Press Release

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Fort Drum Public Affairs

Fort Drum will open cemeteries for public visitation on Memorial Day

Fort Drum, NY - It's an annual Memorial Day tradition at Fort Drum, and with COVID-19 prevention and mitigation measures firmly in place, it will go on. Community members will have access to on-post cemeteries for public visitation from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. May 25.

Dr. Laurie Rush, Fort Drum Cultural Resources manager, said that Memorial Day is a unique opportunity, as visitors are allowed to stop by the cemeteries without prior coordination with her office and the Range Control Branch.

“These cemeteries are some of the last visible monuments to the once thriving villages that graced this part of northern New York,” she said.

“Through their preservation and protection we're remembering and honoring the families who lost their communities, who lost their homes and livelihoods, when Fort Drum expanded in 1940 to provide training land for our World War II Soldiers. Some of those families also lost loved ones in the war.”

Rush reiterated it's incredibly important to many people that they have the opportunity to visit the graves of their ancestors and loved ones.

“Last year, we had a woman who was over 90 years old visit the Wood’s Mill Cemetery,” she said.

Of course, with enhanced safety precautions in place at Fort Drum due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, visitors are advised to bring face coverings with them to wear if physical distancing is difficult at any particular location.

The cemetery map and driving directions can be viewed and downloaded at www.fortdrum.isportsman.net/cemeteries.aspx.

Of the 13 cemeteries, 10 are accessible without entering the Fort Drum cantonment area. Three cemeteries – Cooper Cemetery, Quaker Cemetery and the gravesite at LeRay Mansion – require a pass for visitors to enter the installation. Individuals may obtain a pass inside the Visitor Control Center, located at the Lt. Gen. Paul Cerjan Gate, after completing a quick background check. Cemetery maps will be available at the VCC for directions.

Fort Drum Directorate of Emergency Services officials point out that restricted access to post due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is still in place. Non-DoD cardholders who request a pass on Memorial Day for reasons other than cemetery visitation must be approved by the Soldier’s chain of command. For questions regarding gate access, call the VCC at (315) 772-8585.

The Fort Drum cemeteries fall under the stewardship of Public Works’ Environmental Division, and Rush said it is a privilege to help care for these historic and ancestral sites and an honor when they can invite people to see them.

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