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BURIAL REGISTERS FOR MILITARY POSTS, CAMPS, AND STATIONS 1768-1921

Introduction

On the single roll of this microfilm publication, M2014, is reproduced a two-volume register of burials at military posts, camps, and stations from 1768 to 1921; however, the bulk of the burials occurred between 1860 and 1890. These registers are part of the Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Record Group (RG) 92. This publication was financed by The Malcolm H. Stern-NARA Gift Fund and the National Archives Trust Fund.

Background

The registers included on this microfilm were created by the Cemetery Branch, established shortly after the Civil War in the Office of the Quartermaster General, Washington, DC. Entries in the two volumes were based on each post's burial records or grave markers. The first volume was created in 1873, updated periodically until 1883, and updated sporadically until 1932. The second was created in 1883 and updated periodically until 1932. Some burials (generally those that occurred before 1883 in cemeteries that were still active in 1883) are listed in both volumes.

In the book, *Quartermaster Support of the Army: A History of the Corps, 1775-1939* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1962, reprinted 1989), Erna Risch provided the following history of the quartermaster's role in burying deceased military personnel at military posts:

Ever since 1775, the [War] Department had assumed certain duties in caring for the dead. In line with its responsibility for construction, repair, and maintenance at Army posts, quartermasters had long administered post burial grounds. They had always furnished the material for coffins and headboards and paid the expenses of burial. If the soldier died at a garrison and interment was made in a post cemetery, no expense was incurred for the grave. If the post had no burial grounds and interment was made in a nearby church plot or private cemetery, the Department paid the charges for the grave. *Id.* at 462-463.

Much of the Cemetery Branch's work involved establishing, maintaining, and improving national cemeteries as the last resting place of the war dead. On March 3, 1873, under pressure of interested groups, Congress granted burial rights in national cemeteries to all honorably discharged veterans of the Civil War (17 Stat. 605). This expanded the national cemetery system to include earlier burials at the posts. As Risch explained:

Even before expansion in the East began, the Department established additional national

cemeteries in the West, necessitated by the abandonment of military posts on the old emigrant routes as settlement progressed westward. Such abandonment entailed the removal of the re-mains from the post cemeteries and reinterment in national cemeteries, for this course was less expensive than providing for the continued care and maintenance of the post cemeteries. Thus, in 1873, when Forts Kearny, Nebr., and Sedgwick, Colo., were abandoned, the Quarter-master's Department established a national cemetery at Fort McPherson, Nebr., to which the quartermaster removed the remains of those who had been buried in the cemeteries of the two abandoned posts. It later established national cemeteries at Santa Fe and San Francisco, to serve the same purpose in other frontier areas. *Id.* at 468.

Following World War I, the Cemetery Branch became the Cemetery Division when it was consolidated with the Graves Registration Service, which had supervised the burying, placing of headstones, and record-keeping of American war dead abroad during World War I.

Records Description

The registers are arranged by the name of the military post, and thereunder usually in rough chronological order by date of burial. The Table of Contents that follows indicates the volume and page number(s) where burial information for each post may be found. Some pages in the volumes were blank and not filmed, resulting in gaps in the pagination.

The burial registers primarily include soldiers of the Regular Army and Union Army (volunteers). Many civilians, usually wives or children of military personnel, are also listed, as well as some Confederate Army soldiers. Some deceased are listed in both volumes. Most remains were eventually moved to a national cemetery.

If known, the following information about the deceased is given: name, rank, company, regiment, date of death, location of grave (section and number), and remarks. The remarks column may indicate the cause of death (i.e., "Drowned in Newport Harbor"), a civilian's relationship to a soldier (i.e., "Supposed to be wife of Capt. Tho. Grey"), or removal to another cemetery. The type of grave marker, such as headboard, cross, broken stone, or marble slab, is often included. The name of the contractor who supplied the headstone is sometimes indicated. The abbreviation "HS" under the remarks column means "headstone." Notations in the remarks column such as "2903 of 1873" refer to the number and year of correspondence received by the Quartermaster General that provided the information copied into the entries.

