

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort McPherson National Cemetery

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 12004 S Spur 56A ☐ not for publication

city or town Maxwell ☒ vicinity

state Nebraska code NE county Lincoln code 111 zip code 69151-1031

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☒ nationally ☐ statewide ☐ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kathleen Schanuel
Signature of certifying official/Title

9/11/10
Date

Department of Veterans Affairs
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Fort McPherson National Cemetery
Name of Property

Lincoln County, NE
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☒ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
1	0	sites
4	0	structures
4	0	objects
14	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY/cemetery

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Second Empire; Other

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick, concrete
walls Brick; concrete; glass

roof Slate; copper; glass, other
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☐ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B.** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

NATIONAL

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

ca. 1873-Present

Significant Dates

1873

1973

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)**Cultural Affiliation** (Complete if Criterion D is marked)**Architect/Builder****Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☒ Previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☒ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository: Brockington and Assoc, Mt. Pleasant, SC

Fort McPherson National Cemetery
Name of Property

Lincoln County, NE
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 20 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>14</u>	<u>371627</u>	<u>4542621</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>14</u>	<u>371622</u>	<u>4542307</u>

3	<u>14</u>	<u>371845</u>	<u>4542307</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4	<u>14</u>	<u>371904</u>	<u>4542615</u>

☒ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Paige Wagoner, Historian and Edward Salo, PhD, Senior Historian / Jennifer Perunko, Historian</u>		
organization	<u>Brockington and Assoc., Inc. / National Cemetery Admin., DVA</u>	date	<u>6-2009 / 8-2011</u>
street & number	<u>498 Wando Park Blvd., Suite 700 /</u>	telephone	<u>843.881.3128 /</u>
	<u>810 Vermont Ave NW (41C4)</u>		<u>202.632.5441</u>
City or town	<u>Mt. Pleasant /</u>	state	<u>SC /</u>
	<u>Washington</u>		<u>zip code 29464 /</u>
		<u>DC</u>	<u>20420</u>

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name	<u>Kathleen Schamel, Federal Preservation Officer, Department of Veterans Affairs</u>		
street & number	<u>810 Vermont Avenue, NW (00CFM1)</u>	telephone	<u>202.632.5529</u>
city or town	<u>Washington</u>	state	<u>DC</u>
		zip code	<u>20001</u>

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Summary

Fort McPherson National Cemetery is located at 12004 State Spur 56A, four miles south of Maxwell, Nebraska, in Lincoln County. Situated on the west side of State Spur 56A, the 20-acre cemetery sits on a square lot. Fort McPherson National Cemetery was established in 1873 as a space to reinter remains from frontier fort cemeteries abandoned by the U.S. Army when conflicts between settlers and Native Americans declined. Wooden headboards marked the first graves at Fort McPherson; later more permanent markers in the form of upright marble headstones and 6-inch square blocks took their place. Additionally a number of private stone monuments are found in the oldest sections of the cemetery.

At the main entrance, a wrought-iron fence with six ornamental stone piers extends across the entire east side of the cemetery. The main entrance gates, composed of wrought iron, measure approximately 20 feet wide and 10 feet high. Two bronze plaques adorn smaller wrought-iron pedestrian gates flanking the main entrance. The first plaque contains the cemetery name in raised letters, while the second plaque features the Veterans Administration (the predecessor of the Department of Veterans Affairs) emblem. A second set of vehicular gates is located 400 feet north of the main gates.

From the main entrance, a central east-west avenue extends to a turnaround at the rear of the property. A 75-foot flagpole is located in the center of the turnaround and a committal shelter stands behind. Three north-south drives extend from the central avenue, forming a rectangular circulation pattern. A brick wall, approximately 5 feet-6 inches tall, runs along the western side of the cemetery and along what was the northern extent of the cemetery by sections C, E, R, and S. (There are now several openings in the wall that allow access to the expansion sections—K, L, M, N, O, P, T, U, V, W, X, and Y—to the north.) The walls and supporting piers date to three different time periods. The original walls were constructed in 1878-79 and only exist today in section C. When the cemetery was expanded to the west in the early 1930s, the western wall was removed and rebuilt at the western property line and the north and south walls were extended to meet it. The last building campaign occurred in the late 1990s/early 2000s, when the western wall was expanded both north and south to the corners of the property. Additional, cast-stone

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coping was added to the walls and piers at this time. A wrought-iron fence runs along the east side of the cemetery; most of this fencing dates to 1941 but a section at the northern end dates to late 1990s/early 2000s when the northeast corner of the property was developed for burials. The rest of the cemetery (south and north sides) is enclosed by modern chain-link fencing.

North of the main entrance is a collection of historic and more recent buildings, including the original superintendent's lodge (now administrative office), a public information building, and four maintenance buildings.

Burial Sections and Headstones/Markers

Fort McPherson National Cemetery originally consisted of four acres divided into four equal sections and separated by intersecting avenues. Three of the four sections (A, B, and C) were used for interments, and the fourth section contained the lodge and service buildings. Another 16 acres around the cemetery proper was used as farmland by the cemetery superintendent.

Additional burial sections were added as needed, first to the west and south of the original sections and later to the north, and today occupy the entire 20-acre reservation. Still active, the cemetery consists of 25 sections and accommodates casketed and cremated remains. The 25 sections are designated alphabetically, A through X, and the memorial section MA.

About 1878, the first upright marble headstones began to replace the wooden markers at the Fort McPherson cemetery. These headstones featured a recessed shield with the soldier's name, rank (above private) and state inscribed in raised letters. Markers for unknown soldiers were 6 inch x6 inch marble blocks inscribed with the grave number on the top surface.

A year later, in 1879, the War Department allowed families of veterans buried in the cemetery to furnish headstones of their own choice. Some families supplied private headstones of various materials to mark the resting place of their loved ones. Many of these private headstones can still be seen throughout the cemetery. In 1922, the War Department decided that varied markers detracted from the uniform appearance of

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national cemeteries and banned the use of private headstones except in sections where they were already present.

A new upright marble headstone began to be introduced in the cemetery after the first World War. The design included an emblem of belief inscribed in the top center of the marker with a more detailed inscription below including name, rank, military affiliation, war service, and birth and death dates. Known as the "General" type, this headstone design is still used albeit with some inscription changes/additions.

Superintendent's Lodge

In 1878-79, a cemetery lodge was constructed for the superintendent of the cemetery as a home with a first-floor office. Located to the north of the main entrance, the superintendent's lodge is a one-and-a-half-story brick L-shaped building. Designed by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs in the Second Empire-style, the lodge features a mansard roof, brick quoins, gable dormers, and flat lintels. There are approximately 22 Meigs' lodges extant today in national cemeteries. The lodge currently houses the administrative offices.

