame clad with corrugated galvanized metal. It consisted of two areas, a larger open area on the east for machinery access and a fully enclosed room on the west for storage. It was recently demolished during the Phase IV expansion project.

Additional work on the cemetery's master plan project was not initiated until 1996 with the commencement of the Houston National Cemetery Expansion Project (Phase II).⁶⁸ (Figure 7) Plans were drawn by Huitt-Zollars, Inc. of Dallas, Texas, in March 1996. Three years later, work was completed on various tasks in compliance with the Master Plan as a 130-acre expansion project which retained the cemetery's original concentric planning concept.⁶⁹ The main entry of the cemetery was relocated from Veterans Memorial Drive to the new extension of T.C. Jester Boulevard between Steubner-Airline Drive and Aldine-Western Road.⁷⁰ This significantly changed the approach to the cemetery by altering the previous axial path from the former entry to administration building and the hemicycle and chapel beyond. From T.C. Jester Boulevard ran a new entrance boulevard (composed of two one-way roads divided by a median) that extended through the cemetery. Sloping, concave, polished granite retaining walls stood at the entry on either side of the entrance boulevard. A polished granite entry sign reading "Houston National Cemetery" occupies the grassy median of the entry boulevard. The new entrance boulevard winds through the western portion of the cemetery to the outer circular drive surrounding the hemicycle and chapel. On the northeast side of the Hemicycle, a median-divided boulevard of two one-way roads provides access to newly developed portions of the cemetery. Together, the entrance and northeastern boulevards form a "spine" for vehicular access through the cemetery. Previously established burial sections were expanded with the addition of Sections G2, G3, and K1-K9. New burial sections—M1-M2, N1-N3, and O, P, Q, R, and S1-S3—were also developed. The project included the construction of three permanent committal shelters and 11 columbaria (C1-11) with 5,000 niches. Also at this time, seven detention ponds to aid drainage were dredged. At the Hemicycle, the stairways were refurbished and the construction joints resealed.⁷¹ The chapel, the carillon bell tower, and the speaker's platform were also renovated and refurbished.⁷² The cemetery property was further improved with new identification, directional, traffic, and parking signage.⁷³ Among the signs installed were concrete posts with recessed numbers and lettering to identify the burial sections and the newly named cemetery roadways. The new entrance boulevard and the new roadway northeast of the hemicycle were named Military Drive and Memorial Drive, respectively. Roads "B" and "C" between the two circular drives around the Hemicycle and Chapel were continued as one-way lanes of Military Drive. The inner circular drive was named Thomas Circle. Additional new road names were: Veterans Circle (Roads "D" and "E"), Pine Street ("Road G"), Oak Street ("Road H"), and Woodlawn Street ("Road I"). "Road F" between Sections D and F was removed.

The Phase III extension of Houston National Cemetery further to the east retained the cemetery's concentric plan. (Figure 7) Starting in 2008, the site was further developed with the addition of Sections T, T1, and U-U2 to accommodate 6,000 pre-cast concrete lawn crypts. So that these new areas could be accessed, the cemetery road network was expanded with the addition of Freedom Street and Patriot Drive and the extension of Memorial Drive with necessary curbs and gutters. Two double-sided columbaria (C12-13) were built north of the new burial sections.⁷⁴ The project also included an irrigation mainline sprinkler system and tree planting.⁷⁵ Also around this time, Section R was expanded with the addition of Section R1 with a capacity for 776 plastic pre-placed crypts.⁷⁶

The Phase IV Gravesite Development and Cemetery Improvement Project took place from 2010 to 2012. (Figures 4 and 8) The project included the development of 20 acres for burial (yielding approximately 20,500 full-casket and cremain

⁶⁷ RVI, 19.

⁶⁸ RVI, *Gravesite Expansion and Cemetery Development Schematic Design and Design Development Services Phase IV, Site Characteristics and Schematic S1 Recommendations Report*, July 8, 2009, 3.

⁶⁹ RVI, 3.

⁷⁰ Drawing no. MP/L11, Entry, July 20, 1985; Drawing no. MP/L12, Entry-Section, July 20, 1985.

⁷¹ Drawing No. A-1, "Hemicycle Lower Level Plan" March 1996; Drawing No. A-3, "Hemicycle Lower Level Plan," March 1996.

⁷² Drawing No. A-5, "Chapel Renovation," March 1996.

⁷³ Drawing no. MP/L22, Graphics Plan, July 20, 1985; Drawing no. MP/L22, Graphics Details, July 20, 1985.

⁷⁴ RVI, 19.

⁷⁵ Federal Business Opportunities, "Potential acquisition opportunity - construction project for the manufacture, delivery, off-loading & installation of 6K crypts, drainage items, road work landscaping & irrigation at Houston National Cemetery," https://www.fbo.gov/index?s=opportunity&mode=form&id=835866e6fd8edceb670af4a5639b9fa2&tab=core&_cvview=0 (accessed July 9, 2012).

⁷⁶ RVI, 19.

