



**REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERY  
IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION  
30 YEARS OF HISTORY  
1984 to 2014**

**Formed to preserve and expand the  
FAYETTEVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY  
Fayetteville, Arkansas**

## DEDICATED

To the Veterans who saw the need in 1984 to purchase land adjacent to the Fayetteville National Cemetery to prevent the Cemetery from being closed to Veteran burials.

REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT CORP.

30 YEARS OF HISTORY

1984 to 2014

Written and edited by Lorna Sterrett and Jake Lamkins

All information has been obtained from letters, newspaper articles, and documents on file, and restated to the best of our knowledge and ability. The official emblem of the RNCIC on the cover of this history was designed by Peggy McClain.

History Committee:

Lorna Sterrett, Chair

Jake Lamkins

Merle Williams

Peggy McClain

Gary Culp

## FOREWORD

In 1865 during President Lincoln's second inaugural address he promised to the country, *"to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan."* Because of this promise to America, 14 national cemeteries were established which were the beginning of today's National Cemetery Administration. In 1867, Fayetteville National Cemetery was created because of the historic civil war battles in the area.

Fayetteville National Cemetery has a long involved history with the people of Northwest Arkansas and is truly part of the fabric that is the quilt of American history. Almost 10,000 Veterans and their spouses, including the more than 800 unknown Union Soldiers have been laid to rest at historic Fayetteville National Cemetery since its' inception in 1867. There is no other organization in America that supports their national cemetery like the RNCIC does. The mission and goal of the RNCIC is to make certain "heroes of America" past, present and future, know that they will never be forgotten and to especially remember the sacrifices they made so we can be the America we are today.

The Northwest Arkansas community should be proud of the commitment and dedication of the RNCIC. Through their exemplary efforts by continuing to donate land to Fayetteville National Cemetery, there will always be a final resting place in Fayetteville that honors the truest of American heroes and their family members.

I applaud the outstanding accomplishments of this fine organization.

Thomas M. Ruck, Director

Fayetteville National Cemetery

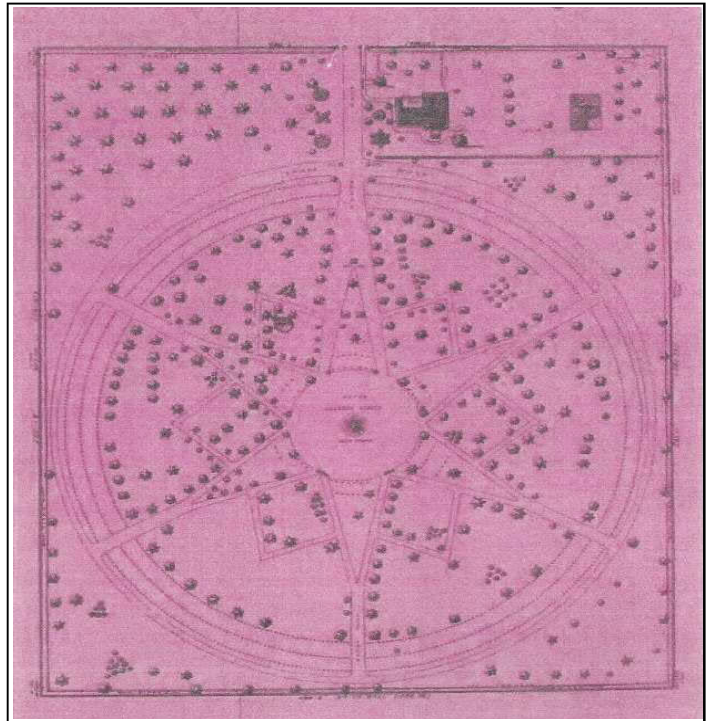
## HISTORY OF THE FAYETTEVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY

The Fayetteville National Cemetery is located on the south side of Fayetteville, Arkansas, at 700 Government Avenue, about one mile southwest of the old courthouse. Although Frank Pierce, a hunter and trapper, first visited what became the Fayetteville area in 1819, the town was not officially settled until 1828. Within a year, however, residents had built a courthouse and a post office and by 1835 it was officially designated a town. Subsequently, Fayetteville was surveyed, divided into lots and sold at public auction, and by 1841 had a population of around 400 people. The Cemetery land had previously been called Gallows Hill because the county's gallows had been maintained there prior to the Civil War.

By the beginning of the Civil War Fayetteville had become a prosperous community. One Union soldier described it as, "a beautiful little hamlet nestling among the foothills of the Ozark range....the chief education center of the state, the home of culture, refinement and that inborn hospitality so characteristic of the south." On April 18, 1863, the tranquility was interrupted by the fierce Battle of Fayetteville. Hoping to reverse the South's waning fortunes, Confederate General William Cabell led 900 cavalry north from Ozark to attack federal forces occupying Fayetteville. The initial strike surprised most of the Union soldiers, some of who were enjoying a dance at a private home several miles outside of town, and others who were asleep. The federal forces were able to quickly recover and primarily due to superior weapons, pushed back the Confederate charge.

On July 17, 1862, Congress enacted legislation that authorized the President of the United States to purchase "cemetery grounds" to be used as national cemeteries "for soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country." Fourteen cemeteries were established that first year. The Fayetteville National Cemetery was one of the 14 Federal Cemeteries authorized by President Abraham Lincoln for burial of Union soldiers who died during the Civil War.

In 1867 the first five acres for the National Cemetery were purchased from local residents David Walker and Stephen K. Stone, and in 1875 an additional 1.11 acres were purchased from them. The first burials were the remains disinterred from local



The original layout of the Cemetery, according to a sketch, is nearly square in shape and consists of an outer circle surrounding a six-pointed star with diamonds between the points of the star. A flagpole in the center formed the hub of a complete wagon wheel. There were 18 sections with an estimated capacity of 1,800 graves. Design changes made possible 3,688 more spaces, but no more land was added to the original six acres until the RNCIC began donating land in 1989.

Civil War battlefields such as the Battle of Elkhorn Tavern/Pea Ridge and Prairie Grove. Interments were originally made with the headstone and inscription facing the flagpole. An inspection report dated May 1871 states there were 1,210 interments in the Cemetery, "the greater portion being unknown white soldiers." When the new sections were added in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the placement of headstones was altered so that the inscriptions face the interred remains.

A four-foot high brick masonry wall surrounded the Cemetery with bricks that were made by hand on the Cemetery grounds in 1867 and 1868. By 1981 with expansion being contemplated, this wall was considered to visually isolate the Cemetery from adjacent parcels of land. Development outside the wall would not identify with the Cemetery. However, the wall was protected by the Historic Preservation Act, and would require a permit for removal or creation of opening in the existing wall.



National Cemetery at Fayetteville pictured in 1909  
(Photograph by Burch Grabill, Courtesy Charlie Alison)

Pictured are Milo Cumpston & Bruce Schaffer



The main entrance is located at the north side and is protected by a double iron gate supported by granite pillars built in 1940, with a pedestrian gate on each side. The older portion of the Cemetery is enclosed by ornamental metal picket fencing with brick columns. The only portion of the original brick wall that remains is at the main entrance between the main gate and the pedestrian gates on either side. The newer portion of the Cemetery is enclosed by black vinyl-clad chain link fencing. To the left and right of the entrance to the newer burial sections is ornamental metal picket fencing supported by brick pillars with pre-cast concrete caps.