The exterior walls are constructed of brick laid in a 5:1 common bond pattern. Approximately 3 feet above grade, the brick water table is capped by a coping stone that continues around the perimeter of the building. Below grade, the brick is supported by a brick and stone foundation. Symmetrically placed 4/4 double-hung windows illuminate the first floor.

The lodge has a mansard roof with projecting dormer windows. The mansard roof is clad in slate shingles laid in a hexagonal pattern. A standing seam copper roof covers the hipped roof above the mansard walls. The main entrance is located on the east elevation. It is accessed via a set of concrete steps.

The cemetery lodge has undergone a number of changes over the years. The original plan featured three rooms on the first floor and three rooms on the second floor. An open frame porch leading to the main entrances was situated at the southeast corner; it was partially enclosed by 1934. In 1926, a 10 foot x 12 foot frame kitchen addition was added to the north elevation. Early photos show two brick corbelled chimneys protruding

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through the tin hipped roof as well as a skylight; these features were gone by the 1970s as a result of changes in heating and cooling.

In 1951, the lodge underwent a significant renovation that included a new vestibule, porch and reception room, new thin tube radiation and rehabilitation of the north wall. A second round of renovations occurred in 2001. The most significant change at this time was the removal of the kitchen addition. Additionally, later materials such as the aluminum siding on the mansard roof were removed; historically appropriate slate shingles replaced the aluminum. The existing hipped and southeast porch roof coverings were also removed and replaced with copper-standing seam roofs. New copper gutters and downspouts were also installed.

All new windows were put in on the first and second floors. Eight-light fixed wooden units were utilized on the second floor and 4/4 double-hung wood sash units were used on the first floor. The entry porch was also remodeled similar to the 1941 design but with different window and door configurations.

Service/Maintenance Buildings

While the cemetery originally consisted of a wide variety of buildings and structures—including a well/pump house, frame garage, stable, tool house, and octagonal rostrum—many of these buildings were demolished over time. Four auxiliary buildings—both modern and historic—are located around the maintenance yard directly north of the lodge. The yard is enclosed by a wooden fence with brick piers separating it and the buildings from public view.

The oldest of the buildings in the maintenance yard is a modest one-story brick stable, now used as a maintenance shed, which dates to 1896. It is located in the northeast corner of the maintenance yard. The building has a rectangular plan, a side-gable roof, and small windows in each gable. There are also three windows evenly spaced on the north side of the building. Two doors on the south side provide access to the stable. One is a wooden pedestrian door; the other is a modern overhead garage-style door. This opening originally contained a set of wooden doors.

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Located south of the stable is a two-part painted brick and cement block utility/maintenance shop. The west end is a single story, built of brick, and covered by a side-gable roof clad in polychromatic composite shingles. It dates to 1936 and was originally referred to as the "Combined Outbuilding, Garage and Comfort Station." It replaced an earlier building at that location. The far west end houses the restrooms; a storage room and work space for the maintenance staff occupy the remainder of the space.

A concrete-block addition was constructed at the east end of the building around 1960. It is slightly taller and wider than the brick building; it is also covered by a side-gable roof clad in polychromatic composite shingles. A variety of window and door openings exist on the building. Openings on the south side of the brick building were significantly altered during the addition construction; the interior layout was also reconfigured at this time. Today, windows include square hopper-style windows and double-sash casement windows; some window openings have been boarded up. Pedestrian doors are solid wood, metal hollow-core or doors with glazing panels in the upper portion. There are three overhead, metal garage-style doors on the south side of the building facing the maintenance yard.

Completed in 2001, a two-part rectangular brick storage/maintenance building stands on the south side of the maintenance yard. It strongly resembles of the 1936/1960 utility/maintenance building in layout and materials. The west end is a single story lunchroom for the maintenance staff. It is covered by a side-gable roof clad in polychromatic composite shingles. Double-hung sash windows are located on the north, south and west elevations; they are bracketed on the exterior by cast-stone lintels and sills. A door with glazing panels in the upper part provides access to the break room from the maintenance yard.

The east end of the building is approximately a half-story taller than the west side and is slightly wider. It too has a side-gable roof clad in polychromatic composite shingles. Square four-light awning-style windows are located on the east and south sides; they are bracketed on the exterior by cast-stone lintels and sills. Three overhead, metal garage-style doors are located on the north wall facing the maintenance yard. A metal pedestrian door is located to the west of the garage doors; a second pedestrian door is located directly opposite on the south elevation and allows access from the lodge.

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The last structure in the maintenance yard is a small frame pump house, which dates to 1960. It is clad in overlapping wood board; a decorative cornice supports a pyramidal roof featuring a wooden finial at the apex. Double wood doors provide access to the interior. The pump house was originally located outside of the north wall of the cemetery, in what would today be Section T. The structure is currently located on a concrete pad on the north side of the 1936/1960 utility/maintenance building.

Public Buildings

Two additional structures were constructed at the cemetery in 2001: the public information building and the committal shelter. The public information building is located at the entrance of the cemetery. The rectangular one-story brick building is topped by a metal standing-seam hipped roof. The roof extends over the front part of the building and is supported by square brick piers creating a portico. Square projections on the east and west sides give the building more of a cruciform shape and creates cross-gables at the roof line. The roof on the side projections also extends beyond the front wall and is supported by brick piers. The corners of the main building and side projections feature quoins. Entrance to the building is through double French-style doors on the south elevation. Double-hung sash windows are present on either side of the doors, and on the front ends of the east and west walls. Fixed eyebrow windows are present on the north side (back) and at the back ends of the east and west walls. Cast-stone lintels and sills are present at all windows. The overall effect of the buildings is to complement the architectural details of the historic lodge building. The public information building contains the electronic gravesite locator, educational information and public restrooms.

A new committal shelter is located at the west end of the central avenue, opposite the entrance. The shelter consists of the metal pyramidal roof with a glass skylight at the apex supported by four round brick columns at the corners. The back (west side) features a brick and glass wall; attached to the interior of the wall are bronze seals of the five service branches. The areas between the columns on the north and south sides feature metal and glass casement-like doors, which can be opened up via tracks in the roof during good weather. The shelter sits on a large square concrete pad, which has low brick walls on the north, south and east sides.

