



Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Background

Located on 162 acres along the eastern shore of Seneca Lake in the pristine, glacier-carved Finger Lakes Region of Upstate New York, Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery is the final resting place for veterans and their eligible dependents.

The Cemetery is located on the site of the former Sampson Naval Training Station and Sampson Air Force Base, one of the most historically significant military sites in the Finger Lakes Region, having served more than 1 million servicemen and women.

When Americans entered World War II in December 1941, there was an urgent need to equip and train soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines. In the spring of 1942, construction began on the Sampson Naval Training Station. More than 5,000 Navy personnel operated and maintained the Station, and more than 411,000 Naval Recruits were trained there. Toward the end of the war, the site served as a Separation Center, discharging more than 65,000 service members. After the war, the Station was used as a temporary college for 15,000 veterans who attended classes under the GI Bill. Sampson College operated from September 1946 to June 1949 and matriculated 7,500 students.

With the outbreak of the Korean War, Sampson returned to active duty as a Basic Military Training Base of the Air Force. More than 330,000 airmen received their training at Sampson AFB. The base officially closed in 2000.

Approximately 2,000 acres of the former military site were set aside to establish Sampson State Park, a popular campground and boating destination. Efforts to establish the Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery on acreage just south of the state park soon followed. Thanks to the effort of New York State Sen. Michael Nozzolio and numerous area veterans, \$3.3 million in state funds were later allocated to establish and construct the Cemetery.

Just over a decade after the military base's closing, Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery was officially dedicated in July 2011. The Cemetery's first committal service and burial took place in September that year. Mr. Clinton C. Van Gelder, a Korean War-era veteran who served in the Air Force from 1952 to 1956, died on Jan. 22, 2010, at the age of 77. He was laid to rest at Sampson Veterans Memorial Cemetery on Monday, Sept. 26, 2011. Today, more than 41 veterans and 5 spouses are laid to rest at the Cemetery.

While state funding was secured to initially establish the Cemetery, private funding must be raised to ensure proper maintenance and operations.

YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THIS FUNDING INITIATIVE IS ESSENTIAL.

When the call to duty came, they answered. Today, there's a new call, a call for each of us to show our respect for the men and women who so honorably served our nation. And just as their nation needed them, we need you.

Thanks to grateful patriots like you, our nation's veterans can be assured of a dignified, military funeral worthy of their service.

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