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gravesites).⁷⁷ The new Public Information Center—a cemetery visitors center with restrooms and a grave locator kiosk located north of the administration building at the newly expanded funeral cortege staging area—was among the first improvements completed. (Photographs 9 and 47) The service (maintenance) building was expanded and another maintenance storage building was erected. (Photographs 49 and 50) Building this new maintenance storage building in the service area required the demolition of the original pneumatic tank house (Building No. 8) and transformer pad (Building No. 12) and the capping off of original well facilities. The soils storage building, located in the northeast portion of the cemetery along Aldine-Western Road, called for the demolition of the ca. 1990 materials storage barn. A chain-link fence topped with barbed wire surrounds the entire maintenance complex. Gravesite development included the installation 3,500 full-casket, pre-placed crypts in existing Section R and the construction of four new columbaria (C14-17) with 5,750 columbaria niches east of Section M. New interment areas (Sections V through Z) were added in the formerly undeveloped eastern portion of the cemetery. The fourth committal shelter services the expanded burial sections. (Photographs 54 and 55) Additional improvements to the cemetery at this time included repairs to existing roadways, dredging of existing ponds, planting landscape buffering and screens, and digging two detention ponds in the new burial sections. The late 1960s stock tank in this area was also turned into a detention pond. (Photograph 56)

⁷⁷ Request for Expressions of Interest, <http://www.dgmarket.com/tenders/np-notice.do~3232720>.

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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 # _____
☒ recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey # TX-5 _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
☐ Other State agency
☒ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☒ Other

Name of repository: Houston National Cemetery Administration
Building

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 419.2

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>262804</u> Easting	<u>3314056</u> Northing	6	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>265021</u> Easting	<u>3313048</u> Northing
2	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>263386</u> Easting	<u>3313161</u> Northing	7	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>265010</u> Easting	<u>3314075</u> Northing
3	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>263392</u> Easting	<u>3313268</u> Northing	8	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>263531</u> Easting	<u>3314061</u> Northing
4	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>264495</u> Easting	<u>3313257</u> Northing	9	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>263526</u> Easting	<u>3313925</u> Northing
5	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>264494</u> Easting	<u>3313039</u> Northing	10	<u>15R</u> Zone	<u>263390</u> Easting	<u>3313922</u> Northing
		<u>11 15R</u> Zone	<u>263390</u> Easting			<u>3314070</u> Northing	

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. <u>29.934403</u> Latitude	<u>-95.457327</u> Longitude	6. <u>29.925741</u> Latitude	<u>-95.434155</u> Longitude
2. <u>29.926446</u> Latitude	<u>-95.451104</u> Longitude	7. <u>29.934999</u> Latitude	<u>-95.434496</u> Longitude
3. <u>29.927412</u> Latitude	<u>-95.451066</u> Longitude	8. <u>29.934589</u> Latitude	<u>-95.449802</u> Longitude
4. <u>29.927525</u> Latitude	<u>-95.439646</u> Longitude	9. <u>29.933362</u> Latitude	<u>-95.449824</u> Longitude
5. <u>29.925559</u> Latitude	<u>-95.439608</u> Longitude	10. <u>29.933308</u> Latitude	<u>-95.451231</u> Longitude
	<u>11. 29.934643</u> Latitude		<u>-95.451264</u> Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying sketch map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Cemetery Administration recognizes the above as the existing boundaries of the cemetery.

Houston National Cemetery
Name of Property

Harris, TX
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Moore/Project Manager; Tara Dudley/Architectural Historian

(with contributions by Jennifer Perunko, National Cemetery Administration)

organization Hardy Heck Moore, Inc.