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The numbers shown for contributing resources within the property reflect the following:

Buildings: Lodge (1876; renovated 1951 and 2001); Stable (1896); Utility/Maintenance building (1936/1960); Storage/Maintenance building (2001); Public information building (2001)

Sites: Cemetery with headstones

Structures: Brick walls (c.1879/1930s/2000s); Main entrance gates and iron picket fence (1939-1941; also 2000s); Pump house (1960); Committal shelter (2001)

Objects: U.S. flagpole (1939); POW/MIA flagpole (c.1998); Bivouac of the Dead plaque (painted aluminum - 2003); Gettysburg Address plaque (cast iron - 2009)

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Fort McPherson National Cemetery is significant under Criterion A for its association with the development of post–Civil War–era national cemeteries and U.S. military activities during the Indian Wars. Created in 1873, Fort McPherson National Cemetery served as the final resting place for Union soldiers, and Native Americans and U.S. Army personnel who died during the Indian Wars.

Creation of Fort McPherson Military Reservation

In the first half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Army pushed westward ahead of settlers, surveying, fortifying, and building new roads. The Army constructed forts and garrisons in Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas, which became footholds of settlement within the frontier. Just outside the new fort walls, small communities of gristmills, sawmills and blacksmith shops emerged to serve the increasing number of troops and settlers traveling throughout the region.¹

Nebraska's Platte River Valley was the avenue by which early pioneers traveled from the Mississippi River to the Pacific coast. Before the expansion of the United States, the valley served as the avenue for the trapper, the highway for the gold rush, the route of the famed Pony Express, and later the course for settlers on the Oregon and Mormon trails. The valley was an important transportation route because it had an easy grade, the river and its tributaries supplied fresh water, and the roaming buffalo provided food for the migrating settlers.²

In the late 1840s and early 1850s, traffic on the Oregon Trail increased from a few hundred to thousands of people. Native American tribes, such as the Pawnee and Sioux, attempted to drive the white settlers from their land, as concerns over food and territory grew. The Grattan Massacre near Fort Laramie in August 1854, followed by major hostilities spreading from Minnesota to Pike's Peak, Colorado, and from Salt Lake City,

¹ Maurice Matloff, ed., *American Military History* (Washington D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, United States Army, 1969; reprint 1973), 157-159.

² Harvey J. Zebel, "History of Fort McPherson, Nebraska" (M.A. thesis, Colorado State College of Education, 1954), 67.

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Utah, to Fort Kearny, Nebraska, signaled the start of the Indian Wars. Westward immigrants sought safety in river towns such as Omaha, Nebraska, and Sioux Falls, South Dakota. However, the eruption of the Civil War in 1861 caused many to fear that the Sioux might ally with the Confederacy, resulting in increased attacks on settlements. Under a great deal of pressure to protect the Pony Express, and railroad and telegraph lines, the Army planned a military outpost in western Nebraska that would eventually evolve into Fort McPherson.³

On September 27, 1863, Brevet Brigadier General George Morgan O'Brien and the 7th Iowa Volunteer Cavalry arrived in Nebraska and selected a site for the military post that would provide protection for the construction of the transcontinental Union Pacific Railroad.⁴ The next month, Lieutenant Eugene Ware ordered his men to cut cedar logs in Cottonwood Canyon, near the town of Maxwell, for the construction of the outpost.⁵ The site for the fort was important, as the post needed to be near a good supply of drinking water, abundant wood for heat and shelter, and the Oregon and Mormon trails.⁶

Initially the Army named the post Fort McKean, in honor of Major General Thomas J. McKean, commander of the Northeast District of Missouri and the District of Kansas. During its construction, the Army renamed the fort "the Post at Cottonwood Springs." In February 1866, the name changed for the final time to Fort McPherson, in honor of Major General James B. McPherson, commander of the Army of Tennessee, who was killed in action on July 22, 1864, during the Battle of Atlanta.⁷

³ Dean W. Holt, *American Military Cemeteries* (North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 1992), 143.

⁴ O'Brien was born in Garrymoile, Ireland, in 1827. In 1848, he took an active role in the rebellion but left Ireland after its failure. He arrived in Milwaukee in 1849, where he worked as a civil engineer and surveyor. After the start of the Civil War, O'Brien served as a Colonel of the 42nd Iowa Volunteer Infantry and the last commanding officer of the 7th Iowa Volunteer Cavalry. He spent most of his service fighting against Plains Indians in Nebraska and Colorado. See "George Morgan O'Brien," Find a Grave, available at <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=11212435>.

⁵ See Eugene Fitch Ware, *The Indian War of 1864* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

⁶ Holt, 145.

⁷ *Fort McPherson National Cemetery: Self-Guided Tour* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, no date), 1-2.

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A typical frontier post, Fort McPherson sat on a bluff overlooking Cottonwood Creek. Constructed by troops of the 7th Iowa Volunteer Cavalry, the fort consisted of officer and company quarters, a post hospital and cemetery, commissary, stables and offices. Additionally, a blacksmith shop, saddle shop, bakery and theater stood right outside the fort's walls and served the troops stationed at the busy post.⁸

From 1863 to 1880, Fort McPherson played an active role in the Indian Wars. Numerous important campaigns and expeditions launched from the fort. On June 15, 1867, Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer led the 7th Cavalry from Fort McPherson in operations against Kansas Indian tribes. In 1869, a large military force left the fort under the supervision of General Eugene Carr, which culminated in the defeat of the Cheyenne Indians at the Battle of Summit Springs. William F. Cody (later known as Buffalo Bill), Frank and Luther North, and their Pawnee Indian scouts all served at Fort McPherson during this period.⁹

After 17 years of intense activity, the Army abandoned Fort McPherson as a military outpost in 1880 with the exception of the 107-acre national cemetery, which was established in 1873. The completion of the Union Pacific Railroad and the decrease in wagon travel resulted in the desertion of many western military posts. Because of this closure, many post cemeteries were neglected and exposed to deterioration. The remainder of the property was transferred to the Department of the Interior.¹⁰

⁸ *Pen Drawing of Entire Fort Locating the Buildings* (no date), Fort McPherson National Cemetery Files, Fort McPherson, Nebraska.

⁹ "A Short History of Fort McPherson and Fort McPherson National Cemetery," p. 1-2, Fort McPherson National Cemetery files, Fort McPherson, Nebraska.

¹⁰ *Historical Record of Fort McPherson, Nebraska, National Cemetery* (Omaha, Nebraska: Office of the Corps Area Quartermaster, 1933).