The administration building constructed in 1997 is located to the east of the main entrance, and the service building complex is located in the southwest corner of the Cemetery. A committal service shelter is situated approximately in the center of the Cemetery to the west of the administration building. Graves are marked with upright marble headstones, except for Section 23, which is marked with flat granite markers.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE RNCIC

In April 1981 a staff member of Land Management Service, a VA Office of Construction, visited the Fayetteville National Cemetery. It was estimated then the Cemetery would have to close to new burials by August 1984. To the west of the Cemetery, separated by University Avenue (an unimproved dirt surface), were seven parcels of land – three vacant and four occupied by single family homes. Expansion to the west of the Cemetery was deemed feasible and favorable and would provide very suitable land for Cemetery enlargement.

In 1984 when the Cemetery was in danger of being closed to new burials due to lack of space, Mr. Ken Gibson, Col. Larry L. Browne, Jr., and Mr. John William (Bill) Murphy formed the REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION (RNCIC) under the Arkansas Non-Profit Corporation Act. It allowed donors to give tax-deductible gifts in whatever form. The petition was made and approved May 7, 1984.

Although the corporation's name, Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation, may seem unusual, it is derived from the National Cemeteries Act. of 1973 (PL 93-43) wherein the VA was authorized by Congress to acquire land and to construct **regional national cemeteries** in each of 10 standard federal regions. It did not, however, authorize funds to enlarge existing National Cemeteries, except through donations of land.

**The Mission of the newly formed RNCIC** was and is to raise money and gifts of property to enlarge the Fayetteville National Cemetery in order to keep it open to new burials for the foreseeable future.

Veterans living in Northwest Arkansas, as well as many living outside our region, have planned their final resting place here. This desire stems from having been born and raised in or close to Northwest Arkansas, having close family ties here, or having made their home in the area following their military service.

The RNCIC applied for and received an Arkansas Certificate of Incorporation of Domestic Non-Profit Corporation on October 19, 1984. A Certificate of Amendment was filed on May 23, 1985, with amendments to Article II (object and purposes) and Article IX (in the event of dissolution). The non-profit corporation was and is made up of all persons (Veterans and non-Veterans) interested in the expansion of the Fayetteville National Cemetery. All officers and members work without compensation.

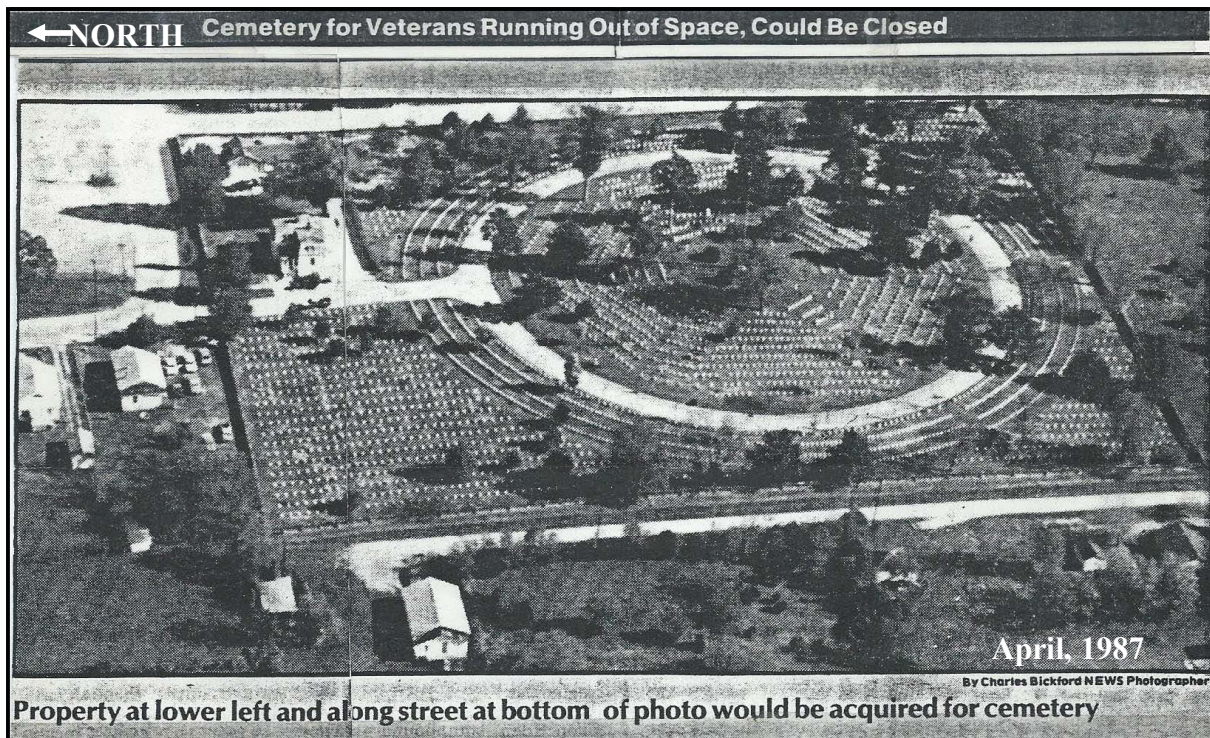
In October 1984 with full awareness of the dire situation at the Fayetteville National Cemetery, the RNCIC “went public” with a fund drive. Governor Bill Clinton was the primary speaker at the open meeting at the Fayetteville Hilton Hotel, during which information was presented on the status of the Cemetery, a proposed expansion area, and the status of preliminary negotiations for the acquisition of land.

The RNCIC began an extensive fund raising program requesting grants from neighboring counties and cities, contributions from Veteran organizations, and private individuals.

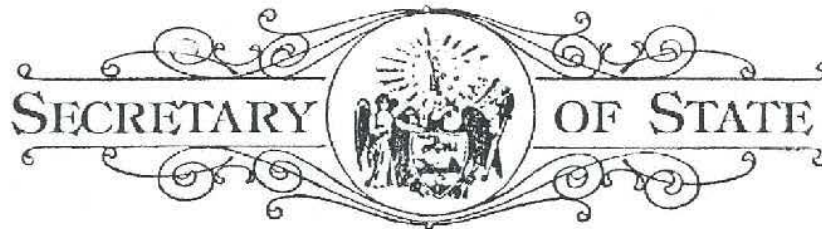
Following incorporation of the RNCIC in 1984 the frequency of the meetings could not be determined for a period of time. There were minutes of an **annual meeting** being held on July 5, 1985, at 16 E. Spring St. in Fayetteville at the offices of attorney



Pictured here are the **three original founders of the RNCIC**: Ken Gibson (died Feb. 1995), Col. Larry L. Browne, Jr. (for lack of a picture, his headstone at the FNC is pictured – died Sept. 1988), and John Murphy (died Jan. 2006).



STATE OF ARKANSAS



*Paul Riviere, Secretary of State*

CERTIFICATE OF INCORPORATION OF DOMESTIC  
NON-PROFIT CORPORATION

*I, Paul Riviere, Secretary of State of the  
State of Arkansas, Do Hereby Certify, that*  
REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETARY IMPROVEMENT CORP.

*has filed in the office of the Secretary of State, a duly  
certified copy of its Articles of Association in  
compliance with the provisions of the law, with their  
petition for incorporation under the name or style of*  
REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETARY IMPROVEMENT CORP.

