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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 remains 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).

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