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Creation of the National Cemetery System

The creation of the national cemetery system in the United States traces to the Civil War. The coming of the Civil War found the civilian population of the United States wholly unprepared for conflict. No less unprepared for war were the military authorities of the Union Army. The rapid expansion of the U.S. Army to meet the war's demands created unprecedented problems of administration and organization. The War Department continued to rely on the prewar procedures for the proper care, identification, and burial of soldiers.¹¹

Prior to the Civil War, local commanders handled all burials of deceased enlisted soldiers at local post cemeteries. While officer casualties were generally returned home to their families for burial, other enlisted personnel received interment at the nearest military post. Responsibility for the identification, burial, and registration of the soldiers' graves remained in the hands of the post commander or Quartermaster General. As the Civil War progressed, the military's burial system proved inadequate in the handling of the steadily increasing number of casualties.¹²

After the First Battle of Manassas, on September 11, 1861, the War Department issued *General Orders No. 75*, which directed the Quartermaster General to supply all general and post hospitals with books and forms on the preservation of mortuary records, to provide materials for headboards to be placed over soldiers' graves, and to ensure the interment of the dead in appropriate cemeteries. However, *General Orders No. 75* had several limitations. For example, the order assumed a system of burial sites and national cemeteries, which at the time did not exist. It also made no provisions for the acquisition of federally controlled cemetery sites and assigned no responsibility for the identification and retrieval of deceased soldiers.¹³ It would take the Army several more months to fully understand the magnitude of the endeavor.

¹¹ Kelsey R. Cass, "None Else of Name: The Origin and Early Development of the United States National Cemetery System" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont University, 2001), 21-22.

¹² Cass, 21-22.

¹³ Cass, 22-23.

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In April 1862, the War Department issued *General Orders No. 33* to overcome the problems of the previous order. While *General Orders No. 33* improved how the Army handled the dead, the question of burial space remained. As the war continued, bodies from local battles poured into local hospitals and cemeteries, which became overburdened and unsanitary. After the American public began to express their displeasure about the ways in which the dead were treated in letters and speeches, Congress acted in July 1862 by passing legislation giving President Lincoln the authority to purchase cemetery grounds for national cemeteries. The legislation of 1862 laid the foundation for today's system of national cemeteries. While the formulation of policies and procedures was left to the president, future action on matters pertaining to military cemeteries would be influenced by practical considerations during hostilities.¹⁴

Although the 1862 act authorized the president to secure cemetery lands for soldiers who died during service, a Joint Resolution of Congress passed in 1866 specifically stated that interment in a national cemetery was reserved for those Union soldiers who died in battle. Questions still remained, however, and ambiguities such as the burial of the Confederate dead and the survivors of the Civil War forced lawmakers to enact legislation that would give structure to the national cemetery system itself.¹⁵ On February 22, 1867, Congress approved *An Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries*, which provided structure for the national cemetery system and presented separate Army regulations for the burial grounds. This act gave a legal basis to the system and committed Congress to find a responsible fiscal policy to support it.¹⁶

The title of national cemetery provided a burial place for all honorably discharged veterans of previous wars. While the earliest of these cemeteries were located on or near battlefields or hospitals, they proved to be inaccessible to some eligible veterans. New cemeteries in areas throughout the country became necessary.¹⁷

¹⁴ Cass, 23.

¹⁵ Cass, 30.

¹⁶ Cass, 31.

¹⁷ *Fort McPherson National Cemetery: Self Guided Tour*, 1-2.

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Establishment of Fort McPherson National Cemetery

The creation of Fort McPherson National Cemetery began on August 5, 1873, when Colonel J. J. Reynolds and Major Alexander J. Perry met to determine a site for the cemetery. The pair selected a site on the south side of the Platte River, about 4,400 feet from the flagstaff of Fort McPherson. The tract, much larger than required for a cemetery, could be used by the superintendent for the cultivation of food and provided sufficient access to water. On October 13, 1873, a War Department General Order indicated that by direction of the President a tract of 107 acres within the limits of the Fort McPherson Military Reservation was set aside as a national cemetery.¹⁸

Originally, the burial sections of Fort McPherson National Cemetery consisted of four acres inside a wooden picket fence. According to an Inspector's Report submitted in 1874, a brick wall replaced the picket fence; the wall has been rebuilt and expanded throughout the last 100 years.¹⁹ An original portion of the 1870s wall survives on the north side of the cemetery. In 1934, a brick wall replaced the woven wire fence constructed by the Sommers brothers, adjacent property owners, in 1925. For \$5,290 the wire fence was disassembled and replaced with a new brick wall on the southwest, west, and northwest sides of the cemetery. Two years later, a portion of the northern wall was removed during the construction of the utility building. In June 1940, the brick wall at the main entrance of the cemetery was taken down to make room for new entrance gates and a wrought-iron fence.²⁰

The *Cemetery Act of 1867* directed the construction of a superintendent's lodge at the principle entrance of each national cemetery. According to standards set out in the 1876 act, the superintendent's lodge should measure 31 feet-6 inches by 18 feet-8 inches. The first story should rise to 10 feet, while the attic story should clear 7 feet-6 inches. The building was to be covered with a mansard roof. The specifications also stated the dimensions of the foundation and cellar, the use of cut stone, granite, or sandstone for the sills and lintels of the first story, the thickness of the exterior brick walls, and the use of rustic quoins on the exterior.

¹⁸ *General Orders No. 103* (Washington D.C.: United States War Department, October 13, 1873).

¹⁹ Inspection Report, 1947, Folder 9, Box 15, Entry 25/A-1, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

²⁰ Correspondence dated 1939, Box 15-16, Entry 25/A1, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15,; National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

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The War Department developed a plan for a brick superintendent's lodge at Fort McPherson National Cemetery that followed the national specifications. In 1878, construction began on the superintendent's lodge near the main entrance, within the eastern wall. The War Department hired a local contractor to construct it for \$6,000; a local brick mason produced thousands of bricks for the project.²¹ The superintendent's lodge was constructed in the Second Empire style popular during the period. The one-and-a-half-story structure in an L-shaped plan, covered by a mansard roof of slate shingles, was designed by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs. Construction was completed in 1879.

In a 1947 inspection report, the condition of the superintendent's lodge is described as "worn out." The inspector further stated that the exterior trim needed repainting, the floors had been painted an unsightly shade of gray, and the furnace used an excessive amount of coal. The inspector noted, "It is not advisable to spend money on maintenance of Lodge. It should be replaced by modern structure." While the superintendent's lodge may have failed inspection, the inspector reported that the utility building, built in 1936, and the stable, 1896, remained in excellent condition.²²

Nearly 75 years after construction, the superintendent's lodge underwent rehabilitation in 1951. The \$24,000 renovation included repainting, insulating and replastering walls, replacing the heating system and gutters, and constructing a new cellar entrance. While the footprint of the building remained unchanged, the enclosed front porch was remodeled to create a reception room for the office and an entrance vestibule for the house. The lodge's kitchen, wiring, and pipes were also updated.²³

The cemetery grounds were also occupied by a wide variety of service buildings, including a pump house, garage, stable and tool house, and octagonal rostrum. However, many of these buildings were demolished during the mid-twentieth century. Four

²¹ Correspondence dated 1879, Box 44, Entry 576, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

²² Inspection Report, 1947, Box 15-16, Entry 25/A1, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

²³ "Ft. McPherson Getting First Renovation." *The Daily Telegraph* in Fort McPherson National Cemetery Files.