*they are therefore hereby declared a body politic and  
corporate, by the name and style aforesaid, with all the  
powers, privileges and immunities granted in the law  
thereunto appertaining.*

*In Testimony Whereof,  
I have hereunto set my hand and  
affixed my official Seal*

*This 19th day of October 19 84*

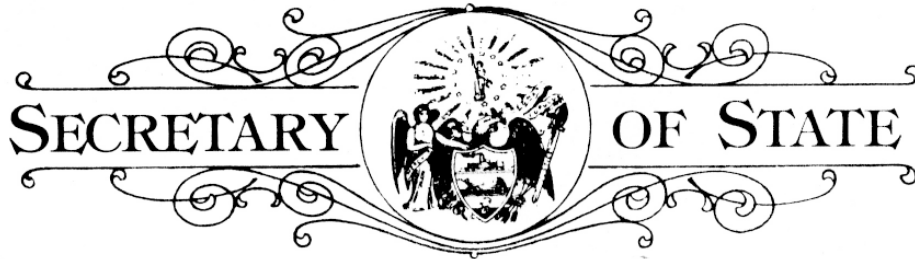
PAUL RIVIERE

*Secretary of State*

*By [Signature] Deputy*



# STATE OF ARKANSAS



W. J. "Bill" McCuen

Secretary of State

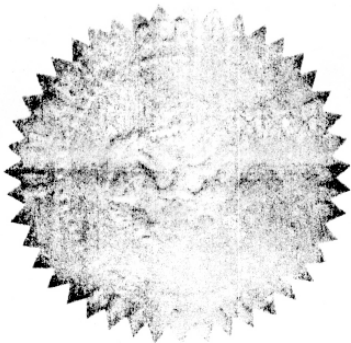
*To All to Whom These Presents Shall Come, Greeting:*

*I, Bill McCuen, Secretary of State of the State of Arkansas, do hereby certify that the following and hereto attached instrument of writing is a true and perfect copy of*

CERTIFICATE OF AMENDMENT

REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETARY IMPROVEMENT CORP.

Filed in this office:  
May 23, 1985



*In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto  
set my hand and affixed my official Seal.  
Done at office in the City of Little Rock.  
this 23rd day of May 19 85*

W. J. "BILL" McCUEN

*Secretary of State.*

*by*

*Deputy.*

John W. Murphy. Larry Browne, Jr., President, was Past State Commander of the American Legion; Ken Gibson, Secretary-Treasurer, was Veterans Service Officer for Washington County; and John Murphy was the Corporation Attorney.

The possibility of the Fayetteville National Cemetery closing in a few months was imminent. The RNCIC was still waiting on the IRS for the RNCIC's tax exempt number. Without that number the contributions would cease and there would be a possible loss of Veterans Administration support due to continued delays caused by the IRS. The RNCIC officers felt they had done everything in their power to satisfy the IRS, had furnished all information requested, and had been diligent in follow-up efforts with the IRS in an attempt to expedite the Tax Exempt Number. The RNCIC received its tax exempt status under section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Service code in a determination letter dated October 8, 1985.

In May 1987 it was discussed that a brief reprieve from closing the Cemetery would come from the destruction of the former caretaker's house also known as the "lodge." Destruction of the house would make room for approximately 135 burial plots, but that would last little more than a year, allowing additional time to raise money to purchase land. It wasn't until the fall of 1990 that the old caretaker's lodge or maintenance building was demolished.

The land remained vacant until August 1996 when the possibility of funding a columbarium for that location was discussed. In August 1997 construction began on the columbarium at the sight of the old lodge or maintenance building. The columbarium structures were started in October 1998, and in April 2000 the columbarium was finished and dedicated. It would allow for 1,200 cremations.

When the General LaFayette Chapter of the Sons of the American Revolution became aware of the fact that the National Cemetery in Fayetteville would soon be out of grave spaces, a committee was formed to assist the RNCIC, and had its first meeting on January 14, 1987. The SAR made a commitment to assist the RNCIC in fund raising. Elvie Heiney, SAR member said, "I don't care if it takes years, we're not going to give up on this. We will do it." This enabled the

RNCIC to purchase the first tract of land in 1989 to expand the FNC. Other RNCIC members in the SAR were Milo Cumpston and C. B. McClelland.

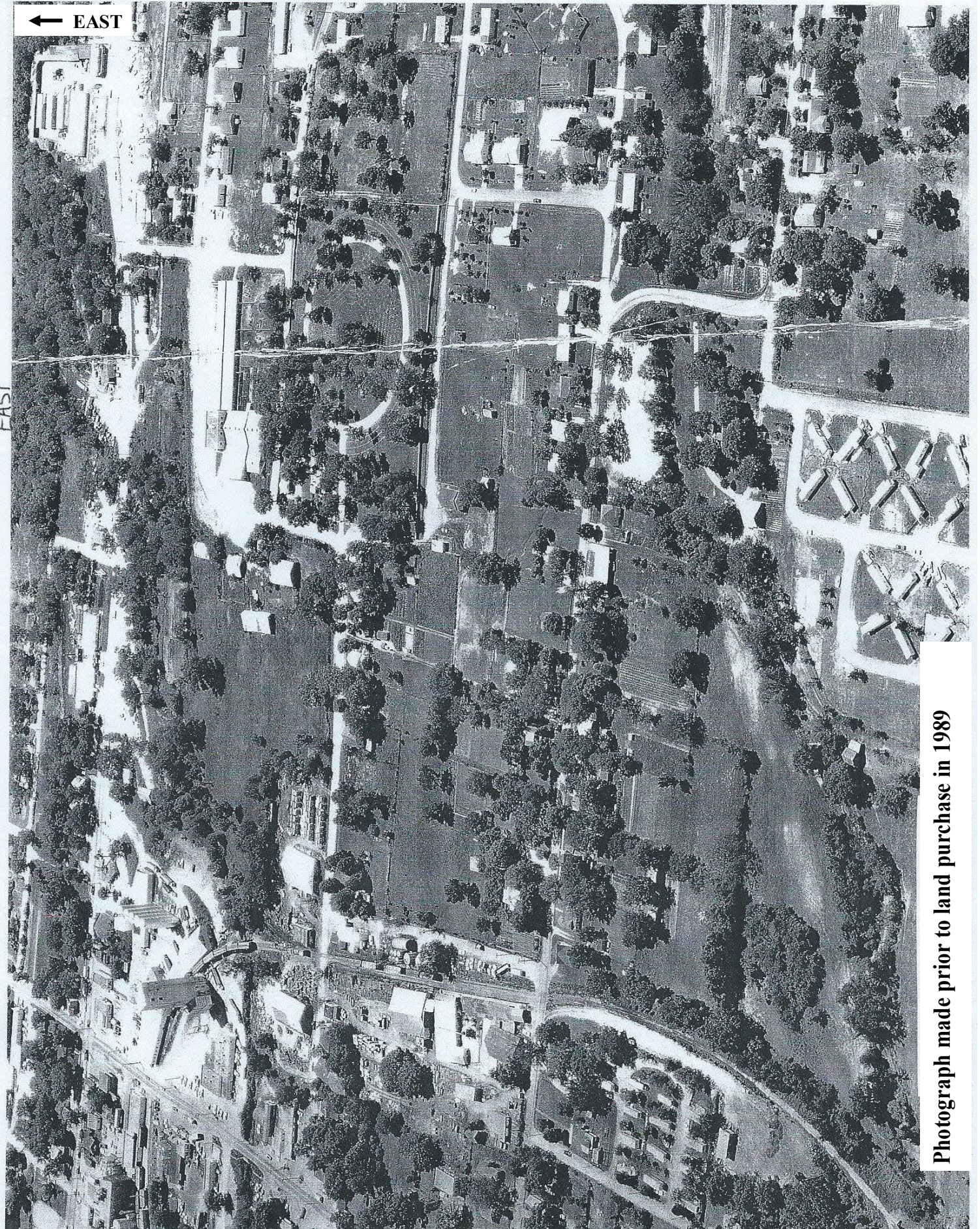
The RNCIC was reorganized January 31, 1989. Elvie Heiney was elected to replace the late Larry Browne, Jr. as President. Others elected were: James Clark, Vice President; Ken Gibson, Secretary-Treasurer; and John Murphy, Legal Advisor. Directors were: Milo Cumpston, Clement B. McClelland, Gene Jordan, Curtis (Bucky) Crouch, Jr., Marshall Sayner, and Hoy Haught. Minutes of the monthly meetings followed thereafter.

