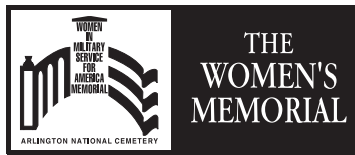


## Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

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### **Brief History of the Women's Memorial**

#### **Honoring Military Women—Past, Present and Future**

Duty. Honor. Pride. These words reflect the spirit of generations of Americans who have sought to defend the rights and freedom of others. At the Women In Military Service For America Memorial, these words come to life in the stories and memories of the nearly two million women who have served in defense of our nation. The Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc., the non-profit organization established to build the memorial, continues to raise the funds needed to operate and maintain the Memorial Education Center. Led by retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma L. Vaught, the Foundation broke ground on June 22, 1995, for the only major national memorial in our nation's history to honor and pay tribute to all service-women of the United States armed forces—past, present and future. Dedication was October 18, 1997. The Women's Memorial officially opened to the public on October 20, 1997.

The history of women in the armed forces began more than 220 years ago with the women who served during the American Revolution and continues through the present day. The Women's Memorial honors all the women who have served courageously, selflessly and with dedication in times of conflict and in times of peace—women whose achievements have for too long been unrecognized or ignored.

#### **The Site and Design**

The Foundation sought the existing Ceremonial Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery as the site for the Women's Memorial; and in 1988, the request was unanimously approved by the National Capital Memorial Commission, the National Capital Planning Commission and the Fine Arts Commission. The famed architecture firm of McKim, Mead and White of New York City designed the original gateway structures. The gateway was never completed and had been neglected since its dedication in 1932. The Foundation's mission became one of restoring and transforming this imposing four-acre site, preserving the existing structure while simultaneously creating an inspirational and dynamic memorial that educates as well as honors.

A national competition was conducted for a design concept for the Memorial and in November 1989, the design of Marion Gail Weiss and Michael Manfredi was selected from the more than 130 submitted. The National Capital Planning Commission and the Fine Arts Commission voted unanimously for final approval of the design on April 6, 1995.

The Memorial site is the 4.2-acre Ceremonial Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery. A 30-foot high curved neoclassical retaining wall stands at the entrance. Ms. Weiss and Mr. Manfredi's splendid design placed the 33,000 square-foot Education Center in the cemetery hillside behind the existing retaining wall. The Memorial incorporates a reflecting pool on the plaza in front of the curved gateway, or hemicycle, with an arc of glass tablets on the upper terrace.

The Memorial's roof is an arc of glass tablets, 250 feet in diameter, inscribed with quotations by and about women who have served in defense of their country. Sunlight passing over these quotes creates changing shadows of the texts on the walls of the gallery below and brings natural light into the interior of the Education Center. The glass tablets illuminate the cemetery hillside at night and during the day, serve as skylights to the interior of the Education Center, which houses the Hall of Honor, exhibits and artifacts of women's military service, a 196-seat theater, a gift shop and the Memorial's computerized Register. Four staircases pass through the hemicycle wall, allowing visitors access to a panoramic view of Washington, DC, from the terrace.

Described by The Washington Post architecture critic Ben Forgey as "a perfect gesture in a proper place at a fitting moment," the multi-award-winning design for the Women's Memorial has been hailed as an elegant solution to integrating an exciting new purpose with an existing, historic structure.

The Register, which serves as the "heart" of the Women's Memorial, is a computerized database of information about the women who are registered. Visitors can access the photographs, military histories, and individual stories of registrants by simply typing names into a computer terminal. The Register serves as an active resource, creating an on-going record of history as it is made. The Foundation is actively seeking to register as many veterans, Active Duty, National Guard and Reserve servicewomen as possible. (Women from service organizations who served overseas during time of war, as well as Cadet Nurses, are also eligible.) Approximately 250,000 of the 2 million women eligible have been registered thus far.

#### **Support**

The Women's Memorial was authorized by Congress and is supported by the Departments of Defense, Transportation and Veterans Affairs. Legislation passed in 1986 stated that the Memorial had to be built with non-federal funds. With the exception of federal grants to restore the existing structure and to complete the Memorial, the Memorial has been financed solely through private donations. Thus far, notable donors include foreign and state governments, leading corporations, veterans organizations, a number of foundations and individuals. Proceeds from the sale of a commemorative coin are a continuing resource.