The earliest burial date noted is 1768 for Edward Pursley at Fort Winthrop (also known as Fort Independence or Fort Warren), MA, and the latest is for an unnamed civilian at Fort Apache, AZ, in 1921. Fort Columbus, at New York City, had several burials dating to the late 1790's.

Related Records

Correspondence received by the Quartermaster General from military posts regarding burials can usually be found in the series, *General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries*,

1865-1890. However, some correspondence is also located in the *Consolidated Correspondence File, 1794-1890* (see Entry 225, Preliminary Inventory NM-81, *Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, Part I* [Washington: National Archives, 1967]).

Other records relating to the burial of veterans and military dead in RG 92 include *Registers of Burials in National Cemeteries* (Entry 627, PI NM-81). Information regarding headstones purchased by the government can be found in the series, *Card Record of Headstone Contracts and U.S. Soldiers Burials, 1861-1903* (Entry 628, PI NM-81).

For information about various U.S. military installations, see *Outline Description of Military Posts and Reservations in the United States and of National Cemeteries* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1872, reprinted 1904).

CONTENTS

<u>Roll</u>	<u>Name and Location of Cemetery: Volume, Page</u>
1	Aberdeen, Mississippi; I; 6-7 Allegheny Arsenal, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; II; 280 Angel Island, California; I, 12-13, II, 71-72 Baton Rouge Barracks, Louisiana; I; 238-239 Benicia Barracks, California; I, 14-15; II, 74-75 Boise Barracks, Idaho; II, 116 Brule Agency, Dakota Territory; I, 143 Camp Beales Springs, Arizona Territory; I, 18-19 Camp Date Creek, Arizona Territory; I, 42-43 Camp Douglas, Utah Territory (<i>see also</i> Fort Douglas); I, 38-41 Camp Grant, Arizona Territory (<i>see also</i> Fort Grant); I, 102-103 Camp Harney, Oregon; I, 125 Camp Huachuca, Arizona Territory (<i>see also</i> Fort Huachuca); I, 124 Camp Hualpai, Arizona Territory; I, 124 Camp Lowell, Tucson, Arizona Territory (<i>see also</i> Fort Lowell); I, 282-283 Camp McDowell, Arizona Territory (<i>see also</i> Fort McDowell); I, 154-155 Camp at Oklahoma City, Indian Territory; II, 238 Camp Pena Colorado, Texas; II, 274 Camp Pilot, Butte, Wyoming; II, 204 Camp Poplar River, Montana Territory ; II, 181, 193 Camp Sheridan, Wyoming; II, 205 Camp on Snake River, Wyoming; II, 149 Camp Stambaugh, Washington Territory; I, 262 Camp Supply, Indian Territory (<i>see also</i> Fort Supply); I, 279

Camp Warner, Oregon ; I, 304
Camp on White River, Colorado; I, 189; II, 148
Camp Wright, California; I, 313
Cantonment, North Fork, Canadian R., Indian Terr.; I, 247
Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania ; I, 76-77
Cheyenne Agency (Depot), Dakota Territory; I, 73-73, 78-79
Columbus Barracks, Ohio; II, 33

