

U.S. MARINE QUANTICO.

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Weathered headstones chronicle Quantico's past

By LCPL ELLEN VILLENEUVE

Weathered headstones, many with the names and dates eroded by time, are one visual reminder of Quantico's early settlers.

Following the Civil War, farmers began a struggle to make the land now occupied by the Marine Corps base a better place to live. The land was dotted with large plantations, small farms, churches, schools, stores and small towns. Along with the settlers came eight major graveyards, not counting many private family plots.

In 1942, as a result of the Navy's petition to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, legal possession of approximately 50,000 acres west of U.S. 1 was awarded the government.

The land was owned by individual families, said Herbert Gibson, Development and Education Command facilities planner. But they had agreed to sell. The families moved out of state, some bought land in other counties, while others moved just outside the base borders.

The land, along with the graveyards and family plots, became government property. The Marine Corps assumed responsibility for the upkeep of the land and the graveyards.

"Some of the land where the grave sites were located was needed for impact areas for artillery and small arms," said Gibson. "Approximately 50 cemeteries had to be relocated."

Before moving the graves, the Marine Corps made intense searches through next of kin contacts and advertisement in local newspapers for the relatives of those buried in these sites. The remains in these sites had to be re-interred in another area.

For those remains not claimed, the government moved them to two cemeteries during 1942-43," said Gibson, a 40-year civilian employee. Cedar Run Cemetery, located near Camp Upshur, and Carver Cemetery, located by Va. 612, are the only two cemeteries established by the government.

The other 30 cemeteries on base were all established by churches and families centuries ago, he added.

Although the Facilities Department maintains the 32 cemeteries, only eight are still used for occasional burials. The remaining cemeteries have been left to Mother Nature.

For the eight active cemeteries, the Facilities Department keeps the grass mowed and the fences repaired. All of the gravesites

are located in the Guadalcanal Area except the Buck-Keys cemetery, located east of U.S. 1 in Chamberlain Village.

Only members of the settling families are allowed to use these active graveyards for burial.

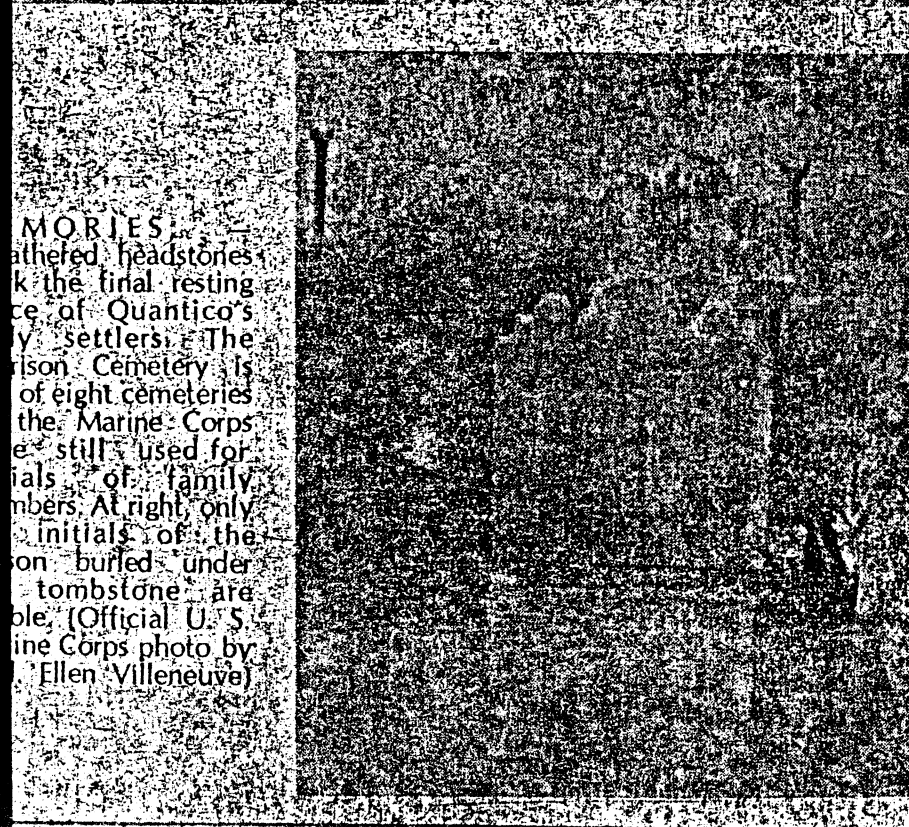
"Families must first request permission from us to perform a burial," said Gibson. "We maintain records of burials."

While these cemeteries are still active, the others remain silent and peaceful deep in MCDEC's woodlands. The only visitors are occasional hikers, hunters or animals.

In order to keep track of each cemetery, they have been named after the people buried there or after the location of the cemetery.

The Cedar Run cemetery is named after the Cedar Run Creek which meanders silently by. The Herndon, Harrison and Abel cemeteries are all named after the families who owned the land and are buried in the grave sites. And, Shiloh and Hearts Delight cemeteries are named after the churches they are near.

More grave relocations may take place in the future. The Abel cemetery is within the newly consecrated Veterans Administration cemetery and will henceforth come under the jurisdiction of that department.



MORIES
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of eight cemeteries
the Marine Corps
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initials of the
son buried under
tombstone are
ble. (Official U. S.
ine Corps photo by
Ellen Villeneuve)

not on
M.C.
people