date July 2012; revised September 2016

street & number 1507 North Street, Suite 1

telephone (512) 478-8014

city or town Austin

state TX

zip code 78640

e-mail tdudley@hhminc.com / dmoore@hhminc.com

Houston National Cemetery
Name of Property

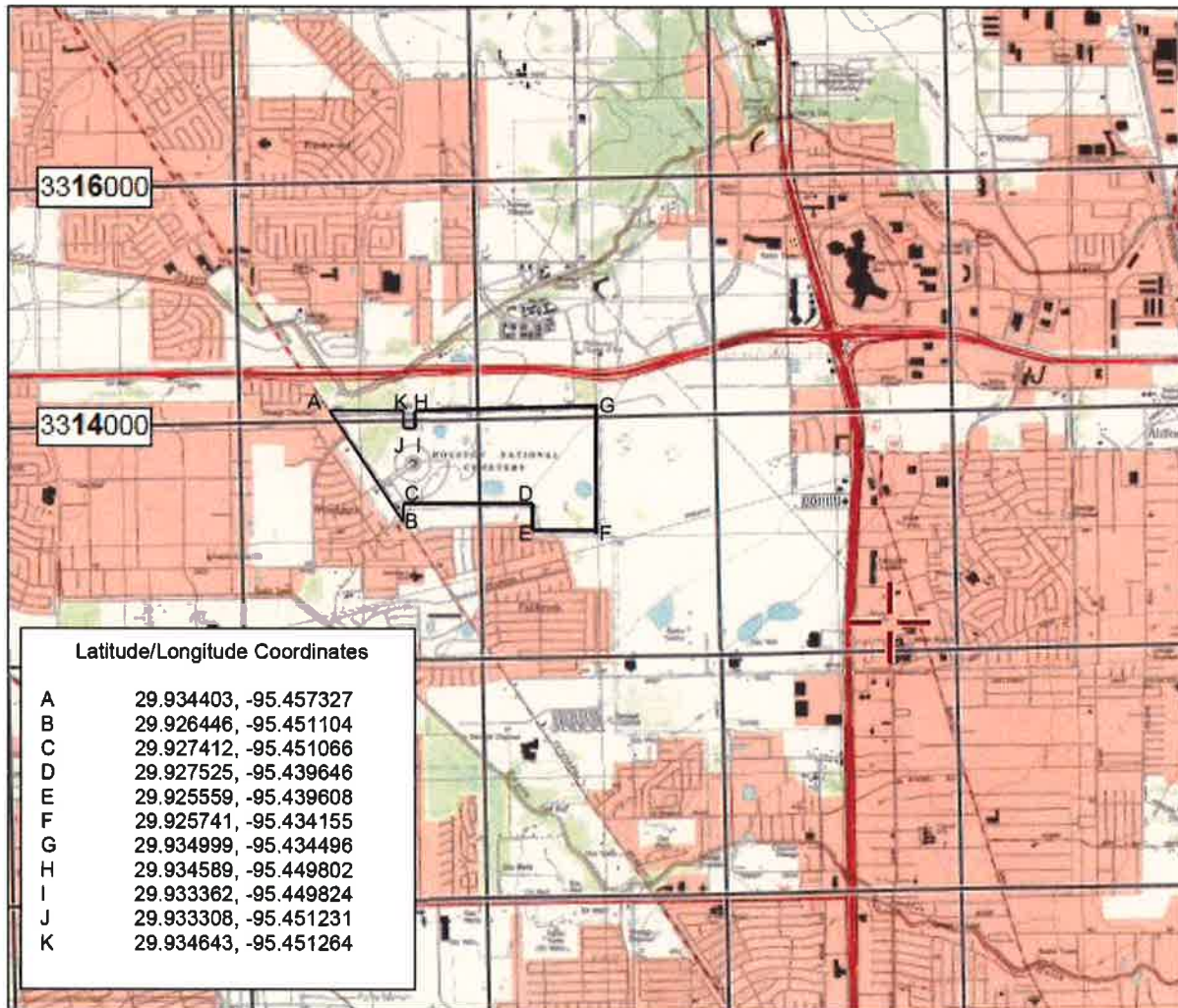
Harris, TX
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