David's Island, New York Harbor; I, 52-53; II, 9, 192

Fort (Camp) Abercrombie, Dakota Territory; I, 8-9; II, 200-201
Fort Adams, Rhode Island; I, 2-3; II, 1-2
Fort Apache, Arizona Territory ; I, 10-11; II, 182, 211-213
Fort Assiniboine, Montana Territory; I, 376; II, 136, 188
Fort Bascom, New Mexico; II, 196
Fort Bayard, New Mexico; I, 28-29; II, 150-151
Fort Belknap, Texas; II, 236
Fort Bennett, Dakota Territory; I, 78-79; II, 122
Fort Benton, Montana Territory; I, 30-31
Fort (Camp) Bidwell, California; I, 36-37; II, 76
Fort Bliss, Texas; I, 22-23; II, 62, 214
Fort Boise, Idaho Territory; I, 24-25
Fort (Camp) Bowie, Arizona Territory; I, 16-17; II, 92-93
Fort Brady, Michigan; I, 34-35; II, 3
Fort Bridger, Wyoming; I, 20-21; II, 35-36
Fort Buford, Dakota Territory; I, 26-27, 374-375; II, 123-125
Fort Cameron, Utah; II, 37
Fort Cameron, Washington Territory; I, 64-65
Fort Canby, Washington Territory; II, 111
Fort Cape Disappointment (Fort Canby), Washington Terr; I, 68-69
Fort Chadbourne, Texas; I, 388
Fort Clark, Texas; I, 58-59, 387; II, 166-167, 240-241
Fort Clinch, Florida; I, 74
Fort Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; I, 188
Fort Columbus, New York Harbor; I, 336-343; II, 4-8
Fort Colville, Washington Territory; I, 70-71
Fort Concho, Texas; I, 56-57, 75, 368-369; II, 168-170
Fort Craig, New Mexico; I, 60-63; II, 152
Fort Crawford (Uncompahgre Cantonment), Colo.; II, 147
Fort Cummings, New Mexico; I, 66-67 ; II, 157, 187
Fort Custer, Montana Territory; I, 385; II, 137, 282
Fort Davis, Texas; I, 46-47; II, 171-172
Fort Dodge, Kansas; I, 48-51

Fort Douglas, Utah (*see also* Camp Douglas); II, 38-40, 252
Fort Du Chesne, Utah; II, 249
Fort Duncan, Texas; I, 44-45; II, 173
Fort Elliott, Texas; I, 135; II, 63
Fort Ellis, Montana Territory; I, 82-83; II, 138
Fort Fetterman, Wyoming Territory; I, 86-87
Fort Foote, Maryland; I, 88; II, 18
Fort Garland, Colorado Territory; I, 98-99; II, 65
Fort (Camp) Gaston, California; I, 106-107; II, 77
Fort Gibson, Indian Territory; I, 90-95
Fort Grant, Arizona (*see also* Camp Grant); II, 94-95, 233-234
Fort Gratiot, Michigan; I, 108-109
Fort Griffin, Texas; I, 96-97
Fort Griswold, Connecticut; I, 186-187
Fort Hale (Lower Brulé Agency), Dakota Terr.; I, 143; II, 126
Fort (Camp) Hall, Idaho; I, 111; II, 41
Fort (Camp) Halleck, Nevada; I, 110; II, 78
Fort Hamilton, New York Harbor; I, 118-119; II, 10
Fort Hancock, Texas; II, 207
Fort Harker, Kansas; I, 112-117
Fort Hartsuff, Nebraska; I, 7
Fort Hays, Kansas; I, 120-123; II, 145-146
Fort Huachuca, Arizona Territory (*see also* Camp Huachuca); II, 102
Fort Independence, Massachusetts; I, 127; II, 19
Fort Jefferson, Florida; I, 132-134
Fort Keogh, Montana Territory; I, 380-381; II, 139-140
Fort Klamath, Oregon; I, 136; II, 114
Fort Knox, Maine; I, 202
Fort Kodiak, Alaska Territory; I, 138
Fort Lapwai, Idaho Territory; I, 142; II, 112-113
Fort Laramie, Nebraska; I, 360
Fort Laramie, Wyoming Territory; I, 144-145; II, 42-43
Fort Larned, Kansas; I, 140
Fort Lewis, Colorado; I, 101; II, 64
Fort Abraham Lincoln, Dakota Territory; I, 141; II, 121
Fort Logan, Colorado; II, 230
Fort Logan (Camp Baker), Montana Territory; I, 32-33
Fort Lowell, Arizona Territory (*see also* Camp Lowell); I, 326; II, 190
Fort Lyon, Colorado Territory; I, 146-148; II, 55-56
Fort Mackinac, Michigan; I, 152-153, 178-179; II, 26-27
Fort Macon, North Carolina; I, 156
Fort Maginnis, Montana Territory; I, 382; II, 141
Fort Marcy, Sante Fe, New Mexico; I, 364-367; II, 153-156

