

## History and Background of Ft. McPherson National Cemetery

Located in the Platte Valley of Nebraska, Fort McPherson National Cemetery is a reflection of the people who settled the American West. Through the valley passed traders and trappers searching for furs, settlers in their quest for land and freedom, miners seeking the riches of the Rocky Mountains, and the first transcontinental railroad.

From these people and their descendants came a special breed of men and women who were willing to fight in battles both foreign and domestic for which American freedoms have been preserved. These grounds are maintained as a tribute to those willing to make the sacrifices necessary to continue our American heritage.

Established September 27, 1863, the original fort provided protection for the building of the railroad and settlers on their westward trek. Initially named Fort McKean, and for a brief time Post of Cottonwood Springs, the fort received its present name on February 20, 1866, in honor of Major General James Birdseye McPherson who was killed in action on July 22, 1864 during the Battle of Atlanta. As settlement of the area progressed, the need for soldiers decreased, and Fort McPherson took on a new role in the area.



On March 3, 1873, the Fort McPherson National Cemetery was established on the Fort McPherson Military Reservation. With many forts in the area closed and their cemeteries deteriorating, it was decided that the remains resting in 23 frontier forts be reinterred in Fort McPherson National Cemetery.

Many interesting tales are associated with the area. In August of 1854, Lt. John L. Grattan and 28 of his men were killed near Fort Laramie, Wyoming, in what came to be known as the "Grattan Massacre." In 1891, the remains of Lt. Grattan and his entire troop were moved to Fort McPherson National Cemetery.

Section S is the final resting place of Baptistie Garnier, also known as "Little Bat." Son of a French trapper father and a Sioux Native American mother, he served as a scout for General Crook. Little Bat was murdered on December 16, 1900 at Crawford, NE and was originally buried at Fort Robinson.

Nearby lies Moses Milner, nicknamed "California Joe," who left Kentucky at age 14 and spent his first winter learning to hunt and trap on the North Platte River. In 1848 he built a cabin on Brady Island and traded with friendly Native Americans on the Loup, Dismal, Platte and Republican Rivers. He fought in the Mexican War, was with Kit Carson at Adobe Wells, and scouted for Generals Crook and Custer. In 1876 he was shot in the back by an unknown assailant and was buried originally at Fort Robinson.

Traversing and settling the west could not have been accomplished without assistance from Native American scouts. Spotted Horse, a Pawnee Native American, spent his early years as a warrior fighting against white settlement of the plains, but later joined the settlement efforts and served as a military scout. Fort McPherson National Cemetery became his final resting place.

The last of the Civil War veterans of Lincoln County, NE, Private Cyrus Fox, a member of Company C 7th Iowa Infantry, died on June 12, 1942. Coincidentally, Private Fox had served under General McPherson, for whom the cemetery was named.

# Fort McPherson National Cemetery



Fort McPherson National Cemetery is located on S. Spur 56A, two miles south of Interstate 80 at exit 190.

Cemetery Administration Office:

Toll Free: 1-888-737-2800

Local: 308-582-4433 or 308-582-4766

Fax: 308-582-4616

Weekend number: 800-535-1117

- ◆ Fort McPherson National Cemetery was established and designated as a national cemetery on March 3, 1873.
- ◆ The first burial took place in 1867.
- ◆ The cemetery serves an estimated 7,000 veterans and their families within Nebraska.
- ◆ Cemetery burials currently average 1-2 per weekday.
- ◆ Fort McPherson National Cemetery conducts an average of 232 burials each year.
- ◆ Fort McPherson ranks 49th in the nation in the number of interments conducted annually among national cemeteries administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs.
- ◆ The cemetery site encompasses 20 acres. Fort McPherson National Cemetery expects to have space for casketed service through the year 2019, and cremated service through the year 2022. Approximately 15 percent of all burials are cremation.
- ◆ Regulation upright marble headstones are used for all burials.
- ◆ On May 27, 2002, Fort McPherson National Cemetery dedicated a new 6-acre development project. It consisted of additional burial sites, streets, and the construction of a beautiful committal shelter and a new public information center. The Meigs lodge was remodeled and converted into an administrative building. Also included in the project were new exterior brick walls, chain link and wrought iron fencing.



- ◆ The cemetery atmosphere is enhanced daily at 8:00 a.m., 12:00 noon, and 5:00 p.m. as the beautiful bell carillon plays a selection of appropriate music. On weekends the carillon plays on the hour from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. This feature was a gift of the Nebraska American Legion and the Nebraska American Legion Auxiliary.
- ◆ Veterans from numerous American conflicts are represented at Fort McPherson. Because of the cemetery's age, veterans of the Spanish American War and Indian Wars are among those represented. Other conflicts represented include World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Persian Gulf War and Iraq.
- ◆ Fort McPherson National Cemetery is the final resting place of four Medal of Honor recipients. Three of them served during the Indian Wars, and the other is a Vietnam veteran.
- ◆ A memorial section honors veterans and their families whose remains have never been recovered, who were buried at sea, scattered, or donated to science.

## Visiting the Cemetery

**Over 7,500 people** visit Fort McPherson National Cemetery each year. Whatever the reason, we welcome all visitors to this shrine for our nation's heroes and offer the following information to assist you.

**The cemetery is open** to the public daily from sunrise to sunset for visitation of cemetery grounds.

**Specific gravesites** can be found through our electronic gravesite locator system, which can be found in the public information center, just inside the main entrance to the cemetery.

**General cemetery information** may be obtained at the administration building or public information center.

**Visitors to specific gravesites** may park along the curb near the gravesite they are visiting.

**Restrooms and water fountains** are located at the public information center

**Visitors attending committal services** should gather at the committal shelter located directly behind the main flagpole.

**All special observances and ceremonies** take place at the committal shelter or around the main flagpole.

**Special services each Memorial Day** begin at 2:00 p.m.

**None of the following activities** are permitted:

- Any sports or recreational activities
- Pets on cemetery grounds
- Public gatherings of a partisan nature
- Littering
- Cutting, digging or otherwise damaging landscape materials
- Boisterous activity.

**All cemetery offices** are closed on federal holidays.