Meetings in the early years were held at the American Legion Hall, 28 So. College Ave. in Fayetteville as indicated by the letterhead stationery.



The American Legion Post 27 paid the initial expense of establishing the corporation and had been paying most of the administrative expenses for several years. At the Sept. 1991 RNCIC meeting, John Murphy made the motion that the American Legion Post 27 be relieved of the obligation of paying RNCIC's administrative Expense and that the RNCIC absorb these costs. The motion passed.

In July 1994 it was announced that the American Legion building at 28 So. College had been sold. By November of that year Sheriff McKee offered the use of the basement in the jail for the RNCIC meetings. From there the meetings moved to the maintenance building at the FNC in the spring of 1997. However, due to lack of room, the meetings were moved to the American Legion Post 27, 1195 So. Curtis Ave. in Fayetteville, beginning in January 1998. Members continue to meet there today.



Photograph made prior to land purchase in 1989

## THE MIDDLE YEARS OF THE RNCIC

The RNCIC, a group of veterans and concerned citizens, along with officials of the City of Fayetteville, Washington County, and the State of Arkansas, secured funds to purchase land adjacent to the Cemetery for its expansion. Early in 1991 the City of Fayetteville contributed \$12,500 to the RNCIC for the Cemetery expansion.

The RNCIC's purchase of the first tract of land was recorded at their February 11, 1989, meeting. It was recorded that two additional tracts of land had been purchased by June 1989 for expansion of the FNC. On Saturday, June 17, 1989, a press release to the news media stated that the first step in clearing these three tracts of land would be to raze the house located at 645 Government Ave.

On September 5, 1991, there was a Mortgage burning Ceremony as the loan from the Bank of Fayetteville was paid off. It marked the end of the first phase of enlarging the Cemetery. U.S. Congressman John Paul Hammerschmidt was on hand to congratulate the RNCIC with special recognition given to Elvie P. Heiney, RNCIC President, and Ken Gibson, RNCIC Secretary-Treasurer. Karen Browne, FNC Director, and John Lewis, Bank of Fayetteville Pres., were also in attendance. At the Ceremony it was said that this was an "auspicious day" in the long history of the National Cemetery in Fayetteville. This was truly a "sign of good Omen," a favorable sign that we will be successful in our mission to assure the continuation of this Cemetery.



L-R: John Paul Hammerschmidt, Elvie Heiney, Karen Browne, John Lewis



L-R: John Paul Hammerschmidt, Elvie Heiney, Karen Browne, John Lewis

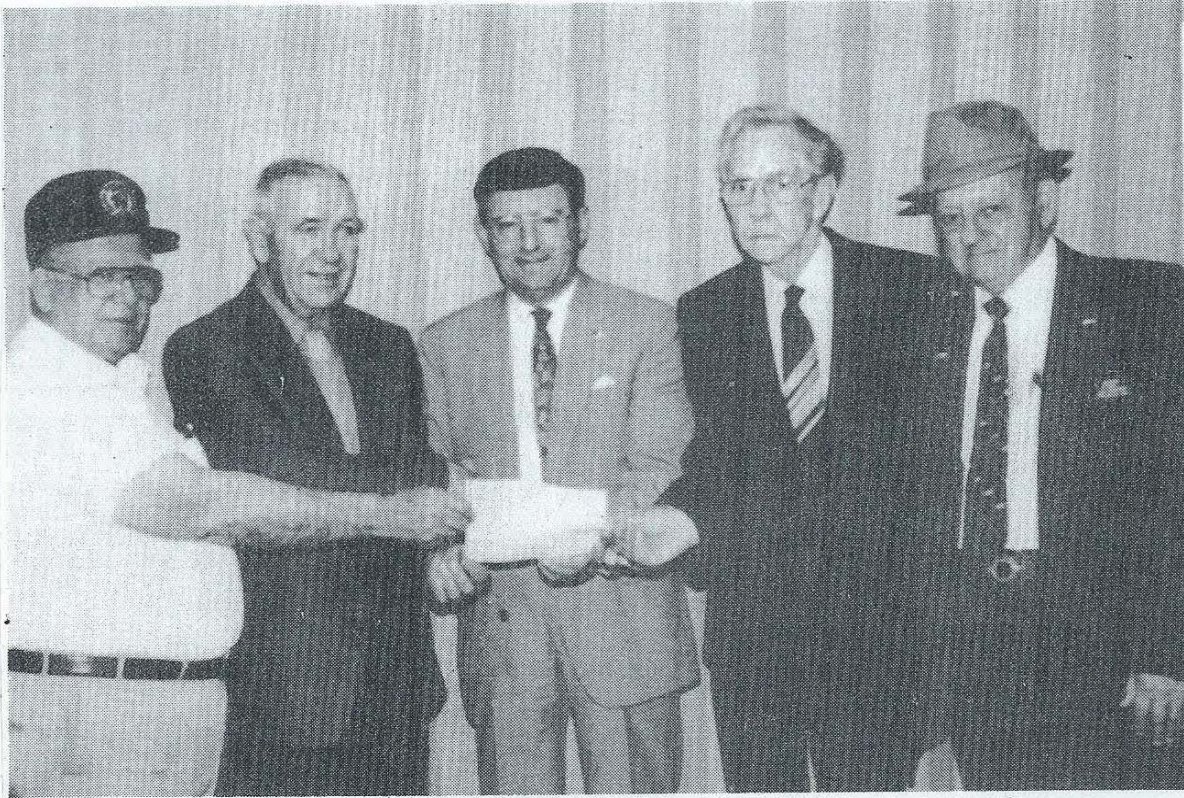


L-R: John Paul Hammerschmidt "striking the match," Karen Browne, Elvie Heiney receiving mortgage from John Lewis, and Gary Gartin



L-R: 3- J Clark, 4- H Haught, 5- J P Hammerschmidt, 6- R Melton, 7- E Heiney, 9- M Cumpston, 10- D Steele, Remainder—unidentified

# F'ville donates to cemetery improvement



Fayetteville mayor Fred Vorsanger, center, hands \$12,500 check to RNCIC president Elvie

Heiney as RNCIC officers James Clark, Ken Gibson and Milo Compston look on.



## Gadding about

**Hogeye**  
Vaunda Johnson,  
Hogeye,  
846-2497

**HOGYE** — The city of Fayetteville recently contributed \$12,500 to the Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation (RNCIC) bringing its total to \$25,000 for purchase of additional land to expand the National Cemetery in Fayetteville.

In 1989 the city also assisted in clearing and leveling 98 percent of an acre of land which the RNCIC donated to the Veterans Administration. Since then there have been 35 interments of veterans in this tract.

As of March 1990 there were about 30,000 veterans in the six-county Northwest Arkansas area eligible for burial in a National Cemetery. Also, due to their recent service on active duty, the 142nd Field Artillery Brigade and other Reserve and National Guard Units who served in Operation Desert Storm, will become eligible for burial in the National Cemetery.

Elvie Heiney, president of RNCIC, stated that though the VA will soon assist RNCIC in the purchase of certain tracts of land adjacent to the cemetery, \$50,000 will be needed to complete the project. Contributions are still needed and are tax deductible within the limits allowed by law. Please make checks payable to

RNCIC, P.O. Box 4221, Fayetteville, Ark. 72702. Call Elvie Heiney at 442-2389 with any questions, or write to him at 5688 E. Huntsville Rd., Fayetteville, Ark., 72701.