USGS Topographic Map (7.5 minute series)
Aldine, Texas
Regional Perspective



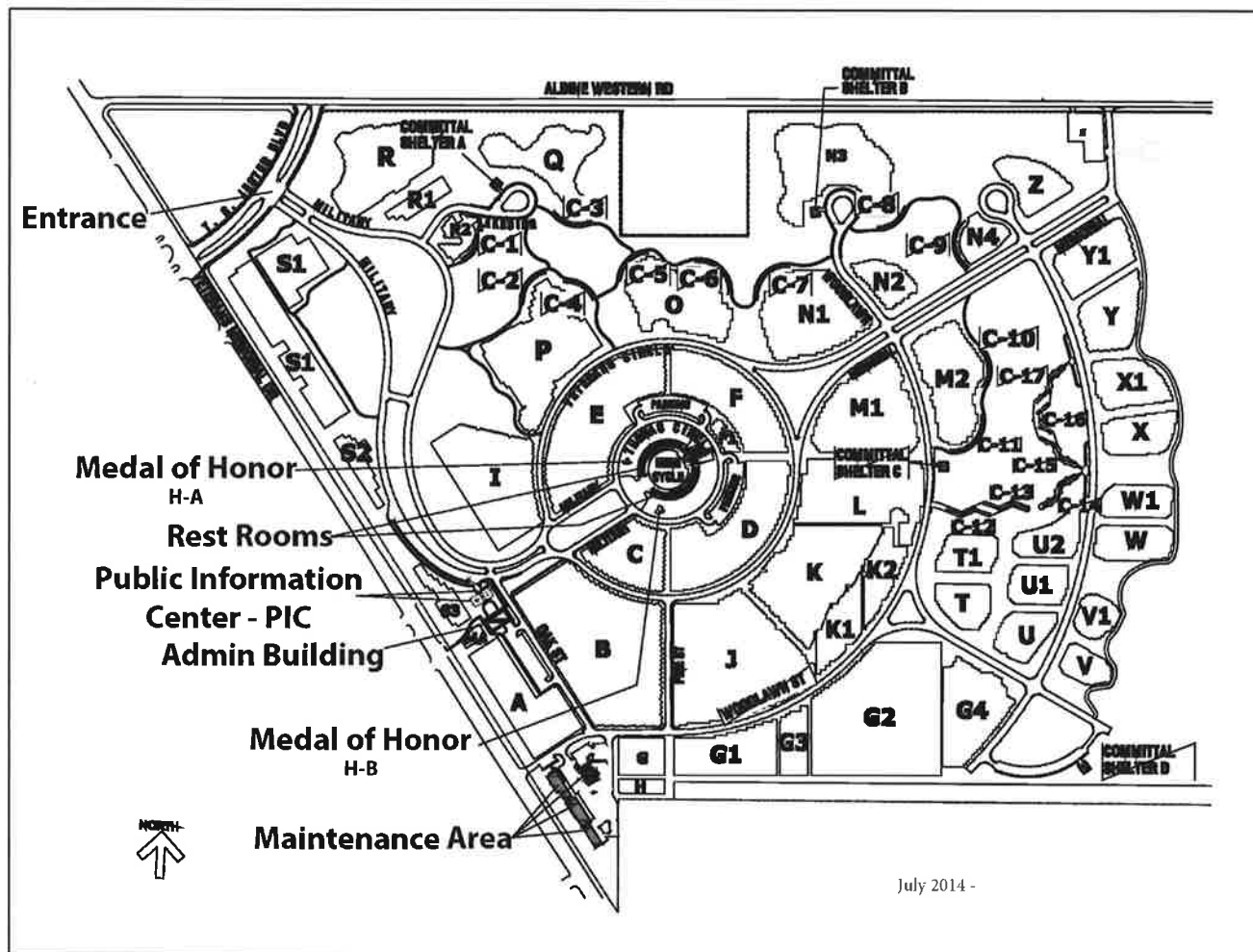
Houston National Cemetery

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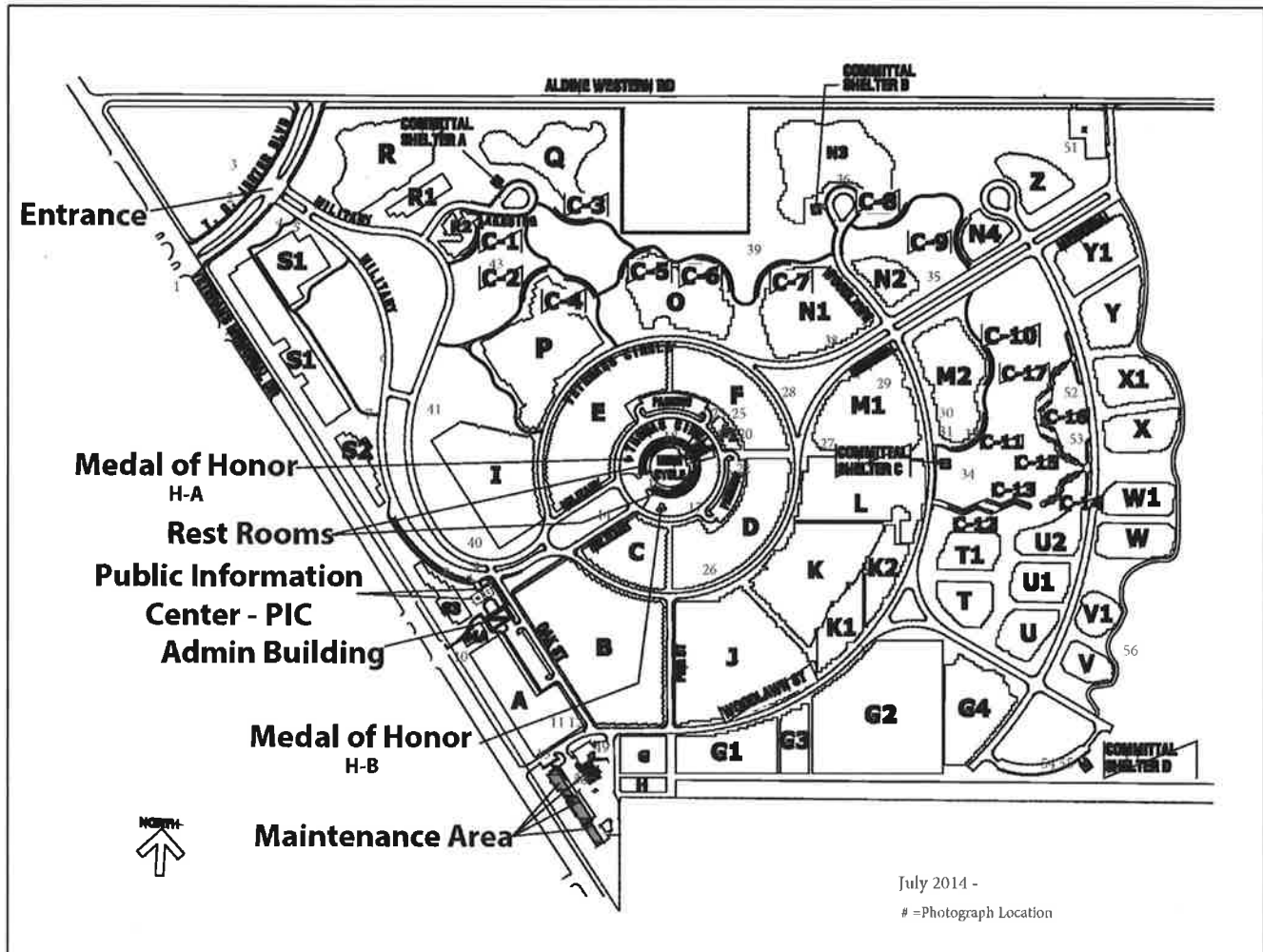
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Key all photographs to this map.



Houston National Cemetery
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A **Sketch map** with photograph locations noted.



- Continuation Sheets
- Additional items: (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Houston National Cemetery

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Figure 1. View from hemicycle toward the original cemetery entry flanked by the administration building (left) and flagstaffs (right). ca. 1965. Undated photo. Houston National Cemetery Scrapbook, 1964-1967, compiled by Alwin D. Farrior.