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auxiliary buildings dating from a variety of time periods still remain within the site and serve as maintenance and storage spaces.

The War Department eventually deemed the original 107-acre tract too large for the national cemetery, and 87 acres of the cemetery land was transferred to the Department of the Interior by Executive Order on December 1, 1920.²⁴ In 1925, the Department of the Interior conveyed the acreage to Louis Sommers for farmland.²⁵ The present cemetery consists of the remaining 20 acres.

Burials at Fort McPherson National Cemetery

With the creation of Fort McPherson National Cemetery, space became available for the removal and reinterment of remains from many of the abandoned Western frontier posts. An 1874 report from Colonel O. A. Mack, Inspector of National Cemeteries, noted that a total of 389 interments had been made in the recently established cemetery. Among the first to be reinterred at the national cemetery were burials from Fort Kearney, Nebraska, and Fort Sedgwick, Colorado.²⁶ Remains were also moved from forts in South Dakota and Wyoming. Burial records from the early Western military posts demonstrate the harsh quality of life on the frontier. Diseases such as smallpox, typhoid, and pneumonia, as well as attacks by Indians, drowning, frostbite, murder, and suicide all claimed victims at the military outposts.²⁷

Many of the early interments at Fort McPherson characterized the people and events of the western United States during the nineteenth century. In August 1854, Lieutenant John L. Grattan and 28 of his men were killed in a skirmish with Native Americans near Fort Laramie, Wyoming, in what is known as the Grattan Massacre. The Army initially buried Lieutenant Grattan and his men at Fort Laramie, but later reinterred the soldiers at Fort McPherson in a common grave and Lieutenant Grattan at Ft. Leavenworth National

²⁴ Myrtle Martin, "History of Fort McPherson National Cemetery, Maxwell, Nebraska" p. 3, Box-15-16, Entry 25/A-1, Records of the Department of Veterans Affairs, RG 15, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.

²⁵ *Historical Record of Fort McPherson, Nebraska, National Cemetery.*

²⁶ Report of the Inspector of the National Cemeteries for the year 1874, 43D Congress, 2d Session, Senate Ex. Doc. 28. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1875.

²⁷ Holt, 146.

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Cemetery. A white marble monument marks the grave, which is inscribed on three sides with the soldiers' names.

In addition to the Grattan dead, the cemetery contains numerous notable interments. Foremost of these are recipients of the Medal of Honor, the highest award for valor that can be bestowed by the president in the name of Congress. Earned by a deed of personal bravery and self-sacrifice, the Medal of Honor is the highest decoration that can be given in any of the armed forces. Over the years, Fort McPherson has become the final resting place for four Medal of Honor recipients: Private Daniel Miller, Sergeant Emanuel Stance, Sergeant George Jordan, and Private First Class James Fous. Miller was a member of Company F, 3rd U.S. Cavalry during the Indian Wars. Both Stance and Jordan were members of the 9th Cavalry, better known as the "Buffalo Soldiers," and also served during the Indian Wars. Fous served in the U.S. Army, Company E, 4th Battalion, 47th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division, during the Vietnam War.²⁸

Section B contains the Grattan Massacre monument and the grave of one of the first superintendents of the cemetery, Captain Patrick J. O'Rourke.

Section C holds the remains of Spotted Horse, a famous Pawnee Indian scout. His remains were moved from Fort Kearney where he was killed while on a scouting mission.²⁹ The section also contains the remains of Private Cyrus Fox, a member of Company C, 7th Iowa Infantry, and the last surviving Lincoln County Civil War veteran.³⁰

Section S contains the grave of Baptiste "Little Bat" Garnier, a noted scout and tracker during the Indian campaigns. Another grave in Section S holds the remains of Moses Milner, known as "California Joe." Milner fought in the Mexican War, joined the gold rush to California, fought alongside Kit Carson at Adobe Wells and scouted for General Custer in the Battle of Washita.³¹

²⁸ *Fort McPherson National Cemetery: Self Guided Tour*, 7-8.

²⁹ Holt, 148.

³⁰ Holt, 148.

³¹ Holt, 146.

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Fort McPherson National Cemetery has a number of group burials. Many of these group burials are located in Section R and mark the final resting place for a number of American soldiers who served their country in various wars. In some instances, positive identification was impossible due to the circumstances of the soldier's death. Fort McPherson contains over 80 group graves commemorating those soldiers who died in service and whose individual remains could not be identified.

Headstones and Markers at Ft. McPherson National Cemetery

The earliest marker used at post cemeteries and early national cemeteries were wooden headboards with a rounded top and a registration number or name painted on. However, as the markers weathered, many of the inscriptions on them faded and the identification of many of these early graves was lost. The loss of information led to many graves being marked with "Unknown" markers once the permanent headstones were introduced in the cemetery in the 1870s. Fort McPherson National Cemetery contains 541 unknown soldiers.³²

After the War Department created the first organized system of marking graves in 1861, a concerted effort was undertaken to recover the dead from their temporary wartime burial places and to accomplish permanent reburial. Public sentiment turned toward a more permanent mode of marking these graves, and in 1873 Secretary of War William W. Belknap adopted the first stone design for national cemetery headstones and markers.

For the known dead, the War Department adopted a slab design of marble or durable stone 4 inches thick, 10 inches wide, and 12 inches high. The stone was polished and the top slightly curved. The number of the grave, rank (above private), name of soldier, and soldier's home state were engraved on the front face. While not part of the original design, the majority of the headstones from this time period feature a recessed shield in which the inscription appears in bas relief.³³ This marker, referred to as the Civil War type, was originally designed for members of the Union Army but was eventually used

³² *Fort McPherson National Cemetery: Self Guided Tour*, 12-13.

³³ Email/Conversation, Jennifer Perunko, Historian, National Cemetery Administration, July 2009; and Kelsey R. Cass, "None Else of Name: The Origin and Early Development of the United States National Cemetery System" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont University, 2001), 43-46.