The recent contribution fulfills the request made to the Washington County area for a total of \$65,000.

However, none of the following counties and larger cities in each of them have answered requests made by the RNCIC: Benton County, nor Rogers,

L-R in photo: RNCIC Officer, Milo Compston; RNCIC President, Elvie Heiney; Fayetteville Mayor, Fred Vorsanger; RNCIC Vice President, James Clark; and RNCIC Secretary-Treasurer, Ken Gibson.

The Navy SeaBee Battalion stationed in Fayetteville volunteered to raze all structures and do the ground leveling. Major equipment items were furnished by Washington County. Usable materials were donated to the Washington County Rural Fire Dept. for use in a planned community building at Black Oak Road and Ed Edwards Road. **The first land donation to the VA** and the dedication ceremony was held **August 1, 1989**, with approximately one acre of land (three tracts containing approximately 41,000 sq. ft.).

### THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND NATIONAL CEMETERIES

Time was running out quickly for the Fayetteville National Cemetery. The Federal Cemetery officials would not reopen a cemetery once they had closed it. The situation had reached the critical stage.

In accordance with the National Cemeteries Act of 1973, responsibility for the national cemeteries was moved from the U.S. Army to the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The federal government will not purchase land for expansion of any existing national cemetery; however, they will accept donations of land providing it is contiguous to such a cemetery. It must be raw land devoid of all structures, utilities, and septic tanks. After acquiring property for use by the Cemetery the RNCIC must arrange and pay for such removals before acceptance by the federal government.

The land transfer process is a lengthy one including boundary and topographic surveys, bounds descriptions, deed work, legal documentation, title verification, and compliance with environmental and historic preservation regulations.

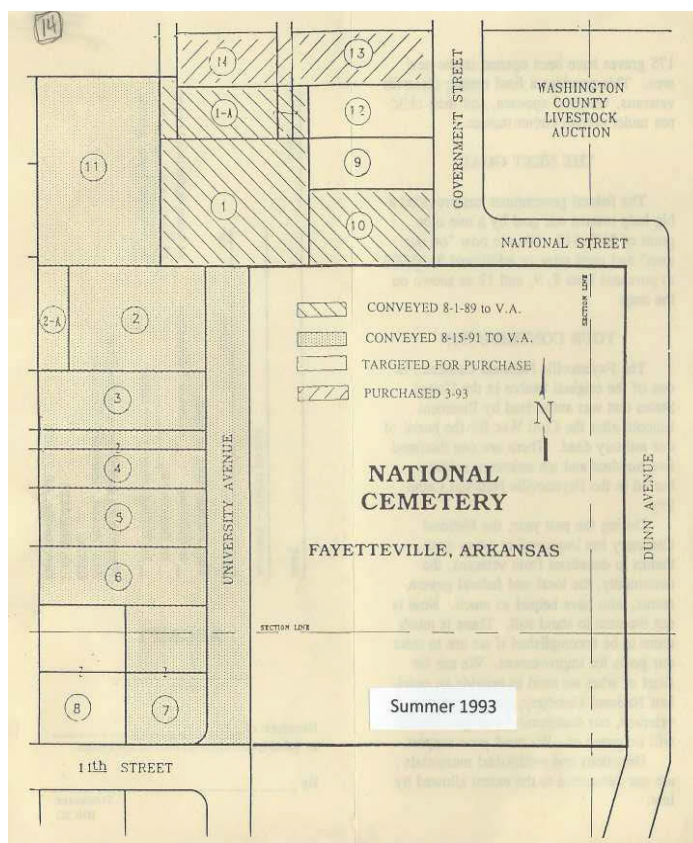
After transfer all maintenance and personnel costs are paid by the Department of Veterans Affairs. The federal government maintains all national cemeteries at their cost.

### THE RNCIC FACED CHALLENGES

Officers of the RNCIC encountered many challenges and battles in the early years. At the May 1992 meeting President Elvie Heiney read parts of a letter from Roger Rapp, Director of Field Operations, Dept. of Veterans, National Cemetery System, Washington D.C. dated April 24, 1992. In reference to the purchase of tract two this letter stated, "The

various lots purchased for this expansion provide burial space for Veterans for the next 35 years. **Since no additional land is required for the foreseeable future, we request that all efforts by the RNCIC associated with the securing additional land be terminated."**

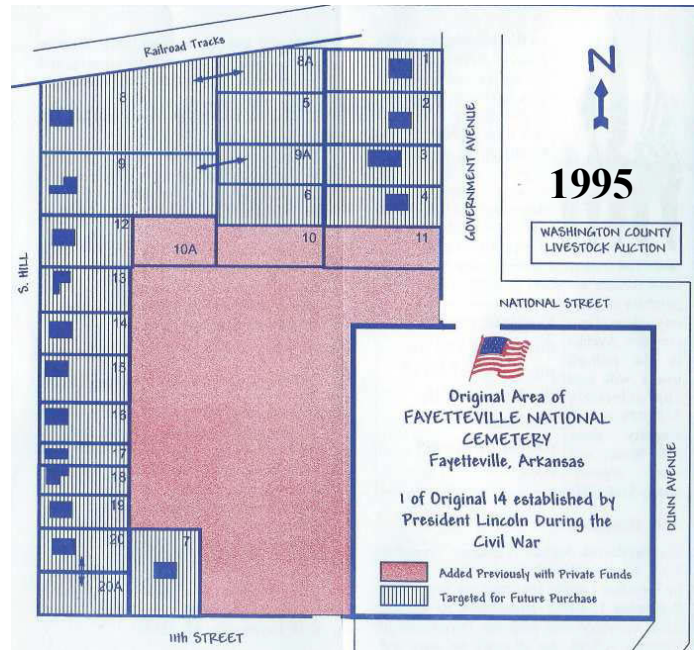
President Heiney stated it was his intention to write a letter to the VA in Washington with copies to the President of the United States, Secretary of the DVA Derwinsky, and all Congressmen and Senators in Arkansas. This letter would protest Roger Rapp's letter of April 24, 1992, point out what has been accomplished and the fact that more land is needed, **and that we do not intend to terminate our efforts.**



In March 1998 the RNCIC passed a motion to take 10,000 bricks from the original Cemetery wall, when it was removed for the 1990's expansion program, and use them as a fund-raiser. The original donation price was \$50 with an engraved plaque; but when sales were slow, the price was reduced to \$25 each. At the RNCIC's April 2001 meeting, with the bricks not selling, the Board was concerned about storing them. So a motion was passed that anyone who wanted them could have them if they would move them!



In November 2001 a huge pecan tree on one of the purchased lots needed to be removed to prepare the land for donation to the Cemetery. With many workers involved, Margaret and Arnold Christie were able to make use of the firewood. Taking a break and seated left to right are one of the workers, Milo Cumpston, and Arnold Christie.



## THE LATER YEARS OF THE RNCIC

On July 28, 1999, the Fayetteville National Cemetery, being the smallest active National Cemetery in the U.S., was recognized for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places means that the property is among some of the nation's most historically significant properties. The RNCIC and Veteran groups in Northwest Arkansas have done much to improve the property, acquire additional land, and help keep the Cemetery open and vibrant. The FNC was later added to the Civil War Discovery Trail. The Fayetteville National Cemetery is a pristine treasure for the City of Fayetteville.

Without further Cemetery expansion Veterans who request interment would be required to travel to an out-of-state national cemetery, a state maintained cemetery or a private family plot. This would cause relatives in the Northwest Arkansas area to travel a much longer distance to visit their loved one's grave site.

