

# FORT SAM HOUSTON NATIONAL CEMETERY





# Overview

## Message from the Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery Staff

Welcome to Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. We hope you find peace amid these quiet and beautiful grounds and visit us again.

Families often contact us during a difficult time - after the loss of a loved one.

We're here to make the burial process as comfortable as possible. We encourage Veterans and their families to talk with us in advance for information or about any questions or concerns.

When the time comes, we will ensure the committal service and any other requests are handled respectfully. We pledge to honor the dignity and memory of each person and to provide excellent service to family and friends during this difficult time.

### *Our Mission*

The National Cemetery Administration honors Veterans with final resting places in national shrines and with lasting tributes that commemorate their service to our nation.



- The first interment was in 1926. It became known as Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery in 1937.
- The cemetery serves over 154,071 Veterans and their families and has conducted 143,466 interments as of October 2014.
- Situated on 338.0 acres, the cemetery accommodates casketed and cremated remains.
- Approximately 3,900 burials are conducted each year.
- Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery also maintains San Antonio and Kerrville National Cemeteries.
- It is the eighth busiest national cemetery in the country.
- Thirteen Medal of Honor recipients, 384 general officers, 27 Buffalo Soldiers, the Fourth Sergeant Major of the Army, and one U.S. Congressman are buried here.



# Making Burial Arrangements

The funeral home or next-of-kin should contact the National Cemetery Scheduling Office to make burial arrangements for Veterans and/or their eligible dependents.

The funeral home should fax all available military discharge documents to the scheduling office at (866) 900-6417 and follow up with a call to (800) 535-1117. If military discharge documents are not available, scheduling office representatives will assist the funeral home or next-of-kin with the verification process. This process may require 48 hours or more to determine eligibility for burial in a national cemetery.

The scheduling office will be open seven (7) days a week, from 7 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Central time, except for Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day.

Please contact the cemetery directly to:

- Schedule active duty interments
- Schedule memorial services without interment
- Cancel or reschedule interments
- Change information initially provided to the scheduling office
- Request disinterment or relocation of remains

Burial benefits provided by the National Cemetery Administration, at no cost to the Veteran, include: burial plot; opening and closing of the gravesite; a government liner; headstone or marker with inscription; interment flag; perpetual care of the gravesite; and a Presidential Memorial Certificate. Funeral director's services are not covered.

Gravesites are assigned by the cemetery and cannot be selected in advance. Assignments are made without regard to rank, ethnic or religious background, branch of service or other factors.

The Veteran and spouse are interred in the same grave. If both were Veterans, they may choose to be buried side-by-side in separate graves.

Military honors are provided by the Department of Defense and are to be arranged by the funeral director or next-of-kin. Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery has a volunteer Memorial Service Detachment, which is available upon request, to provide military honors for Veterans including a Rifle Salute and Taps.

Burials and interments are scheduled between 8:30 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except designated holidays. Out of respect for all persons buried at the cemetery the main flag is lowered to half-staff 30 minutes before the first service, where it remains until 30 minutes following the last service of the day.

Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery has the following burial site options:

- Casket: in-ground only
- Cremation: in-ground
- Cremation: above-ground columbarium

The administration office is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and closed on designated holidays.



## Floral Policy

**We welcome and encourage** fresh-cut and artificial flowers throughout the year and provide flower containers for gravesite display. Cemetery visitors are free to use the containers located in receptacles placed throughout the grounds. All items are removed from the graves on the first Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday of each month with the exception of January and February. Exceptions will also be made for certain holidays or religious observances falling on pick-up dates.

**During the holiday season**, from December 1st through January 20th, wreaths, gravesite blankets no larger than two feet by three feet, and seasonal decorations may be placed on gravesites.

**To maintain the dignity** of the cemetery, no items will be attached to a headstone, marker or niche cover in a national cemetery. In addition, commemorative items, balloons, pinwheels, glass items, votive lights, statues, shepherd's hooks and permanent plants, among other items, are not allowed. All unauthorized tributes will be removed by cemetery personnel.

**Due to the open** nature of the cemetery grounds, animals may eat fresh flowers and arrangements. Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery is not responsible for lost or stolen items.



## History and Background

As early as 1846, San Antonio residents attempted to establish a permanent military facility in their town. During the Mexican War, the U.S. Army established a quartermaster depot at San Antonio and a training camp at San Pedro Spring. In 1849, San Antonio was named the headquarters of the U.S. Army, Eighth Military District and the Alamo was leased from the Catholic Church to use as a storage facility.