The Foundation has a National Tribute Committee whose members include current and former members of Congress, governors, corporate leaders, and government and civic leaders. Active support for the Memorial is also demonstrated by the prestigious National Sponsors Committee, made up of all living former Presidents and Secretaries of Defense. State chairs have been appointed in key states to lead the effort to locate, register and honor servicewomen and women veterans throughout the nation. State chairs work in coordination with the Foundation's volunteer force of field representatives, which number approximately 1,800.

The Women's Memorial preserves an important legacy for all generations by capturing the undocumented history of our American servicewomen. It is a place of honor for those who served in the past, those who serve today, and those who will serve in the future.

### **Memorial Drive**

The entrance to Arlington National Cemetery extends across the Potomac River to the Lincoln Memorial at the eastern edge of Memorial Bridge.

Memorial Drive, Memorial Bridge and the magnificent Hemicycle and Court entrance to the cemetery were designed as a single project, dedicated together on January 16, 1932, by President Herbert Hoover.

Memorial Bridge was intended as a symbolic link, binding together what had been the Civil War's North and South into one great Union. The theme of national unity was continued when architects McKim, Meade and White designed the bridge to extend along an axis joining two great symbols of our nation: the Lincoln Memorial and the Robert E. Lee Memorial at Arlington House in Arlington National Cemetery.

Connecting the bridge to the cemetery gates is a parkway known as Memorial Drive. Along this parkway is a traffic circle intersection with the George Washington Memorial Parkway. At night, as visitors approach Arlington Cemetery along Memorial Drive, the eternal flame that marks President John F. Kennedy's grave is visible on the hillside.

There are monuments located along Memorial Drive that are not formally part of Arlington National Cemetery. These include the Seabees Memorial, the United Spanish War Veterans Memorial, the monument to Admiral Richard Byrd, the 101st Airborne Division Memorial, the Mechanized Armor Memorial and the 4th Infantry Division Memorial.

Memorial Drive ends in a sculpted court, now part of the Women's Memorial, that had been partially excavated from the steep hillside below Arlington House.

### **The Niche**

At the western end of the court is a semicircular retaining wall, the Hemicycle, which rises 30 feet and is 226 feet long. In the center of this wall is a large semicircular niche which measures 20 feet across and 30 feet high. The basic building materials of the Hemicycle are reinforced concrete, faced with Mount Airy granite. The thickness of the wall ranges from 2'-6" to 3'-6". The Central Niche contains accent panels and coffers of red Texas granite. In the center of the niche is a bas-relief of the Great Seal of the United States. On either side of the Great Seal are the seals of the Department of the Army and the Department of the Navy, with the Army on the south side and the Navy on the north.

### **Ceremonial Gateway**

From the court, roads lead both north and south through a pair of large, ornate, wrought iron gates. The set of gates on the north is called Schley Gate after Admiral Winfield Scott Schley. The set on the south side, Roosevelt Gate, is named in honor of President Theodore Roosevelt. At the center of each gate is mounted a gold wreath, thirty inches in diameter. Set within each wreath is a shield with the seal of one of the military services. On the Roosevelt Gate are the seals for the US Marine Corps and the US Army. Mounted on the Schley Gate are the US Navy and the US Coast Guard. (When the gates were installed, the United States Air Force was still a branch of the Army, so its seal does not appear.)

### **Symbols and Architectural Detailing**

The Classical Revival style of the Hemicycle and gates makes use of many symbols and architectural detailing deep-rooted in the Greek and Roman periods.

The wrought iron gates contain many decorative elements easily identified with the Classical period. Examples include the Acanthus leaf and honeysuckle ornament, helmet of Minerva (Athena) and the Roman pike used as pickets.

The Hemicycle is composed of base, pier or pilaster, spandrel, architrave, frieze and cornice. The upper terrace is outlined by the turned balusters of the upper balustrade. The central niche contains every element expected in this style of architecture. A pediment proportioned in the method of Vitruvius tops this composition.

Decorative elements include the symbolic laurel and oak leaf wreaths used to symbolize valor and sacrifice. There are Greek key patterns, rosettes, tridents and faces. The ceremonial urns topping the pylons recall Roman sacrificial urns. The heroic sculpted eagles at the gatehouses are commonly associated with classical Rome as well as being the symbol of the United States.

Memorial Bridge, Memorial Drive, the Women's Memorial and other monuments which line that drive, the cemetery entrance and Arlington House all fall within the jurisdiction of the National Park Service, US Department of the Interior.