Fort Marion, St. Augustine, Florida; I, 197
Fort Massachusetts (Ship Island), Mississippi; I, 63
Fort (Camp) McDermott/McDermit, Nevada; I, 150; II, 79
Fort McDowell, Arizona Territory (*see also* Camp McDowell); I, 89; II, 96-97
Fort McHenry, Maryland; I, 4-5, 160-163; II, 23-24
Fort McIntosh, Texas; I, 168-169; II, 174, 265
Fort McKavett, Texas; I, 170-173; II, 175-176
Fort McKinney, Wyoming; I, 362; II, 44
Fort McPherson, Georgia; II, 256
Fort McPherson, Nebraska; I, 164-167
Fort McRae, New Mexico; I, 157
Fort Meade, Dakota Territory; I, 55; II, 127, 198
Fort Mifflin, Pennsylvania; I, 174-175
Fort Missoula, Montana Territory; I, 384; II, 142
Fort Mohave/Mojave, Arizona Territory; I, 158-159; II, 100
Fort Monroe, Virginia; I, 176-177, 216; II, 28-32, 270
Fort Moultrie, South Carolina; I, 211
Fort Niagara, New York; I, 180-183; II, 14-15
Fort Niobrara, Dept. Platte, Nebraska; I, 185; II, 45
Fort Omaha (Barracks), Nebraska; I, 190-191; II, 46
Fort Ontario, New York; I, 194-195; II, 13
Fort Pembina, Dakota Territory (*see also* Pembina); II, 128
Fort Pike, Louisiana; I, 196
Fort Porter, New York; I, 204; II, 17
Fort Preble, Maine; I, 202; II, 18
Fort Pulaski, Georgia; I, 208
Fort Quitman, Texas; I, 214-215
Fort Randall, Dakota Territory; I, 370-373; II, 129-130
Fort Reno, Indian Territory; I, 199; II, 57, 194-195
Fort Rice, Dakota Territory; I, 218-221
Fort Richardson, Texas; I, 224-225
Fort Ridgely, Minnesota; I, 223, 376
Fort Riley, Kansas; I, 226-231; II, 67-69
Fort Ringgold (Barracks), Texas; I, 232-233; II, 177-178
Fort Ripley, Minnesota; I, 234-235
Fort Robinson, Nebraska; I, 358; II, 70, 284-286
Fort D.A. Russell, Wyoming; I, 236-237, 356-357; II, 47-49, 275-276
Fort St. Philip, Louisiana; I, 270-275
Fort Sanders, Wyoming Territory; I, 242-243
Fort Sandy Hook, New Jersey; II, 11
Fort San Felipe, Texas; I, 62
Fort Scammel, Portland Harbor, Maine ; I, 202
Fort Selden, New Mexico; I, 248; II, 158, 186