Houston National Cemetery

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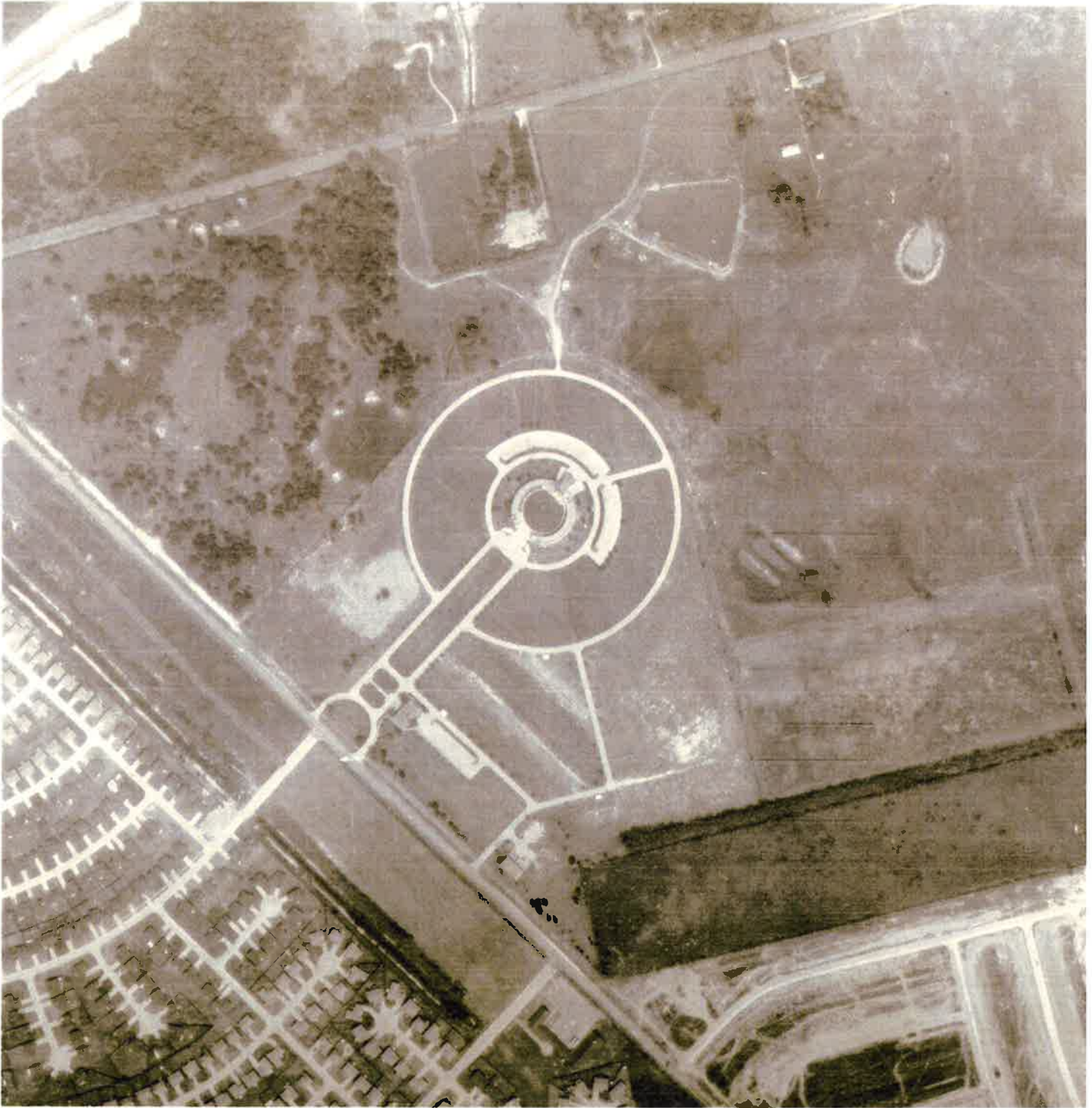


Figure 2. Aerial of Houston National Cemetery, 1978. Note the axial layout of the original cemetery entry as well as the superintendent's lodge and associated outbuildings at the top right. NCA History Program Photograph Collection.

Houston National Cemetery

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Harris, TX

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Figure 3. Superintendent's Lodge (demolished). 1981. NCA History Program Photograph Collection.

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Figure 4. Aerial of Houston National Cemetery, 1998. Photo by Ken Batula. Note the new cemetery entrance at top left and layout of Memorial Drive. Photo courtesy of Houston National Cemetery.