Almost a decade had passed since the last land donation to the VA in May 1999, until 1.35 acres were donated in October 2008. Special acknowledgment was given to Milo Cumpston, who was a driving force in acquiring the properties. This donation included the first property to expand the Cemetery through to Hill Avenue. Milo was said to be the "backbone" of support for the expansion of the Fayetteville National Cemetery. Milo was a Charter Member of the RNCIC and active until his death in April 2009.

## VETERANS MEMORIAL 5K RACE 2014



Ronald Butler and Eugene Keister, Nov. 2013

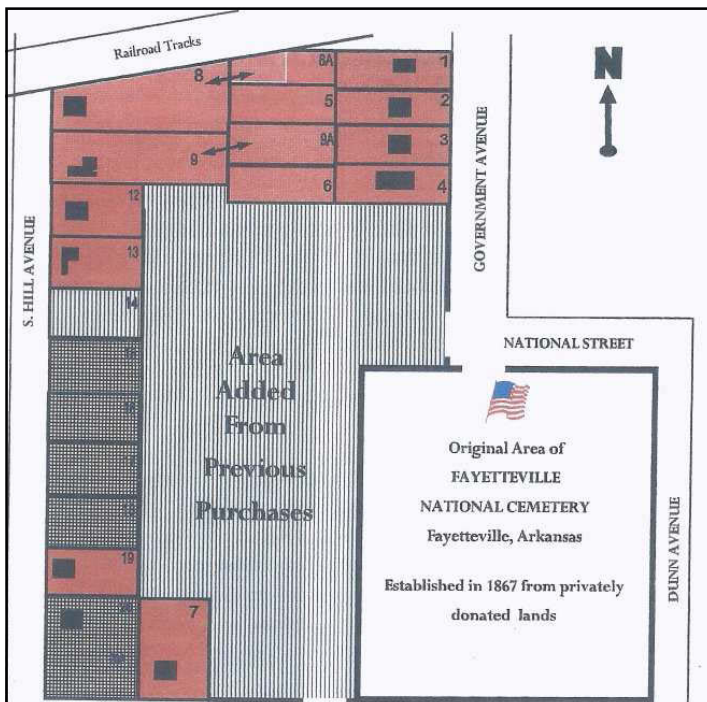
Many of the land owners surrounding the Fayetteville National Cemetery are/were Veterans and wished to see the FNC expanded to include their properties. In addition to the Christie properties, Eugene Keister (US Army WW II) and his family are currently negotiating to sell his property to the RNCIC.



Marine Veteran Milo Cumpston holds a portrait of him with his grandson, Travis, on May 23 at his apartment in Fayetteville. The World War II Veteran passed away Thursday morning.

(Brooke McNeely, Northwest Arkansas Times)

With the donation of the 1.35 acres to the VA in October 2008, the burial capacity of the FNC was increased by nearly 1,300 sites. Many of the people who had started the RNCIC's mission had now passed away, and many are buried at the FNC. **It is important that we finish what they started.**



The size of burial plots has changed over the years to provide more burials per acre. Original grave sites were 6 ft. by 12 ft. Currently an entire crypt field is prepared with burial vaults being placed 3 ft. by 8 ft. and placed side by side to allow for maximum usage of the land space. The vaults are then covered with top soil until a vault area needs to be opened for a burial.



In keeping with the times, the RNCIC web site was created by the fall of 2004. Previous attempts had been made in 1999 with our first web page being set up as a link from Attorney Ginger Middleton's page. Jake Lamkins announced that he had made a memorial donation to the RNCIC to upgrade the website in November 2009, and continues to do so annually as his contribution to the RNCIC. He bought the domain name **RNCIC.com** and also upgraded the website to a premium plan that does not have ads. A PayPal account was added to the web page in August 2014 to assist with payment of donations and memberships.

The number of RNCIC members in the early years was as many as 50, but by 2008 the attendance at meetings was down to four or five individuals. With the land donation in 2008 there was a public ceremony at the FNC with newspaper and TV coverage bringing more awareness of the RNCIC to the public.



In early 2009 Wes Stites and Josh Sakon, both professors at the University of Arkansas, joined our meetings. With Josh being a runner, they introduced the idea of doing a 5K Race as a fund raiser. The name for the first 5K Race was "Veterans Memorial 5K Run," and the date was set for November 7, 2009. The race continues annually as a major fund raiser through sponsorship from Northwest Arkansas businesses.

## **The Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation (RNCIC)**

**Presentation of 2.3 Acres of land  
to**

**The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)**



**FAYETTEVILLE NATIONAL CEMETERY**

**Saturday, November 9, 2013**

**Fayetteville National Cemetery**

The Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation (RNCIC) is proud to present to the US Department of Veterans Affairs 2.3 acres of land adjacent to the Fayetteville National Cemetery for the purpose of providing space for future burials. The RNCIC has been purchasing and donating land to the VA since 1984, thereby allowing the cemetery to continue to provide burial space for US service men and women and their families. Today's donation is the largest single land transfer to the VA ever made by the RNCIC.



**Green—1967 original acreage; Red—additions by RNCIC to date; Blue—Today's addition**

**Recognition of significant contributors to RNCIC mission**

**Presentation of Certificate of land transfer:**

Lieutenant Colonel Ron Butler, President RNCIC

Ms. Gloria Bailey, Director Fayetteville National Cemetery

On Saturday morning, November 9, 2013, following the fifth annual 5K Race, the RNCIC donated 2.3 acres of land (six lots) to the VA. The largest crowd ever gathered at the gates of the FNC for this ceremony. This was the donation which really created the ability of the FNC to expand west to So. Hill Avenue and to join up with the one lot on Hill Avenue previously donated in 2008. The Cemetery fence will be moved in 2015 to include this donation.



Each year on Memorial Day the Boy Scouts of America gather at the Cemetery to pay tribute to fallen Veterans by placing an American flag at each headstone.



## WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

In December of each year Wal-Mart donates thousands of live green wreaths as part of the Wreaths Across America. Hundreds of people come out to place a wreath at each headstone.



Among the Veterans at rest at the Fayetteville National Cemetery are longtime and hardworking RNCIC volunteer Milo Cumpston and Medal of Honor recipient Clarence B. Craft (US Army WW II and Korea). The north Fayetteville, AR, post office is named the Clarence B. Craft Post Office Building. The Clarence B. Craft Primary Care Addition at the Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks in Fayetteville is named for him as well.



## MEMBERSHIP IN THE RNCIC

In July 2011 the Board implemented membership dues effective January 1, 2012, and changed the By-Laws to do so. Membership in the RNCIC is open to all individuals, representatives of organizations and clubs in support of the purposes of the RNCIC.

Join the Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corp.	
Name: _____	<b>Please circle one:</b> <b>Lifetime \$500</b> <b>Organization \$500</b> <b>Sustaining \$100</b> <b>Supporting \$35</b> <b>Basic \$20</b>
Address: _____	
City, State, Zip: _____	
Telephone: _____ Email _____	
Membership dues are annual except for Lifetime and Organization. Please make checks payable to RNCIC and mail to RNCIC, P. O. Box 4221, Fayetteville, AR 72702. You can also pay online via PayPal at our website <a href="http://RNCIC.com">http://RNCIC.com</a> . Your support is appreciated.	
I would like to make a donation of \$ _____	
In memory of _____ or honor of _____	

Meetings of the RNCIC currently are held at the American Legion Post 27, 1195 So. Curtis Ave., Fayetteville, Arkansas, on the second Saturday of each month at 10:00 a.m. with the exception of November when we gather at the FNC for the 5K Race. We encourage active attendance and support to these meetings and the mission of the RNCIC.