Fort Seward, Dakota Territory; I, 249
Fort Shaw, Montana Territory; I, 250-251; II, 143-144
Fort Sheridan, Illinois; II, 220
Fort Sherman (Fort Coeur d'Alene), Idaho; II, 117
Fort Sidney (Barracks), Nebraska; I, 254; II, 50
Fort Sill, Indian Territory; I, 252-253, 276; II, 58-59
Fort Sisseton, Dakota Territory; II, 131
Fort Snelling, Dakota Territory; II, 118-119
Fort Snelling, Minnesota; I, 256-261; II, 120
Fort Spokane, Washington Territory; I, 294; II, 165
Fort Stanton, New Mexico; I, 264-265; II, 159, 246
Fort Fred Steele, Wyoming Territory; I, 266-267; II, 51
Fort Steilacoom, Washington Territory; II, 266
Fort Stevens, Oregon; I, 263; II, 103
Fort Stevenson, Dakota Territory; I, 268; II, 132
Fort Stockton, Texas; I, 269; II, 179
Fort Sullivan, Eastport, Maine; I, 80-81
Fort Sully, Dakota Territory; I, 278; II, 133, 209
Fort Supply, Arizona Territory; I, 352
Fort Supply, Indian Territory (*see also* Camp Supply); II, 60-61
Fort (Camp) Thomas, Arizona Territory; I, 333 ; II, 183
Fort Thomas, Kentucky; II, 254
Fort Thornburg, Utah Territory ; I, 328
Fort Thornburgh, Utah; II, 53
Fort Totten, Dakota Territory; I, 281; II, 134
Fort Townsend (San Juan Island), Washington Terr.; I, 196, 295; II, 104
Fort Trumbull, Connecticut; I, 280, 348; II, 19
Fort Union, New Mexico; I, 286-289, 354; II, 160-162
Fort Vancouver, Washington Territory ; I, 290-291, 322, 324-325
Fort (Camp) Verde, Arizona Territory ; I, 292-293; II, 184
Fort Wadsworth (Fort Sisseton), Dakota Terr.; I, 296-297
Fort Wadsworth, New York Harbor; I, 298; II, 11
Fort Walla Walla, Washington Territory; I, 350; II, 109-110, 222
Fort Wallace, Kansas; I, 300-303, 390
Fort Warren, Massachusetts; I, 305
Fort Washakie, Wyoming Territory; I, 139; II, 54, 243
Fort Washington, Maryland; I, 306
Fort Wayne, Michigan; I, 310-311; II, 21-22
Fort Whipple, Arizona Territory (*see also* Whipple Barracks); I, 308-309
Fort Wingate, New Mexico; I, 312; II, 163-164
Fort Winthrop (Fort Warren), Massachusetts; II, 20
Fort Wood (Bedloe's Island) New York Harbor; I, 299; II, 11
Fort Yates, Dakota Territory; I, 378; II, 135

Fort Yuma, California; I, 314-319; II, 88-90

Grand River, Dakota Territory; I, 100-101

Greenwood, Louisiana; I, 104-105

Independence, California; I, 126

Jackson, Mississippi; I, 130

Key West, Florida; I, 137

Key West Barracks, Florida; II, 202

Madison Barracks, New York; I, 151; II, 12, 260-263

Mount Vernon Barracks, Alabama; I, 197; II, 11

Newport Barracks, Kentucky; II, 255

North Platte, Nebraska; I, 185

Ogelthorpe Barracks, Savannah, Georgia; I, 211

Pembina, Dakota Territory (*see also* Fort Pembina); I, 203

Pikesville, Maryland; I, 198

Pine Ridge, South Dakota; II, 218

Plattsburgh Barracks, New York; I, 200-201; II, 16

Presidio, San Francisco, California; I, 206-207, 334-335; II, 80-81

St. Augustine, Florida; II, 34

San Carlos, Arizona Territory; II, 227-228

San Diego, California; I, 330

San Diego Barracks, California; II, 83

San Diego, Texas; I, 328

Sandy Hook, New York Harbor; I, 240

San Juan Island (Fort Townsend), Washington; I, 246

Sitka, Alaska Territory; I, 255

Smithville, North Carolina (near Fort Johnson); I, 131

Tule Lake, California; I, 284

Uncompahgre Cantonment, Colorado; I, 241

Vancouver Barracks, Washington Territory; II, 105-108

Whipple Barracks, Arizona Territory (*see also* Fort Whipple); II, 98-99

Willett's Point (Ft. Totten), New York Harbor; I, 307

Yorkville, South Carolina; I, 320