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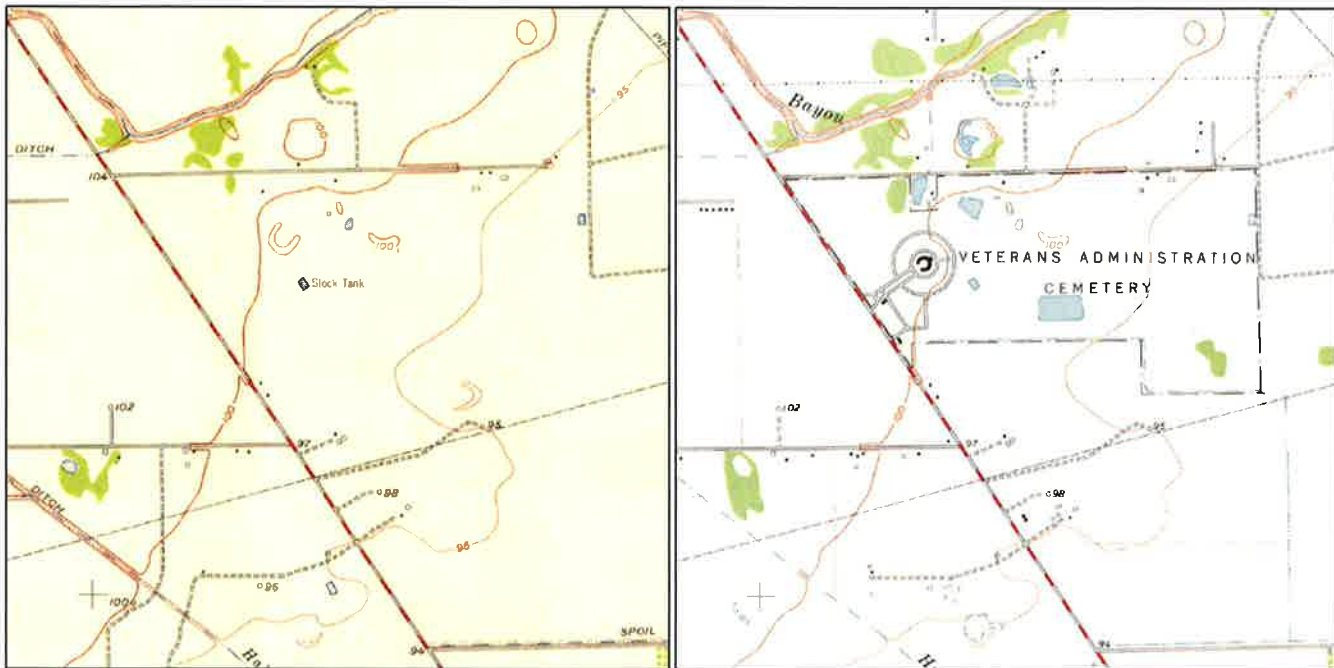


Figure 5. Topographical Maps from 1956 (on left) and 1967 (on right) of the site selected for Houston National Cemetery. The maps illustrate the cemetery's location and initial lay-out. The stock tanks on the property are visible in both maps. NCA History Program Map Collection.



Figure 6. Aerial photographs documenting the development of the cemetery grounds from the initial construction in the mid-1960s to the completion of the master planning process began in 1985. 1966 (on left) and 1981 (on right). NCA History Program Photograph Collection.

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Figure 7. Aerial photographs of the cemetery grounds after the completion of Phase II (1996-1999) and Phase III (2008) of the master plan. 2002 (on left) and 2010 (on right). NCA History Program Map Collection.

