

It is with honor and pride that we recognize and list the names of those self-less Alabama service members that have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country's freedom in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Since all records are only as good as the sources of their material, we acknowledge that our records too may be incomplete. However, we think it is proper and fitting that we explain the effort and the lengths at which the Alabama Veterans Memorial Foundation went to in order to ensure both the accuracy and the completeness of the names listed in the Memorial Plaza Hall of Honor.

Before constructing the Memorial Plaza the Alabama Veterans Memorial Foundation spent five years compiling the names of Alabama service members who had lost their lives as a result of their wartime military service. Sources for these names were varied, sometimes conflicting, and oftentimes incomplete. Primary sources are the Alabama Department of Veterans Affairs; the Departments of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, and U.S. Air Force; Department of Defense; National Archives; the Legion Field Memorial; as well as names submitted by individual family members and friends. These lists were checked, cross-checked, publicized, and verified by several different means.

The names were then arranged in order by conflict and alphabetized by the county in which these service members were from, then alphabetized by name within each county listing. In order to get a full public accounting these lists were then published repeatedly over a period of several months and years in each county newspaper within the state of Alabama informing the public of the Foundation's intent and requesting feedback. Needless to say in the initial months there was a tremendous amount of feedback from all over the state. After a full two years of reviewing and feedback, cross-checking lists, and verifying through multiple sources the final list was compiled, published again in every county newspaper throughout the state, and then work began on constructing the Hall of Honor.

Two very simple, but also sometimes confusing criteria were used to determine a service member's inclusion in this final list. The first criteria was in determining that the service member was from Alabama. Though sounding simple enough, it actually was not when reviewing official military records created during hectic times using crude methods of record keeping and following military protocols for determining "home of record". Each branch of the military services enlistment records will credit or attribute a service member's enlistment to one and only one location. Sometimes these records may conflict with a service member's or the family member's records, recollections, or wishes. Due to the fact that all record keeping conducted by human hands is subject to a variety of errors there were also instances of conflicts and omissions. For instance, there were occasions where a service member was born and raised in Alabama, graduated from an Alabama high school, but left Alabama right after high school and then subsequently enlisted in the state he was currently residing in. Official military records would most often accredit his enlistment from his new place of residence, however, on some very few occasions, with strong input and evidence from the service member or his family that a majority of that service members life was spent in Alabama then that individual's name was added to our list.

The second criteria used was the service member's actual cause of death. These lists, also coming from numerous and varied sources, were oftentimes confusing and inaccurate as well. The final list included service members who were killed in action, died as a result of wounds received while in combat, died of non-combat related injuries to include sickness or accidents while deployed in support of combat operations or training, or those who may have taken their own lives.

As a result of these comprehensive efforts it is thought that the Alabama Veterans Memorial Foundation has the most complete and accurate list of all Alabama service members who have died as a result of involvement in our nation's conflicts. As accurate as our list might be there still could be an instance where a native Alabamian has been inadvertently left off of our list. However, every effort has been made to identify and include every Alabamian who has patriotically served our country and died as a result of one of the above criteria.

The intent of the Alabama Veterans Memorial Foundation is to honor and recognize all Alabamians who have served our great state and nation in defending freedom, especially those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. They can rest assured that at the Alabama Veterans Memorial Park they will never be forgotten. Join us in honoring their legacy in service and sacrifice to our nation.