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for the eligible deceased of the Indian Wars and Spanish-American War. A small block of marble with the number of the grave cut at the top marked the graves of the unknown dead. The War Department discontinued the use of stone blocks for unknown soldiers in 1903 and adopted the same stone design for both known and unknown soldiers.³⁴

Following World War I, a board of officers composed of Assistant Secretary of War J. M. Wainwright, Army Chief of Staff General John J. Pershing, and Quartermaster General Harry L. Rogers adopted a new design to be used for all graves except those of veterans of the Civil War and Spanish-American War. The General-type stone consisted of a slab design of American white marble with a slightly rounded top. The inscription on the front face included the soldier's name, rank, regiment, division, date of death, and home state. A religious emblem, the Latin cross or Star of David, was authorized for use on each stone.³⁵ By 2011, there were more than 40 emblems of belief available for inscription on government headstones.

Fort McPherson National Cemetery to the Present

The Fort McPherson National Cemetery has continued as a sacred resting place honoring those who fought under the American flag throughout the twentieth century. In 1973, the National Cemetery Act transferred 82 national cemeteries from the Department of the Army to the Veterans Administration (VA) (which became the Department of Veterans Affairs—DVA—in 1989). The VA was already managing a number of national cemeteries associated with veteran hospitals and the transfer consolidated the majority of the national cemeteries under one agency.

During the early 1990s, Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska earmarked \$40,000 for Fort McPherson National Cemetery to acquire more land. DVA considered purchasing 5 to 10 acres of land from a neighbor in an effort to expand the cemetery and continue its activity. In 1991, the cemetery had used 14 of its 20 acres for burials, while 6 acres had yet to be prepared for burials. Many of Nebraska's veterans voiced concerns over the period of time in which the cemetery could remain active within its present 20-acre site. However, Fort McPherson's director, Bob Poe, felt the money should be used on

³⁴ Cass, "None Else of Name."

³⁵ Cass, "None Else of Name."

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cemetery improvements, including construction of new storage buildings, workshops, and a committal shelter. Federal money eventually went to the construction of new buildings and improvements.³⁶ A 2011 project anticipates the construction of columbaria along the northern edge of the cemetery in Section U.

As of July 2011, 9,918 military men and women, and their eligible spouses and dependents were buried in Fort McPherson National Cemetery. The U.S. flag flies daily over the ordered rows of white marble headstones in honor of the lives and deeds of those who answered the call of duty. Set against a serene backdrop of rolling hills and golden fields, Fort McPherson National Cemetery reflects the people who settled the American West and those willing to fight in battles both foreign and domestic under the American flag. The cemetery is maintained and preserved as a final resting place and memorial to those that have served in the U.S. military.

³⁶ Blair Flamig, "Fort McPherson director annoyed about funding delay," *The Daily Telegraph*, April 5, 1991.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: UTM REFERENCES

NAD27 UTM ZONE 14N

NW	371627 4542621
SW	371622 4542307
SE	371845 4542307
NE	371904 4542615

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries are indicated on the accompanying base map.

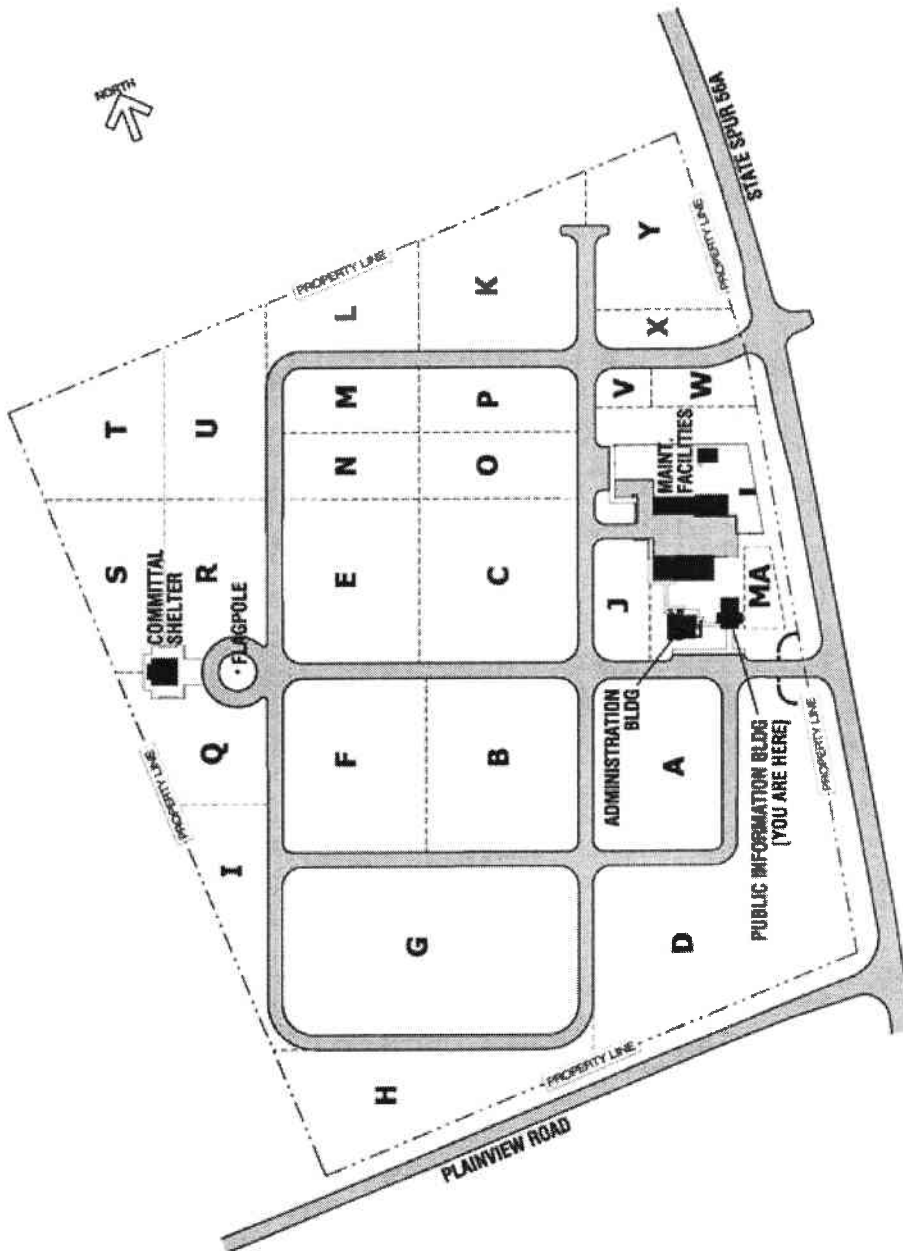
GEOGRAPHICAL DATA: BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The National Cemetery Administration recognizes the above as the existing boundaries of the cemetery.

