

# 15th Annual Alton Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony Will Be Very Different This Year

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ALTON - The Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony at Alton's National Cemetery has become a memorable tradition each year for many area residents. Memorial Day 2020 will be like no other in the history of recognizing this special date because of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

COVID-19 alters gatherings in communities, while limiting people's interactions with one another in public spaces, businesses, or churches.

Presently with the pandemic, when those who die are designated to be buried with full military ceremonies at locations like Alton's National Cemetery, the gatherings are very restricted.

Alton's 15th Annual Memorial Day Sunset Ceremony this year will not be open to the public. However, a wreath-laying ceremony is set to occur with 10 participants being the maximum number of people allowed at Alton's National Cemetery. Also, instead of the usual "sunset" starting time, those designated to be present will arrive in the morning.

The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) is responsible for determining the guidelines and format for national cemeteries and other sacred places the federal government is responsible for around the United States. NCA employees will conduct the wreath-laying ceremonies at nearly all locations. In Alton an exception has been made and Richard Baird, event creator and organizer for the annual ceremony, will participate, along with his son, Robert Baird, and grandson, Elijah Baird, who will lead the "Pledge of Allegiance."

Representing the NCA and specifically Jefferson Barracks, will be a former acting Director at Jefferson Barracks. She will speak for a few moments as will Baird. There will be the Pledge of Allegiance, the remarks, laying of the wreath, and concluding with "Taps."