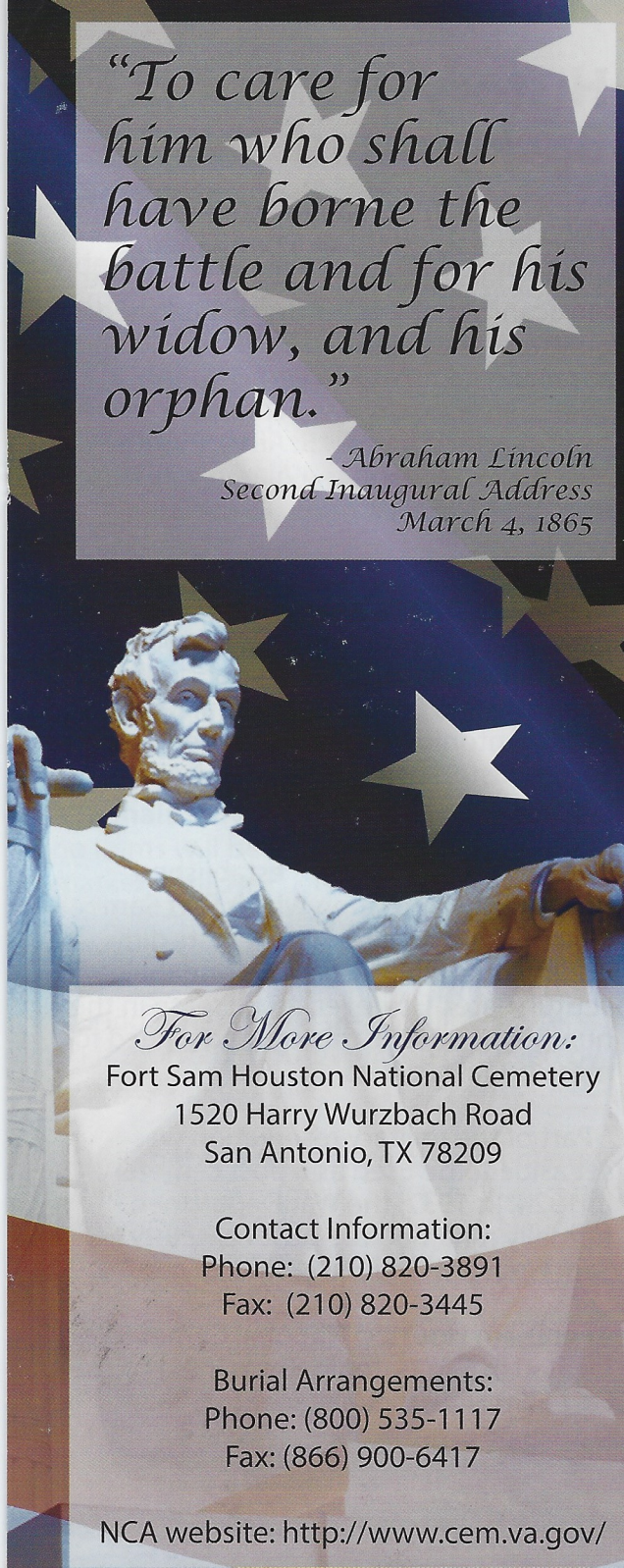
Despite a formal request for an Army post in 1870, funds were not given until 1875, and construction did not begin until June 1876. In 1890, the military post at San Antonio was re-designated Fort Sam Houston by President Benjamin Harrison.

Although the post was established in 1875, the land upon which Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery rests did not become a burial ground until half a century later. However, an increase in the number of post deaths created a need for more burial facilities.

Part of the military reservation was set aside to be used as a post cemetery in 1924. In 1937, the War Department formally renamed the post cemetery Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery.

Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery is located in San Antonio, Texas, next to the Fort Sam Houston Military Post.





*“To care for  
him who shall  
have borne the  
battle and for his  
widow, and his  
orphan.”*

*- Abraham Lincoln  
Second Inaugural Address  
March 4, 1865*

*For More Information:*

Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery  
1520 Harry Wurzbach Road  
San Antonio, TX 78209

Contact Information:

Phone: (210) 820-3891

Fax: (210) 820-3445

Burial Arrangements:

Phone: (800) 535-1117

Fax: (866) 900-6417

NCA website: <http://www.cem.va.gov/>







# Visiting the Cemetery

**Hundreds of thousands of people visit** Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery each year. Many come for a committal service or to visit the gravesite of a loved one, others to attend special observances or to enjoy the peaceful setting. We welcome all visitors to this shrine for our nation's heroes.

**The cemetery is open to the public** daily sunrise to sunset for visitation of the cemetery grounds. Specific gravesites can be found using the automated gravesite locator kiosks, located on the front porch of the former administration building and on outside of the new administration office. A nationwide Gravesite Locator for national cemeteries is also available on the Internet at <http://www.cem.va.gov>.

**General cemetery information** is available in the administration building. The public restrooms are located behind the former administrative building at the Main Entrance. Roadway parking is available throughout the cemetery and near the committal shelter during services.

**Visitors attending committal services** will find the daily service schedule posted outside the former administration office or at the funeral procession check-point. Special observances and ceremonies are held at the Assembly Area.

**A Memorial Day** ceremony is held annually the last Monday in May. For schedule of this ceremony, call the cemetery office at (210) 820-3891.

**In an effort to improve** the overall appearance of VA cemeteries, in 2009 VA decided to discontinue the use of black lettering on government headstones. We are convinced that as Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery adheres to this policy, the result over time will lead to a more uniform and beautiful appearance at one of America's greatest national shrines.

**While we invite visitors** to Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, we remind them of its solemn purpose and ask that they act in a dignified manner while on the cemetery grounds. For this reason, public gatherings of a partisan nature are not permitted. In addition, sports or recreational activities are not permitted, including:

- Bicycle riding
- Jogging
- Picnicking
- Roller blading
- Walking of pets
- Fishing or hunting