**According to research it is believed that there is no other organization like the RNCIC in existence.** You are invited to become part of the RNCIC. Membership dues are annual except for Life memberships.

The plight of the Fayetteville National Cemetery gained attention in 2009 when a development company proposed building apartments for college students on the former Washington County Livestock area to the east of the Cemetery. The asking price for that property was in the millions of dollars and totally out of the range of the RNCIC to raise the money. Therefore our concentration is from Hill Avenue on the west to Government Avenue on the east and the abandoned railroad spur on the north and 11<sup>th</sup> Street on the south.

Other fund raising efforts are the request for Grant Funds from the Arkansas State Politicians' Discretionary Funds, the Northwest Arkansas Economic Development District, Inc. and grants from private foundations. This has proven to be a very viable support of our efforts. Memorial

donations designated for the RNCIC on one's obituary is also a very fitting tribute.

Under the leadership of RNCIC President Ron Butler, Annual Reports from the President, Vice President/Publicity, Secretary, Treasurer, Web Master, and Special Projects/Committees were implemented in 2012. This review made for a better informed Board of Directors with planning for future efforts and improvements. The Board consists of 12 elected members plus the FNC Director as an ex-officio member.



On May 28, 2010, local businessman and philanthropist, Don Tyson, donated \$75,000 to the RNCIC to buy land. Longtime RNCIC supporters Peggy and Roger McClain were instrumental in acquiring the donation. L-R: Peggy McClain, Don Tyson, Archie Schaffer and Roger McClain.

## RECORDS INDICATE LAND DONATIONS TO THE VA

August 1989 - 3 lots  
August 1991 - 8 lots  
1995-1999 - 4 lots  
October 2008 - 4 lots  
November 2013- 6 lots  
2014 - 4 lots northern-most properties  
purchased by the RNCIC await deeding to the VA

**By the end of 2014, the RNCIC's 30<sup>th</sup> year, the group had acquired 29 properties with 10 properties remaining in sight for purchase on the current RNCIC brochure map. Those 29 properties purchased translate into roughly 13 acres adjoining the Cemetery at a cost of approximately \$846,000.**

Without the long-term efforts of the members of the Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation, this expansion project would not have been possible and the Fayetteville National Cemetery would have been closed to new burials in the 1980's.

Mr. Tom Ruck, Director of the Fayetteville National Cemetery, was quoted to say, "We at Fayetteville National Cemetery and the NCA realize what a treasure the RNCIC is to America and the Veterans of Northwest Arkansas. Without the RNCIC, Fayetteville National Cemetery would not be the place of honor that it is today. As the new Cemetery Director, I personally want to say thank you for all you do, it is truly appreciated!"

## THE FUTURE OF THE RNCIC

It was stated in a press release in May 1987 that the RNCIC's sole purpose is to purchase land adjoining the Cemetery, turn the land over to the Federal Government, and having done this **"the corporation will be dissolved."**

Ten (10) properties still remain in our sight. With the number of interments at the Fayetteville National Cemetery as of December 31, 2014 at approximately 9,600, we want to keep the Cemetery open to honor as many Veterans as possible.

Our work is not complete and thus **"the corporation cannot be dissolved."**



## REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION OFFICERS FOR 2014

L to R: Lorna Sterrett, Secretary; Harold Crivello, Treasurer  
Ron Butler, President; Merle Williams, Vice President



**REGIONAL NATIONAL CEMETERY IMPROVEMENT CORPORATION**

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

L to R: Aubrey Shepherd, Jake Lamkins, Ron Butler, Josh Sakon, Lorna Sterrett,  
Tom Ruck, Peggy McClain, Roger McClain, Merle Williams, Harold Crivello

Not shown: Jim Glover, Gary Culp, Wes Stites

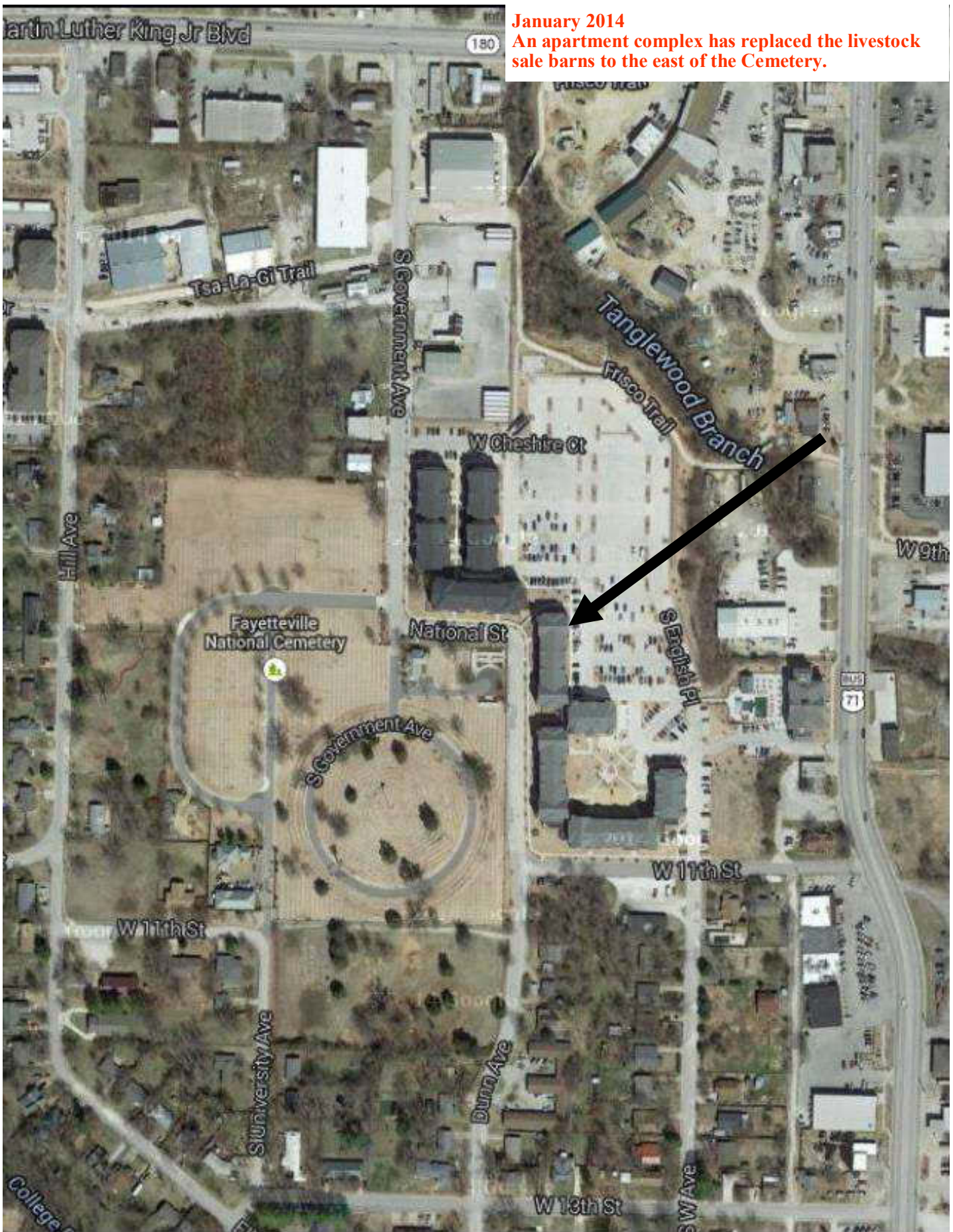
May 2010

The livestock sale barns are shown on the right to the east of the Cemetery.



