



## ***Moving Stones: Replacing Illegible Grave Markers***

### **VA Form VA40-1330**

Two Page Document	Requires Veteran's Information (DOB, DOD, Service Records)	Requests Applicant's Name & Contact Information
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### **Who Can Apply to VA Form 40-1330?**

Any individual—regardless of whether they are related to the veteran or not—can apply for veterans who served **prior to** April 6, 1917, to receive a VA grave marker. This means that Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican-American War, Civil War, & Spanish-American War are eligible, as well as any other service members from pre-1917.

### **Veteran's Information (Sections 1-18)**

On VA Form VA40-1330, there are 18 sections that require information about the veteran. Necessary details include the veteran's name, ethnicity, branch of service, dates entered/separated from the military, DOD/DOB, etc.

### **A Note About Grave Markers (Section 15)**

In the past, I was told historical service members (those who served pre-1917) were eligible for upright granite and upright marble markers *only*. Upright marble is more traditional in regards to national cemeteries. However, upright granite markers typically require less routine cleaning.

### **A Note About Emblems of Belief (Section 17)**

Applicants can choose from a slew of belief emblems for the veteran. Unless one knows the veteran's beliefs with 100% certainty, it may be best to select that no emblem is needed. Of course, that's completely up to the applicant's best judgement!

### **Applicant's Information & Cemetery Details (Sections 19-35)**

These sections of the form require information about the applicant *and* details about the cemetery (including the caretaker and the burial ground's address, if applicable). Most of the information required is basic, requesting the applicant's address, phone number, email address, etc. If the cemetery does **not** have a caretaker, a local official (magistrate, mayor, representative/senator, etc.) can sign section 31 on the form.

### **Supporting Documents Needed Include:**

Pictures of Grave Marker (Depicting Its Illegibility And/Or Other Issues)	Military Records (Discharge Certificate, Pension, Muster Roll, Etc.)	Letter Stating Why The Soldier Needs A New Marker ( <i>Optional, But Encouraged</i> )
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### **Mail Your Application To**

NCA FP Evidence Intake Center  
PO Box 5237  
Janesville, WI 53547

### **Now What?**

Within A Few Weeks Or Months, Expect A "Snail Mail" Or Emailed Response	Your Application Will Be Either Approved Or Denied
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### **If It's Approved:**

Congratulations—your hard work and dedication paid off!

### **If It's Denied:**

Take heart—you have the opportunity to appeal VA's decision!

### **Appeal Tips**

You'll Likely Have One Year To Appeal	Good Grammar Is Vital	Be Concise
Add Adequate Information	Be Polite (No Foul Language, Anger, Etc.)	Keep Your Appeal To One Page

### **Basic Appeal Template**

[Date here, including month/day/year]

[Salutation here, like “Dear Board of Veteran Affairs’ Staff” or “To Whom It May Concern”]

[Place the body of the text here, sharing a few lines—or paragraphs—about why the veteran needs a new headstone. For example, describe that it is broken, illegible, etc.]

[Add a thank you, such as, “Thank you for your time and careful consideration.”]

[Close with “Best,” “Sincerely,” etc.]

[Sign your name and note your relation to the veteran, like “John Smith, Jesse Christmas’s Grandson”]

### **After Mailing Your Appeal**

You’ll wait a few *more* weeks or months for a final decision! Your appeal can be accepted (yay!) or denied. If the appeal is denied, you can still privately purchase a grave marker (Etsy offers very affordable options) or collect donations so that you don’t bear the financial costs alone.

### **Installing Veteran Affairs’ Grave Markers - Option One**

1. Dig A Hole To Put The Marker In & Fill The Surrounding Hole With Dry Concrete	2. Moisture From The Ground (And Rain) Will Harden The Concrete—Your Marker Will Be All Set!
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### **Installing Veteran Affairs’ Grave Markers - Option Two**

1. Build A Wooden Base That Comes Out A Few Inches More Than The Grave Marker (About 4 In. Or So All The Way Around). The Base Should Be Close To A Foot High	2. Drive About An 18 In. Piece Of Rebar Into The Ground, At Diagonal Corners Of The Grave Marker. Drive The Rebar About 10 In. In The Ground (So 8 In. Above Ground, Inside Of Form)
3. Take Layers Of Foam, Slightly Taller Than The Form And About 1 In. Wider & Longer Than The Stone, & Place In Form’s Center	4. Pour Mixed Concrete Into The Form. Make Sure There Are No Air Voids In The Concrete, Pour To Top Of Form, & Level Off
5. <i>Allow At Least 48 Hrs. For Concrete To Cure</i> —Remove The Foam (It May Need To Be Chipped Away)	6. Remove The Wooden Form & Place The Stone In The Cavity Left By The Foam, Making Sure It’s Level & Plumb

7. Mix Mortar & Fill Up The Space In Between Stone & Concrete Form, Making Sure There Are No Air Spaces	8. Cover Top Of Form With Thin Layer Of Mortar & Smooth Until It Is Visually Pleasing To You
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### Pros of Option One Installations

Easier	Less Concrete	Less Time	No Wood Required	Immediate Install
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### Pros of Option Two Installations

More Professional-Looking	Keeps Stones Safer During Maintenance
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### 17 Stones Later: What I've Learned

<i>Always</i> Read Stones Before Installing Them	To Save Time, Send Plenty Of Military Records With The Initial Application
Seriously Consider Whether Marble Or Granite Best Fits Your Cleaning Needs	The Process Takes Some Time, Especially When Appealing And Installing

### VA Form VA40-1330 Is So Worth It

<p>From filling out the initial application to setting the grave marker, the process of making sure veterans' graves are properly marked takes quite a bit of time...as in <i>months</i>. But that doesn't mean I've ever regretted the time and dedication required to use VA Form VA40-1330 to procure new headstones for past service members! In fact, whether I was setting a stone for my 4th great grandfather or a veteran I'm not even related to, I've found this to be one of my favorite projects—probably because it's incredibly worthwhile to honor our forebears and ensure their memory is preserved for future generations!</p>
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### Helpful Links

<p>VA Form VA40-1330 (<a href="https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-40-1330/">https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-40-1330/</a>)  <i>This link will take you to a page with additional information, plus you'll find the form that you can print and fill out.</i></p>
<p>Fold3 (<a href="https://www.fold3.com/">https://www.fold3.com/</a>)  <i>Fold3 offers millions of military records! When you need to print military documents that prove the veteran served, Fold3's wide selection of Revolutionary War, War of 1812, and Civil War records (among others) should be a big help.</i></p>
<p>Find a Grave (<a href="https://www.findagrave.com/">https://www.findagrave.com/</a>)</p>

*If you're really serious about finding veterans in your community whose headstones are in poor condition, Find a Grave can help you find cemeteries to visit in your region. While there, you'll likely find a veteran (or two...or five!) who needs a new VA headstone.*

Trigard Memorials: How to Install a Flat Grave Marker

(<https://www.trigardmemorials.com/blog/how-to-install-a-flat-grave-marker/>)

*In this presentation, I focused on installing upright marble/granite headstones, since that's what historic service members are eligible to receive. However, if you're applying for a more recent veteran and want to apply for/install a flat grave marker, this website offers helpful information.*


Kentucky Living: Giving Voice to History


(<https://www.kentuckyliving.com/news/giving-voice-to-history>)

*Back in 2019, I was featured in Kentucky Living Magazine for my efforts to preserve the past, with a specific focus on my mission to mark veterans' graves. This article has some additional information about my past projects (those that were pre-2019).*



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