



United States Department of the Interior



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Southeast Regional Office
Atlanta Federal Center
1924 Building
100 Alabama St., S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

IN REPLY REFER TO:
SER-RD

JUL 09 2010

Mr. William L. McNeese
P.O. Box 16225
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00909-6225

Dear Mr. McNeese,

Thank you for your letter of June 7, 2010, to National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis regarding your great-great-grandfather's grave marker at Andersonville National Cemetery, managed as part of Andersonville National Historic Site in Georgia. I have been asked to respond on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS).

We thank you very much for providing the additional information on Samuel W. McNeese in your letter and its attachments. The McNeese family history reflects a great pioneer spirit and a tremendous sense of duty to country. With your permission, we would like to add these documents to the library at the National Prisoner of War Museum at Andersonville National Historic Site (NHS). There they will be preserved and made available for the educational benefit of students, researchers, general visitors and, most importantly, to descendants of Samuel McNeese such as yourself. Additionally, based on your research, we will also correct the spelling of Samuel W. McNeese's name in the Prisoner of War database maintained by Andersonville NHS.

Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate your request to change the name on the headstone. Based on the National Park Service's mandate to preserve historic resources, headstones that are representative of a cemetery's period of significance (Civil War headstones in the case of Andersonville) are to be treated as historic objects and preserved whenever possible. The NPS policy (Director's Order #61, National Cemetery Operations), closely follows the policy of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs policy, National Cemetery Administration (NCA). The NCA's Notice 2004-06 (Headstone/Marker Replacement) states the following:

"NCA furnishes headstones and markers for eligible veterans and dependents. Government-furnished headstones and markers, although used to mark individual graves, remain the property of the United States government. In recent months NCA has seen an increase in requests from the public to replace historic headstones or markers, predominantly from the Civil War era. These inquiries are often based on a desire to "correct" information inscribed during the 19th century, and/or to add new information

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found through modern research. Neither of these reasons is valid justification for replacing historic headstones or markers. The existing inscriptions were based on information available at the time the headstone or marker was furnished, and the existing headstones and markers are collectively part of a historic cemetery landscape.

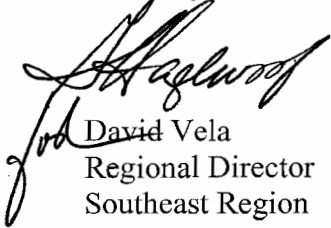
Error of Fact

The "Error of Fact" policy letter issued by the Director, Field Operations, on May 12, 1989, provided guidance for ensuring that correct data was inscribed on headstones and markers for eligible decedents. The letter stated that replacements for error of fact for headstones or markers furnished prior to March 11, 1987, could be made only upon specific request by the decedent's next of kin. This NCA notice rescinds the 1989 letter and allows replacement for error of fact only upon request by the next of kin, authorized representative, or other individual with written consent of the next of kin. **NOTE:** For headstones/markers placed in national cemeteries, next of kin is considered to be the individual identified as next of kin on the Record of Interment (hard copy or electronic) when the last interment took place."

We wish we could accommodate your request. Our mission, however, is to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources, including historic cemeteries, under our care. We arrived at this cemetery policy after much careful thought and deliberation, and it reflects our fundamental dedication to remembering our nation's veterans and preserving history.

While we regret that we will not be able to change Samuel McNeese's grave marker, we join you in honoring his memory and sacrifice. Our mission at Andersonville NHS is to preserve the historic resources entrusted to our care, and to tell the history of American Prisoners of War. This includes the story of your great-great-grandfather and the other 13,000 Union soldiers who perished at Andersonville Prison. We also honor the service of the 7,000 additional veterans who have chosen Andersonville National Cemetery as their final resting place since the end of the Civil War. Thank you for your concern for Andersonville National Historic Site and your interest in the National Park Service.

Sincerely,


David Vela
Regional Director
Southeast Region

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