



Flight 93 National Memorial entrance.

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## September 11, 2001 —

*Life as we knew it changed drastically after a group of terrorists executed a carefully coordinated plan, using four passenger planes as weapons targeting the World Trade Center, the Pentagon and another site, most likely the U.S. Capitol Building. Only one aircraft failed to reach its target, thanks to a courageous group of passengers who, upon learning of the World Trade Center attacks, tried to storm the cockpit and take control. In a panic, the hijackers thwarted the passengers by crashing the plane. Flight 93 was only about 20 minutes' flight time from Washington, DC, when it hit a field located near rural Shanksville, Pennsylvania.*

Amidst all the shock, horror and grief that followed, this powerful story of ordinary citizens displaying extraordinary courage, despite their fear, inspired the creation of a memorial like no other to honor the 36 passengers and four crew members who lost their lives. Soon after the crash, it was clear that a temporary memorial was needed to accommodate the growing number of visitors coming to pay their respects and often leaving a token item behind. To offer much-needed assistance and information, a group of local volunteers came together as the Flight 93 Ambassadors.

By 2002, Congress had authorized the development of a permanent memorial. A competition to select a suitable design soon followed. Almost exactly four years later, Paul Murdoch was selected as the architect. Ground was broken in November, 2009, for Phase I: A new entrance from Rt. 30, Visitors Shelter, Memorial Plaza, Wall of Names and Flight Path. On September 10, 2011, one day before the attack's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Vice-President Joe



**Towering 40 foot walls (each foot representing the 40 passengers and crew) mark the pathways and entrance to the museum and observation areas.**



**Visitor Center entrance and access to museum and displays.**



Biden formally dedicated the Memorial with both former Bush presidents in attendance.

Next up was the interpretative component of Phase II: the Visitors Center Complex, including a Portal Entry, Flight Path Walkway and Overlook, where visitors could explore the story of Flight 93 in greater depth. The Complex dedication and a candlelight vigil took place on September 10, 2015, one day before the attack's 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Situated along the Flight Path, the Complex sits between two concrete walls looming 40 feet high, each foot representing the 40 passengers and crew. In a nod to its rural setting, the wall surfaces resemble weathered barn boards. The black granite Flight Path continues through the Second Portal to the Overlook, offering views of the Memorial Plaza, Crash Site and Field of Honor. A single large boulder sits below like a lonely sentinel, heralding the crash impact site. At the Portal's end is a glass panel with the words, "A common field one day, a field of honor forever." Visitors can take a closer look at the Field of Honor by

walking along its edge on the Allée, an elevated earthen path lined with 40 trees, all native species to Pennsylvania.

The Visitors Center itself is the heart of the Complex, where the story of 9/11/2001 unfolds via a multimedia mélange of interactive displays, text, photos, videos and a collection of artifacts found near the point of impact. In reference to the hemlock grove where Flight 93 crashed, some of the glass within the Visitors Center features abstract images of the hemlock tree. This hemlock motif continues throughout the Memorial. Photos of each victim line a wall. Another wall offers a true-to-life image of a Boeing 757 cabin, as was Flight 93, from the perspective of the passengers when hijackers forced them to the rear of the aircraft. Ten exhibits present a chronology of events within the aircraft as some passengers and crew, aware of the national scope of the attack, voted to storm the cockpit and take control of the plane. Data recovered from the plane's black box offers a harrowing account of the flight's



**Visitors are greeted at the three-dimensional model of the area, displaying crash site, points of interest and directions.**

final moments. On a wall are quotes pulled from the flight audio. A display featuring a replica of six United Airlines passenger seats with phones that allow visitors to listen to actual calls made by three passengers to loved ones. An interactive exhibit allows visitors to see how the terrorists rolled and dipped the plane in an effort to foil the uprising before deciding to take the plane down. A video reveals the plane's erratic movements in real time until it fades to black upon impact. Other displays offer a narrative of how the day unfolded as it began as an ordinary weekday and then something altogether different, a day that changed everything, as newscasters became aware of the first plane crash into the North Tower of the World Trade Center and continued coverage as the second plane hit the South Tower.

This year, the Flight 93 Speaker Series made its debut in the Visitors Center. A joint effort of the National Park Service and Friends of the Flight 93 National Memorial, the Series offers four monthly presentations from May through August. Presentations this year have featured family members of the victims, three first responders, and Wally Miller, the Somerset County coroner on duty at the time of the crash. Future programming is in the works.



**Walkway to Visitor Center and Overlook.**

Another remaining phase of the Memorial construction will begin this fall. A “Soundbreaking” is set for September 10, when construction will officially begin for the Tower of Voices. Officials anticipate that the 93-foot Tower will greet visitors a year after to the Memorial entrance with the sounds of its 40 wind chimes. A dedication for the Tower is planned on September 10, 2018.

Meanwhile, the Sacred Grove is in its sixth year of planting. About 500 volunteers have planted 15,000 – 20,000 seedlings of species native to Pennsylvania, including black cherry, black locust, American chestnut, red oak and white pine. To date, about 116,000 seedlings are in the ground, with a goal of 160,000 by 2020. The trees will serve to reforest the area and create a windbreak. As the years pass, native habitat of wetlands and wildflower meadows will return to this former coal mining site, now transformed into a place telling a story that will continue to resonate and unfold in future years.



Inside the Visitor Center where the story of 9/11/2001 unfolds via multimedia interactive displays.



A plan view of the Flight 93 National Memorial stands off the parking lot at the beginning of the walkway to the Visitor Center.



Flight 93 displays inside the Visitor Center.