

Arlington develops cultural resources plan

By *Melissa Bohan*
Public Affairs Office

Arlington National Cemetery is working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Norfolk (Va.) District and Construction Engineering Research Laboratory, Champaign, Ill., to develop an Integrated Cultural Resources Management Plan as well as a programmatic agreement and nomination for the National Register of Historic Places.

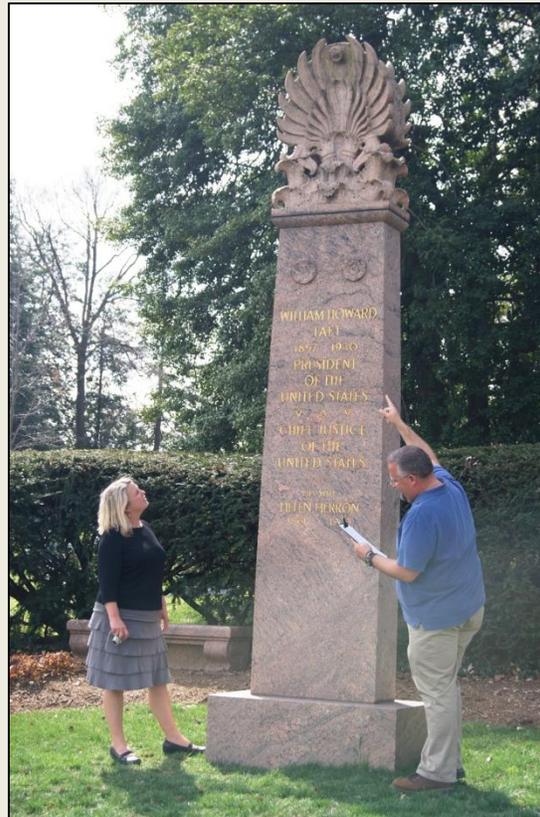
Once complete with Arlington's plan, the team will also develop similar products for the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home National Cemetery.

The ICRMP will document the features that contribute to the historic significance of Arlington's property and outline the standard operating procedures needed to manage those features.

The programmatic agreement, which will be complete this summer, is a written arrangement among the cemetery, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Office and the Advisory Council of Historic Preservation that outlines how the cemetery handles certain projects, such as construction, landscaping, and monument and headstone maintenance and repair. Having an agreement in place speeds coordination with future projects and helps ensure compliance with the state's policies and regulations for historic preservation.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture. National Register listing benefits properties through placement on a public, searchable database; encourages future generations to preserve properties; and provides tax credits and grant opportunities. There are currently more than 80,000 properties listed in the register.

The Army Corps of Engineers' project management team, including an architectural historian, archaeologist and historic landscape architect, is extensively reviewing all of Arlington's property, methodically annotating its monuments, memorials, buildings, landscaping designs, and other structures and comparing them with historic maps, photos and other documentation.



Megan Tooker, historic landscape architect and Adam Smith, architectural historian, review the historic significance of the Taft gravesite monument in section 30.
Photo by Melissa Bohan

“The items will be categorized into “contributing” and “non-contributing” resources, noting their age and integrity – the structures must generally be at least 50 years old and look much like they did in the past – and their significance to the historic origins of the property,” said Susan Conner, project manager.

Arlington will seek placement on the National Register as a historic “district,” a collection of buildings and structures created around common and related events.

The final draft of the detailed nomination package is expected to be completed this month and sent to the Virginia state preservation office and National Register Review Board to assess its eligibility. The state officer and project management team will work together on modifications to the nomination and once final, the state will forward the package and its certified recommendation to the National Park Service for evaluation and listing by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places. The whole process – including the internal review, the nomination package, and the state and federal-level reviews – generally takes up to a year.

In addition, the team expects to expand its original role by also evaluating the condition of Arlington’s monuments, giving advice and recommendations on needed repairs, the priority of those repairs, and the estimated costs. This evaluation process will entail additional resources and experts, but will not affect the established timeline for the management plan and nomination.