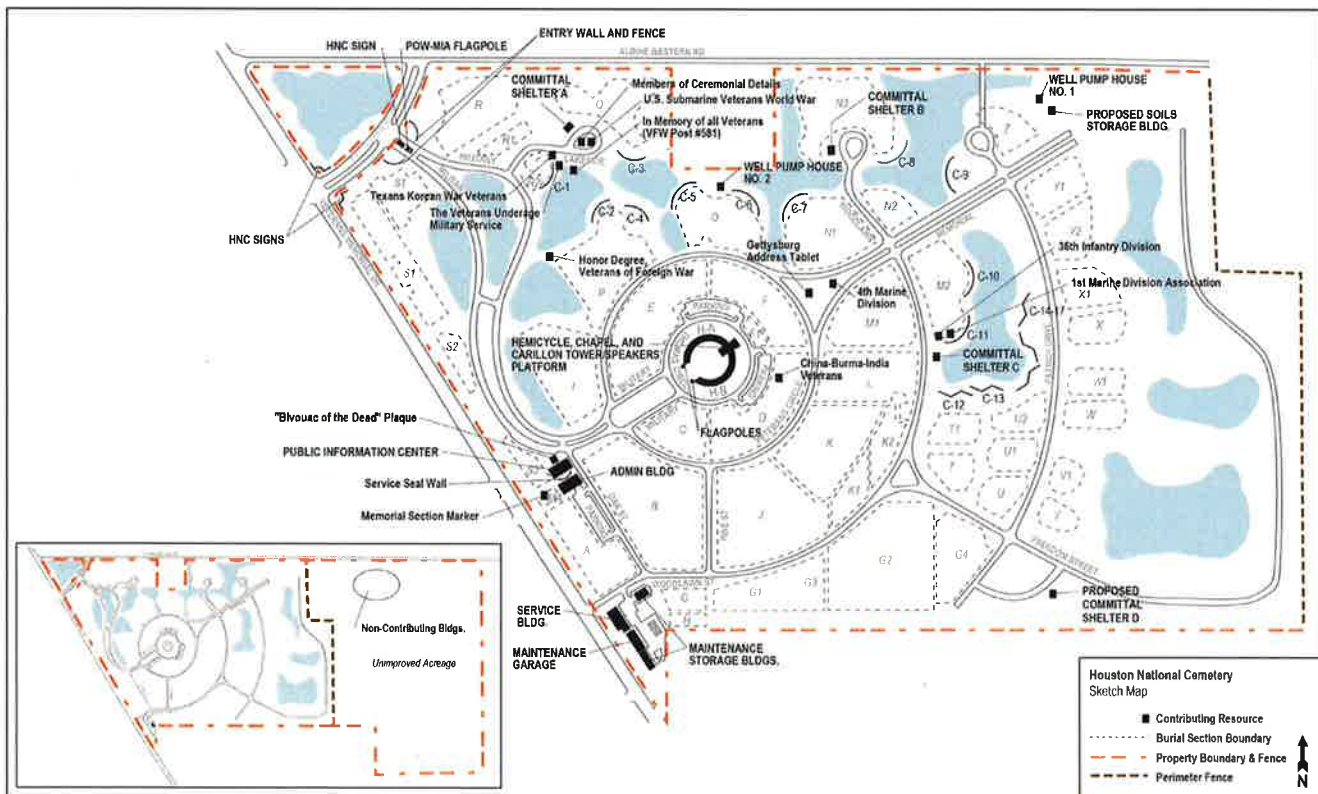


Figure 8. Sketch map of the cemetery grounds during Phase IV (2010-2012) of the master plan development program. 2012. NCA History Program Cemetery Files.

Harris, TX
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Figure 10. Detail notes for the title survey conducted for NCA showing the relationship of the 32.4 acre parcel that may be donated to the cemetery proper. 2010. NCA History Program Map Collection.

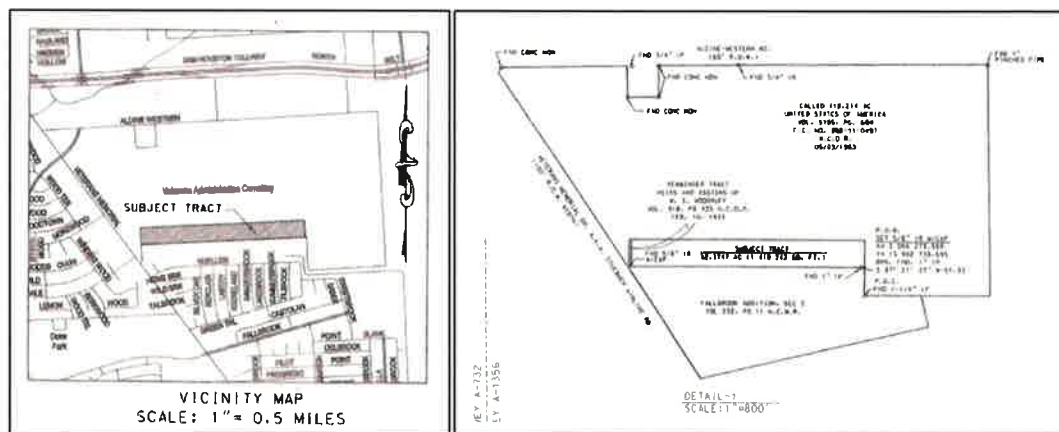


Figure 10. Detail notes for the title survey conducted for NCA showing the relationship of the 32.4 acre parcel that may be donated to the cemetery proper. 2010. NCA History Program Map Collection.

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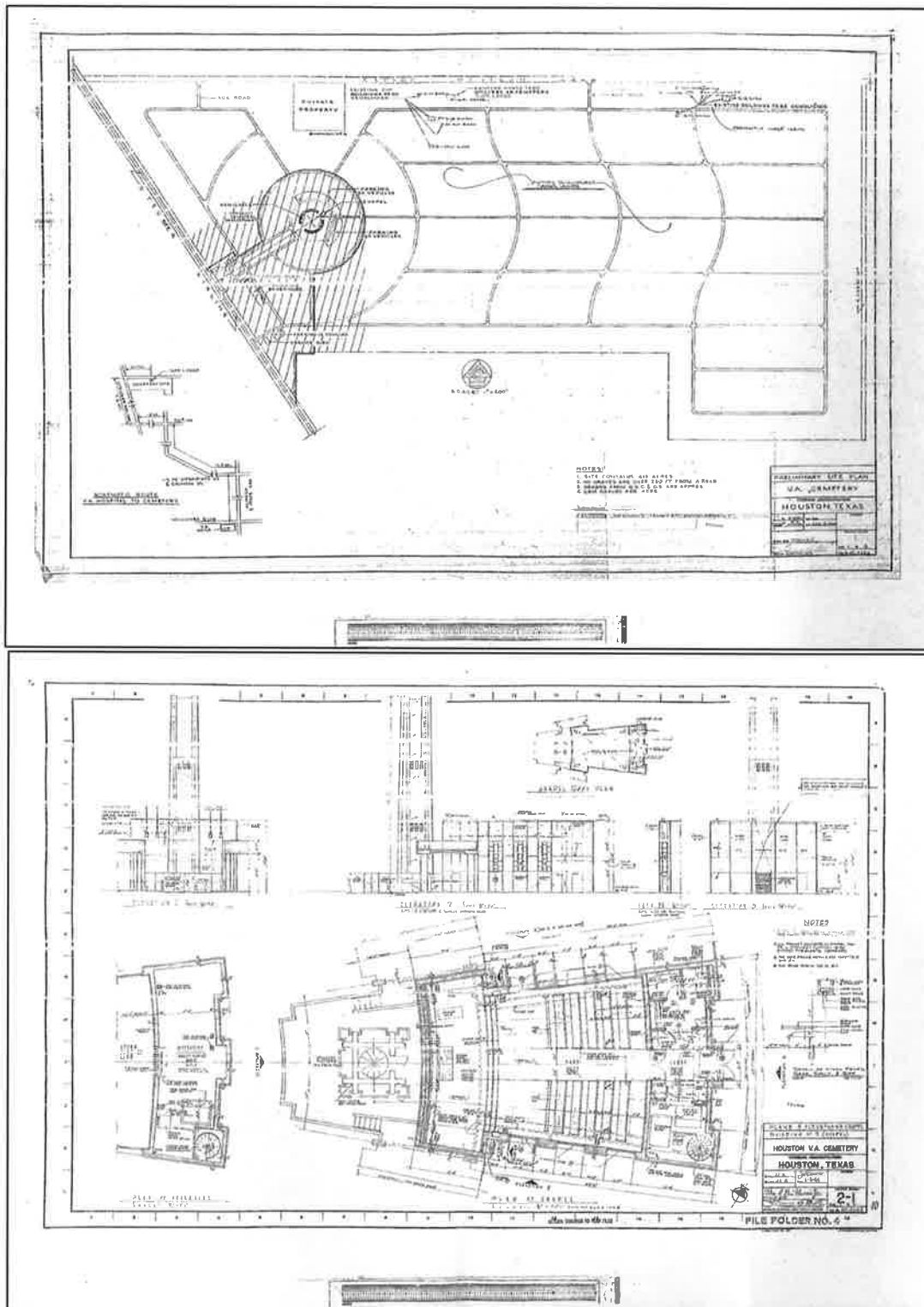