January 2014

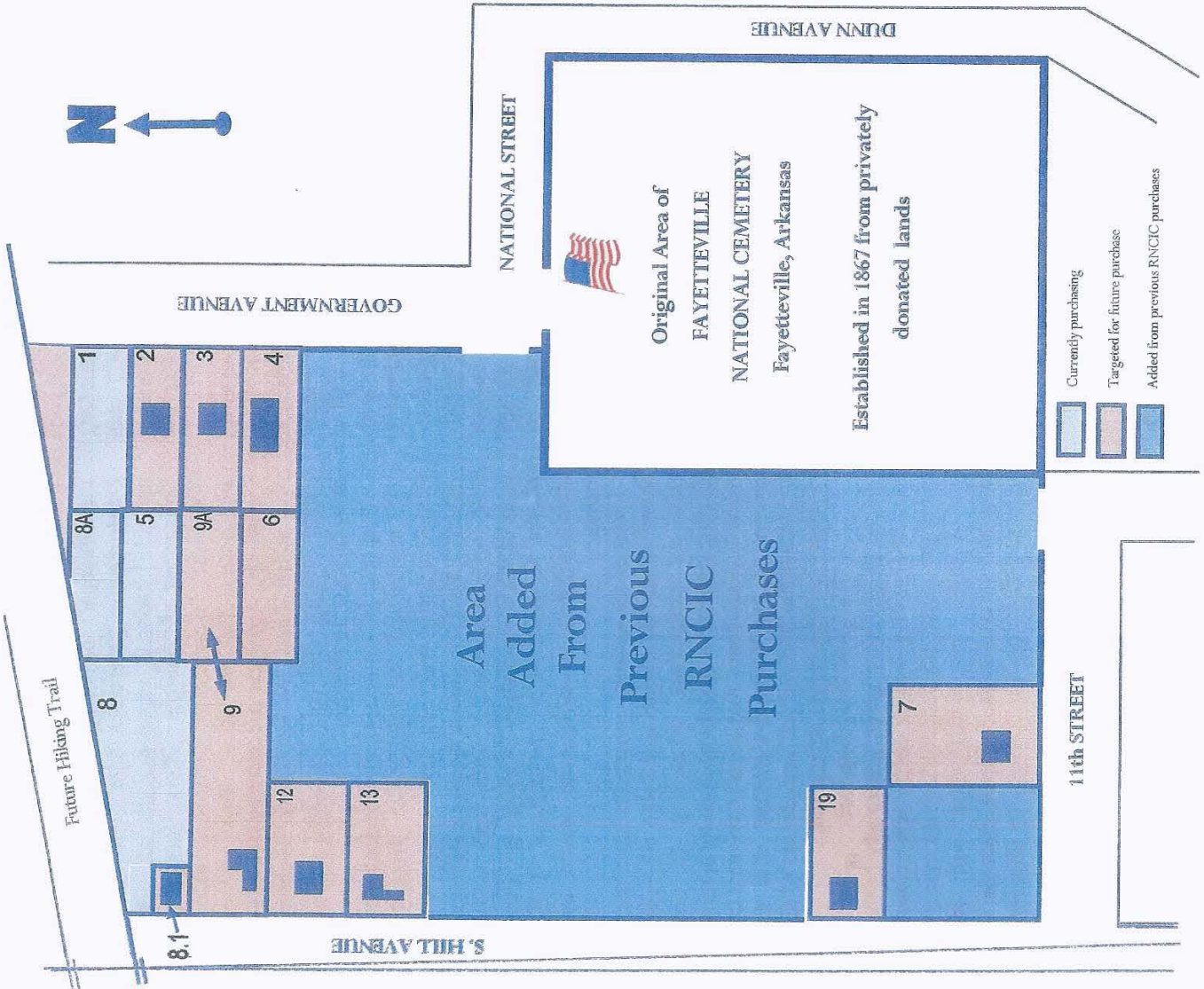
An apartment complex has replaced the livestock sale barns to the east of the Cemetery.





# Fayetteville National Cemetery And Our Veterans **NEED YOUR HELP!**

Revised October 2014



## The Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corporation (RNCIC) was incorporated 1984 to aid in the expansion and improvement of the Fayetteville National Cemetery.

The incorporators were Col. Larry L. Browne, Jr., Ken Gibson and John Wm. Murphy. These three were also the RNCIC's first Board of Directors. It is a legally constituted, not-for-profit corporation (501 c 3) whose officers and directors are volunteers working without compensation. Membership in the RNCIC is open to all interested parties.

We have kept the Cemetery open for burials and increased its size by over 200% since our founding. Without past donations for the purchase of land, the cemetery would be closed to burials today.

Our mission is to secure land adjacent to the Fayetteville National Cemetery to ensure the cemetery can continue to receive veterans for burial. Veterans living in Northwest Arkansas, as well as many veterans living outside our region, have planned their final resting place here. This desire stems from having been born and raised in Northwest Arkansas, having close family ties here, or having made their homes in the area following their service.

On July 17, 1862, Congress enacted legislation that authorized President Abraham Lincoln to purchase "cemetery grounds" to be used as national cemeteries "for soldiers who shall have died in the service of the country."

The Fayetteville National Cemetery opened in 1867. It has been placed on the National registry of Historic Places and the Civil War Discovery Trail. It has also been declared a National Shrine.

Since September 1, 1973, responsibility for

the national cemetery rests with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Today, there are 136 national cemeteries in all. The Department of Veterans Affairs, through its National Cemetery Administration, administers 120 of them. Two national Cemeteries, Arlington and Soldiers Home, are still administered by the Army. Fourteen national cemeteries are maintained by the Department of the Interior.

More than 2.5 million Americans, including veterans of every war and conflict - from the Revolutionary War to the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars - are honored by burial in VA's national cemeteries. More than 14,200 acres of land from Hawaii to Maine, and from Alaska to Puerto Rico are devoted to the memorialization of those who served this nation.

Many of the national cemeteries have been closed to further burials and some are open only for cremations. Expansion to any existing cemetery can only be done by adding adjacent usable land. Any acquisition must be donated to the National Cemetery with an unencumbered title and the land cleared of all structures, utilities, pipes, sewers, etc.

### We Need Your Support

Many people have given generously in the past. Your giving will be deeply appreciated and donations are tax deductible under current law. RNCIC tax identification will be furnished upon request. Please become a member and/or make a donation by clipping and mailing the form at the left or visit our website and use PayPal.

For more information, visit our website at <http://RNCIC.com>

## Join the Regional National Cemetery Improvement Corp.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Please circle one:*

**Lifetime \$500**

**Organization \$500**

**Sustaining \$100**

**Supporting \$35**

**Basic \$20**

Membership dues are annual except for Lifetime and Organization. Please make checks payable to RNCIC and mail to RNCIC, P. O. Box 4221, Fayetteville, AR 72702. You can also pay online via PayPal at our website <http://RNCIC.com>. Your support is appreciated.

I would like to make a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_ or honor of \_\_\_\_\_



#### MEMBERS IN 1997

Seated L to R: Milo Cumpston (VP), Keith Newhouse, Helen Blackwell, Marshall Sayner  
 Standing L to R: Jack Flannery, Roger McClain (Pres), Bill Murphy, Bucky Crouch, Hoy Haight, Peggy McClain (Sec), Don Tuller (Treas), Bob Sterrett



#### RNCIC MEMBERS (mid to late 1990's)

L to R: Helen Blackwell, Marshall Sayner, Roger Melton, Don Tuller, Dana Williams, Peggy McClain, Bob Sterrett



Bruce Schaffer and Milo Cumpston