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Site plan of Fort McPherson National Cemetery

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FORT MCPHERSON NATIONAL CEMETERY

Lincoln County, Nebraska

Paige Wagoner, Photographer

Date of Photographs: April 8, 2009

VIEW OF: Sign at front entrance, view looking west

NEG. NO. 001

PHOTO 1 of 43

VIEW OF: Main entrance gate, view looking west

NEG. NO. 003

PHOTO 2 of 43

VIEW OF: Fort McPherson National Cemetery plaque at main entrance, view looking west

NEG. NO. 006

PHOTO 3 of 43

VIEW OF: Veterans Administration plaque at main entrance, view looking west

NEG. NO. 007

PHOTO 4 of 43

VIEW OF: Superintendent's Lodge, south and east elevations

NEG. NO. 010

PHOTO 5 of 43

VIEW OF: Superintendent's Lodge, north and west elevations

NEG. NO. 015

PHOTO 6 of 43

VIEW OF: Visitor Service Building (noncontributing), south elevation

NEG. NO. 020

PHOTO 7 of 43

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VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 021
PHOTO 8 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking southeast
NEG. NO. 022
PHOTO 9 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite of F. Schwan, example of a recessed shield-style headstone
NEG. NO. 028
PHOTO 10 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite of Daniel H. Miller (Medal of Honor recipient)
NEG. NO. 030
PHOTO 11 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite 361, unknown soldier, example of an "Unknown" block marker
NEG. NO. 032
PHOTO 12 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite of John Anderson, example of a private marker
NEG. NO. 035
PHOTO 13 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite of John McKenzie, example of a private marker
NEG. NO. 036
PHOTO 14 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking southeast
NEG. NO. 038
PHOTO 15 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northwest
NEG. NO. 051
PHOTO 16 of 43

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VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northeast
NEG. NO. 052
PHOTO 17 of 43

VIEW OF: South end of west brick wall
NEG. NO. 053
PHOTO 18 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking west
NEG. NO. 057
PHOTO 19 of 43

VIEW OF: Northern end of west wall
NEG. NO. 059
PHOTO 20 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northeast
NEG. NO. 067
PHOTO 21 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite of Unknown Soldier, example of an upright "Unknown" marker
NEG. NO. 072
PHOTO 22 of 43

VIEW OF: Grattan Massacre Monument
NEG. NO. 079
PHOTO 23 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking north
NEG. NO. 083
PHOTO 24 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 090
PHOTO 25 of 43

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VIEW OF: Group burial

NEG. NO. 93

PHOTO 26 of 43

VIEW OF: Committal Service Shelter, east elevation

NEG. NO. 105

PHOTO 27 of 43

VIEW OF: Nebraska Centennial plaque

NEG. NO. 106

PHOTO 28 of 43

VIEW OF: Flagpole, view looking west

NEG. NO. 107

PHOTO 29 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesites of Baptiste Garnier and Moses Milner

NEG. NO. 114

PHOTO 30 of 43

VIEW OF: West end of north wall

NEG. NO. 118

PHOTO 31 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northwest

NEG. NO. 116

PHOTO 32 of 43

VIEW OF: North wall

NEG. NO. 123

PHOTO 33 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking southwest

NEG. NO. 132

PHOTO 34 of 43

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VIEW OF: Cemetery, view looking northeast
NEG. NO. 143
PHOTO 35 of 43

VIEW OF: Maintenance building, north and west elevations
NEG. NO. 146
PHOTO 36 of 43

VIEW OF: Maintenance and utility building, south and west elevation
NEG. NO. 147
PHOTO 37 of 43

VIEW OF: Cemetery (expansion area), view looking west
NEG. NO. 148
PHOTO 38 of 43

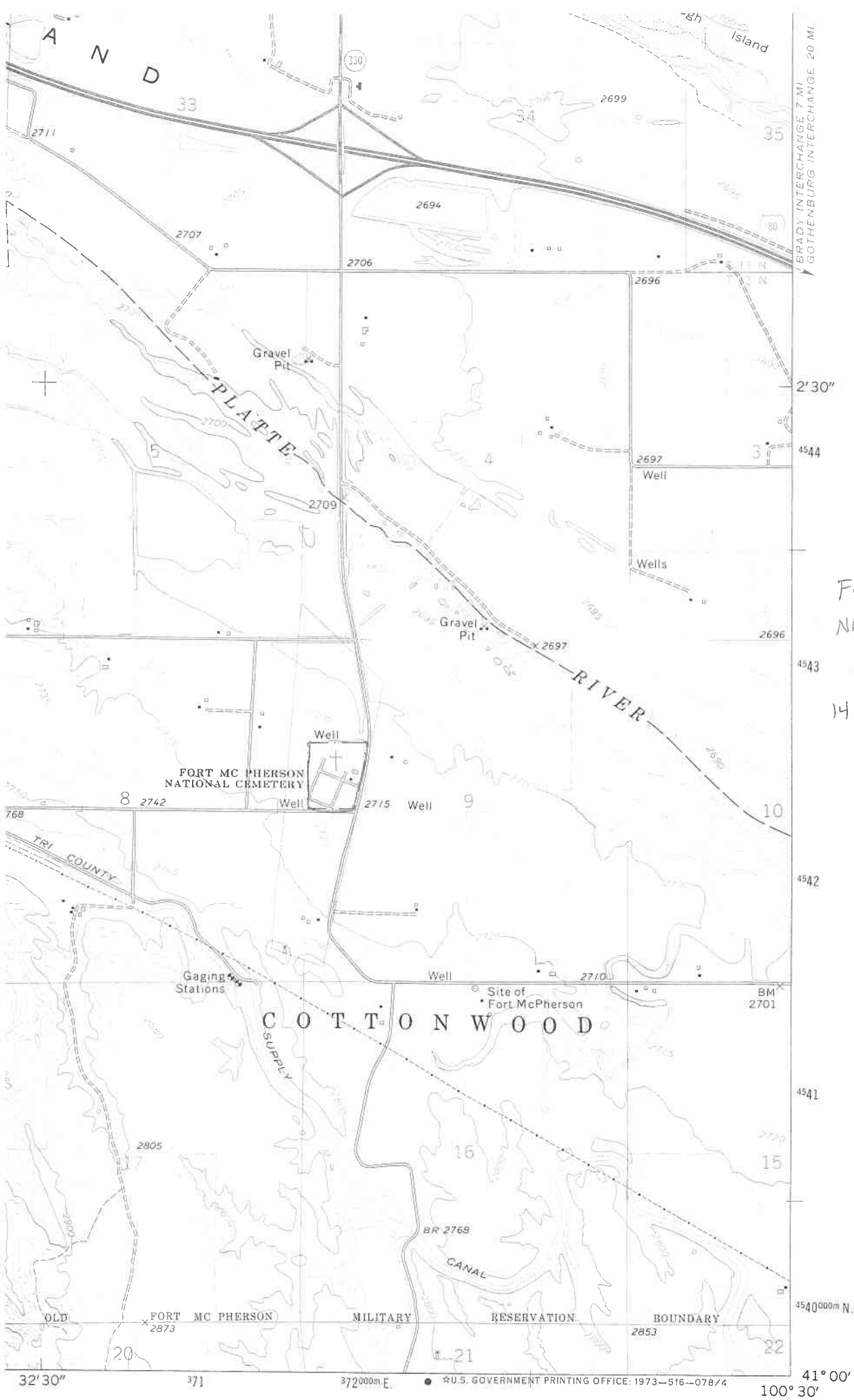
VIEW OF: Cemetery (expansion area), view looking southwest
NEG. NO. 152
PHOTO 39 of 43