Figure 11. Drawings for Houston National Cemetery outlining the initial site lay-out and plans for the chapel. 1964. NCA History Program Cemetery Files.

Houston National Cemetery

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Houston National Cemetery

City or Vicinity: Houston

County: Harris

State: Texas

Photographer: Tara Dudley

Date Photographed: October 2011; June and July 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001. Houston National Cemetery sign, view to east.
- 0002. Entrance to Houston National Cemetery, view to east.
- 0003. Entrance to Houston National Cemetery, view to southeast.
- 0004. Houston National Cemetery, view to northeast.
- 0005. Burial Section S1, view to south.
- 0006. Median at Military Drive, view to northeast.
- 0007. Burial Section S2, view to southwest.
- 0008. Detail of marker in burial section S3, view to southwest.
- 0009. Public Information Center, view to south.
- 0010. Administration Building, view to east.
- 0011. Service area, view to southeast
- 0012. Service Building, view to south.
- 0013. Maintenance Garage and Maintenance Storage Building, view to south.
- 0014. Albert Thomas grave marker, view to southwest.
- 0015. Hemicycle, view to north.
- 0016. Hemicycle, view to northeast.
- 0017. Carillon Bell Tower and Speakers Stand, view to north.
- 0018. Hemicycle from roof deck, view looking southwest.
- 0019. Chapel, view looking southwest.
- 0020. Detail of David Goode Parsons sculpture above chapel entry, view looking southwest.
- 0021. Chapel, View looking west.
- 0022. Chapel, view looking northwest.
- 0023. Chapel nave and altar, view looking southwest.
- 0024. Stained glass windows on southeast wall of Chapel nave, view looking southeast.
- 0025. Stained glass windows on northwest wall of Chapel nave, view looking northwest.
- 0026. Burial Section D, view looking north.
- 0027. Burial Section M1, view looking northeast.
- 0028. 4th Marine Division Monument, view looking northeast.
- 0029. View toward Hemicycle from Memorial Drive, view looking southwest.
- 0030. Burial Section M2, view looking northeast.
- 0031. 36th Infantry Division Monument, view looking northeast.
- 0032. 1st Marine Division Association Monument, view looking north.
- 0033. Committal Shelter C, view looking east.
- 0034. Committal Shelter C, view looking northwest.
- 0035. Burial Section N2 and Columbarium C8, view looking northwest.
- 0036. Burial Section N3, view looking northwest.
- 0037. Burial Section O and Columbaria C6 and C7, view looking southwest from Section N3.
- 0038. Burial Section N1, view looking north.
- 0039. Columbarium C6, view looking west.
- 0040. Detention Pond 4A, view looking northwest.
- 0041. Gravesite Locator Kiosk, view looking north.
- 0042. Texans Korean War Veterans Monument, view looking south.

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0043. Detention Pond 4C and Columbarium C2, view looking southeast.

0044. Detention Pond 4D, view looking south.

0045. Burial Section O, view looking south.

0046. Transformer Pad and Pump House No. 2, view looking northeast.

Photographer: Mat Williams

Date Photographed: July 21, 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0047. Public Information Center with the Service Seal Wall in the background, view looking southeast

0048. Service Seal Wall, view looking east

0049. Maintenance Storage Building, view looking southwest

0050. Maintenance Storage Building, view looking southeast

0051. Soils Storage Building, view looking west

0052. Columbaria (C14-17), view looking west

0053. Columbaria (C14-17), view looking southwest

0054. Committal Shelter D, view looking east

0055. Committal Shelter D, elevation view looking southeast

0056. Detention Pond in the former stock tank area, view looking east

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Kathleen Schamel, Federal Preservation Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs

street & number 810 Vermont Avenue, NW (003C2) telephone (202) 632-5529

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20420

Paperwork Reduction 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. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.