

Replacement of two Civil War-era headstones in Mountain View Cemetery to be dedicated

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An obelisk monument marks a burial site in Mountain View Cemetery in honor of Union soldiers who fought for reunification and the abolition of slavery during the American Civil War from April 12, 1861-April 9, 1865. Courtesy Reserve Organization of America NW021 Chapter.

Civil War-era headstones for two U.S. Army infantrymen have degraded almost beyond legibility in Mountain View Cemetery, 2120 S. Second Ave.

An 11 a.m. dedication ceremony Sept. 6 for new headstones will be followed by fellowship at the Walla Walla Country Club, 1390 Country Club Road. A light lunch menu will be available for purchase.



*The original headstone for U.S. Army Civil War veteran Pvt. Joseph L. Wilson is badly eroded.
Courtesy Reserve Organization of America NW021 Chapter.*



Nearly all of the details for U.S. Army Civil War veteran Sgt. James C. Mason have been erased by time and weather. Courtesy Reserve Organization of America NW021 Chapter.

Reserve Organization of America NW021 Chapter, in conjunction with the Walla Walla Parks & Recreation Department, is replacing the markers for Union soldiers Sgt. James C. Mason and Pvt. Joseph L. Wilson in the cemetery's Civil War section at Vine and Juniper streets.

Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, Fort Walla Walla Camp 3, will lead the ceremony. The events are open to the community.

Wilson was born in 1836 in Randolph County, Illinois. He enlisted June 25, 1861, and served with Company I, 22nd Illinois Infantry, Caseyville, Illinois. He was discharged July 7, 1864, in Springfield, Illinois. A farmer, he died July 5, 1889, in Walla Walla.

Sgt. James C. Mason was born June 4, 1833, in Genesee, New York. He enlisted Aug. 2, 1862, and served with Company F, 1st Regiment, Washington Territory Infantry, Vancouver, Washington. He transferred in 1865 to E Company and was discharged March 17, 1865, at Fort Vancouver, Washington. A carpenter, he died Feb. 19, 1905, in Walla Walla.

Longer bios, drafted by ROA Chapter Treasurer Terry Atchison, will be read at the ceremony.

Sarah L. Bro, retired U.S. Army lieutenant colonel and chapter public outreach officer, said organizers hope to have a color guard, invocation, spoken words with the Sons of Union Veterans, a bugler for taps and the singing of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.” The effort is part of the ROA chapter’s platform as a local veterans service organization to “never forget a veteran” and has been a long time coming, Bro said.

Such headstones, regardless of composition, can suffer damage from weathering, such as wind, rain, freezing and thawing. Additionally, biological weathering comes from lichens, vines, shrubs and trees, which damage the surface and body of the gravestones, according to spadeandthegrave.com.

Don Jameson, camp commander for SUVCW Camp 3, said one of the services the group takes on is to find Union veteran graves not properly marked or with a tombstone and apply to the VA to furnish one.

“The ceremony is a way to give tribute to the long deceased Civil War veteran and honor his service, but also give honor to the family name and, in some cases, the descendants yet available,” Jameson said. They also pass on awareness to the larger community.

“We give honor to those veterans who offered life, fortune and sacred honor for the preservation of the country in an era of great need. We members of the Sons take inspiration from those who have protected the flag and cherished the rights it represents. In a sense, we strive to stir a renewal of personal and American patriotism,” Jameson said.

“The life of a headstone begins when a person passes away,” said Lonnie Mettler, local ROA chapter president.

“Most headstones are requested by the family of the deceased member through the funeral home or direct communication with a monument business for a fee, which varies based on size of the stone and how much graphics or other inscription is included,” Mettler said.

“If the deceased is a veteran and the family wishes to acknowledge that fact, the process is somewhat similar, but there are specific stone types, stone sizing and the type of inscription requirements based on the war era and when the veteran passed away.”



The replacement headstone in Mountain View Cemetery for U.S. Army Civil War veteran Sgt. James C. Mason follows strict regulations for type of stone, size, shape and lettering. Courtesy Reserve Organization of America NW021 Chapter.

Upright marble stone with a shield is used for the Civil War era. Inside the shield the name is displayed in an arc, the rank and unit are horizontal at the bottom. Replacement Civil War headstones include birth and death dates; originals may not have had that data.

“Stone to be used for a veteran headstone is mined in the United States by law. Most of the mines are located on the eastern side of the United States. There are 5 to 10 primary manufacturers of veteran headstones, with

most of them in the southeastern part of the United States. The cost to provide a headstone, including transportation for a Civil War veteran is dependent on width. The cost varies between \$350-\$410.

“The cost of making the headstone is paid by the federal government and is considered a benefit for those who served,” Mettler said.

“The cemetery is responsible for destruction of and removal of all discarded headstones to an appropriate dump site. The government does not want headstone pieces to be shown disrespect,” Mettler said.

Retired editor/journalist Annie Charnley Eveland freelances the Etcetera column and stories for the Walla Walla Union-Bulletin. Send contact name, daytime phone number, news and clear sharply focused photos as .jpg attachments to acereporter1979@gmail.com or call 509-386-7369.

See link at https://www.union-bulletin.com/news/local/replacement-of-two-civil-war-era-headstones-in-mountain-view-cemetery-to-be-dedicated/article_77952c6e-63cc-11ef-a236-7fa07f5a8aa7.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share