VIEW OF: Central avenue, view looking west
NEG. NO. 161
PHOTO 40 of 43

VIEW OF: Gravesite of Spotted Horse
NEG. NO. 177
PHOTO 41 of 43

VIEW OF: Stable, south and west elevations
NEG. NO. 182
PHOTO 42 of 43

VIEW OF: Pump house, west elevation
NEG. NO. 186
PHOTO 43 of 43



FORT MCPHERSON
NATIONAL CEMETERY

14 3716 27 4542621

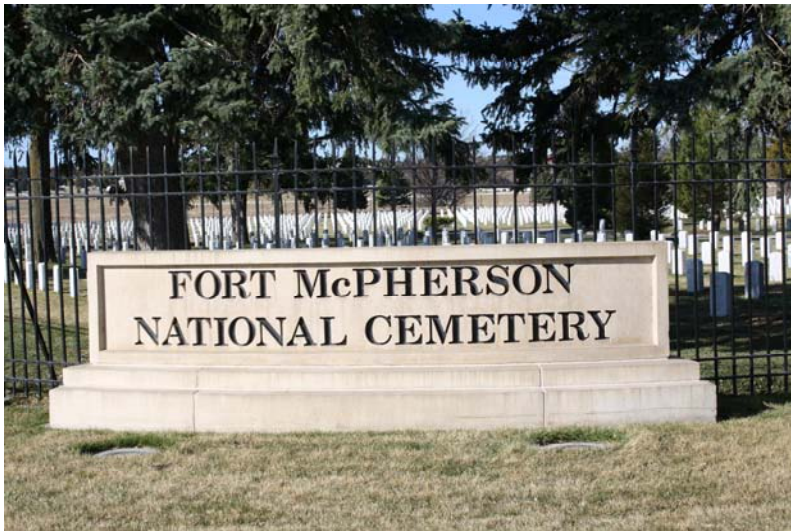


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Photo 2 of 43



Photo 3 of 43



Photo 4 of 43



Photo 5 of 43



Photo 6 of 43



Photo 7 of 43



Photo 8 of 43



Photo 9 of 43



Photo 10 of 43



Photo 11 of 43



Photo 12 of 43

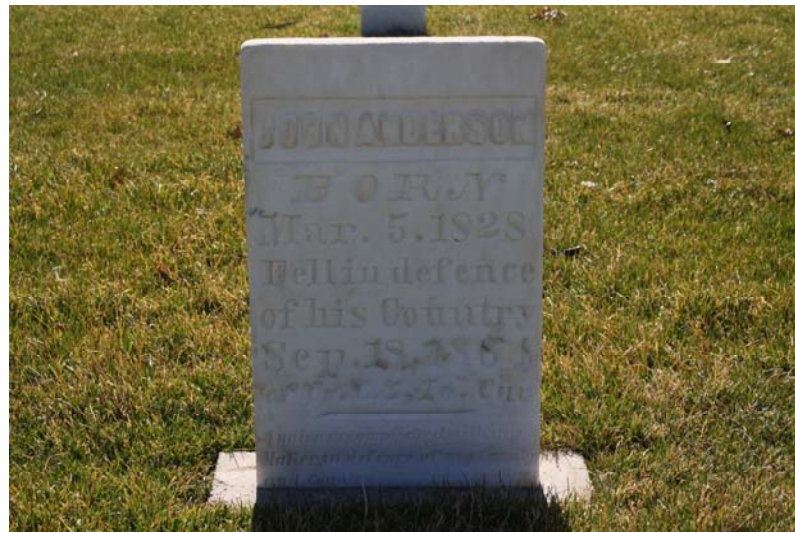


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Photo 14 of 43



Photo 15 of 43



Photo 16 of 43



Photo 17 of 43



Photo 18 of 43



Photo 19 of 43



Photo 20 of 43



Photo 21 of 43



Photo 22 of 43



Photo 23 of 43



Photo 24 of 43



Photo 25 of 43



Photo 26 of 43



Photo 27 of 43



Photo 28 of 43



Photo 29 of 43



Photo 30 of 43



Photo 31 of 43



Photo 32 of 43



Photo 33 of 43



Photo 34 of 43



Photo 35 of 43



Photo 36 of 43



Photo 37 of 43



Photo 38 of 43



Photo 39 of 43

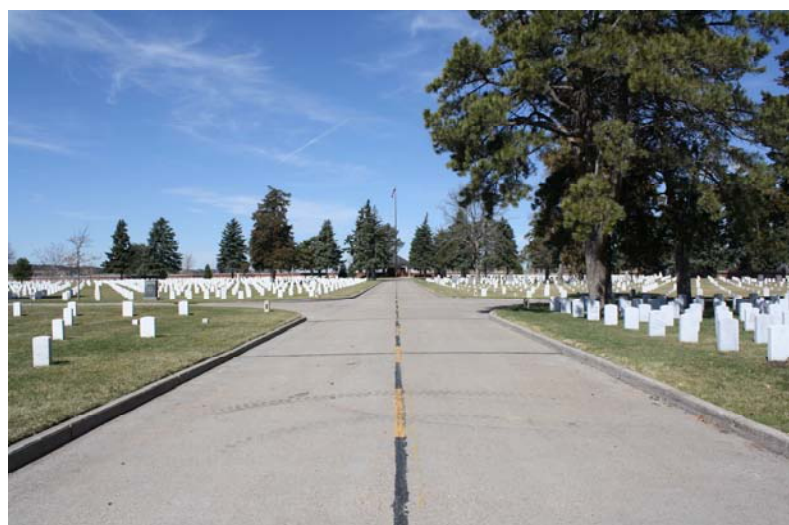


Photo 40 of 43



Photo 41 of 43



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