

History of Nebraska's National Cemetery

It is an anomaly in the history of national cemeteries that the cemetery at Fort McPherson, Neb., is so little known to the citizens of the state which is thus honored. Yet for years Memorial day has been here most carefully observed. The cemetery is reached from Maxwell, a railroad station 27 1/2 miles west from Omaha, with a six-mile carriage drive through the most picturesque section of Nebraska. The North Platte river, rising in Wyoming, the South Platte in Colorado, unite their waters just below the town of North Platte, divide after a short junction and run in distinct channels about thirty miles, reunite and flow as the North Platte river to the Mis-

herded a few rods distant from the picket fence which then enclosed the grounds. The cavalry horse of the commanding officer broke from the herd inclosure and dashed to the cemetery fence and in an excited manner threw his head over the pickets several times, then bounded away to the herd and returned with the whole "command" leaping and snorting, and halted only at the pickets opposite the firing line; then by sudden movement the entire number gave a bound and would have scaled the fence but for the timely arrival of their keepers. They had scented the fray, and, all riderless as they were, by strange instinct obeyed what was to



NATIONAL CEMETERY AT FORT M'PHERSON.

souri. Within this thirty-mile area is Maxwell. By carriage to the National cemetery the North Platte is spanned by a driving bridge ninety-six rods long. Two miles across the meadow land the South Platte is reached and crossed by a bridge 198 rods long. Several smaller bridges span the subdivided waters which encircle forty or more small islands of the two rivers.

The government reservation of Fort McPherson was originally four miles square. Much of this has been opened to settlement. The fort was long occupied by the Fifth United States cavalry. There now remain 128 acres, lying in a most romantic spot on the south bank of the South Platte river in an amphitheater at the base of hills which skirt the horizon. The old fort is dismantled and tenantless. The officers' mess house still stands windowless, voiceless, refusing to give up its secrets. "Target Hill" is still a landmark of strange memories. The cemetery ground is a square of five acres, inclosed with a brick wall of graceful design, sixteen feet high, with columns every twenty feet. The entrance is guarded by granite pillars and heavy iron gates. Outside the inclosure are commodious barns for government carriages and horses, an ice house and other pretentious furnishings, a splendid garden, etc. One hundred yards to the west is a well, with massive tank, and the water is conveyed by pipes to the hydrant within the enclosure, which furnishes pure water for domestic and ground uses. Entering the eastern gateway, a gravelled drive leads to the "porter's lodge," or superintendent's residence. This is a three-story brick building, with ample verandas, superintendent's office, where visitors register, and the government business is transacted. The family section is modern and inviting. Midway the central avenue is the flag mound, twenty-four feet in circumference and six feet in height, green and lovely with trailing vines. It is ascended by a flight of steps and here at sunrise the regulator flag, 12x21, is flung to the winds of heaven, to cast its protecting care over the 824 graves of the soldiers of the civil war and one solitary Philippine grave.

The Burial Section.
The burial section, after the order of all national cemeteries, presents a level surface. Each grave is indicated by the conventional headstone, one foot high, ten inches wide and four inches thick, and bears the number and name of the deceased. Marble blocks six inches square, four in height, define the graves of 349 of the great army of the "unknown," while here and there a monument has been erected by friends or comrades.

These marble blocks, in ferried line, few names record, no heads define. "Unknown" or numbered, none's the need. They died! There is no higher deed, and dying, set the captive free. This, this, the price of liberty.

Slightly remote from the flag mound is the octagonal rostrum, built after the national design of stone and iron, with unique decorations, vine-clad and flag-wreathed.

The following incident is told of the burial of C. L. Hequembourg, chaplain of the Fifth cavalry, which was stationed at the fort in the early days. The body had been lowered to its resting place and minute guns were being fired across the grave. The horses of the Fifth cavalry were

then the call to battle and rushed to the "front."

Another grave of special note is No. 256, corner of the northwest avenue. The marble headstone bears the name "Spotted Horse." Spotted Horse was chief of the Pawnees and served the government as a loyal scout in the Indian frontier troubles. He died at Fort Kearney and by instruction of the War department was interred with his comrades in arms.

A notable monument has been erected to the memory of twenty-eight enlisted men of Company G, Sixth infantry, killed in action near Fort Laramie, Wyo.—the Grattan massacre, August 19, 1854.

On fame's eternal camping ground Their silent tents are spread, And glory guards with solemn round The bivouac of the dead.

For Soldiers Who Die in Service.
By act of congress, 1862, authority is vested in the president, as commander-in-chief of the American army, "to purchase cemetery grounds and cause them to be enclosed, to be used as a national cemetery for the soldiers who shall die in the service of the country."

In 1866 the secretary of war is "authorized and required to take immediate measures to preserve from desecration the graves of the soldiers of the United States who fell in battle or died of disease in the field and in hospital during the war of the rebellion and to secure suitable burial places in which they may be properly interred, and to have the grounds enclosed,

so that the resting places of the honored dead may be kept sacred forever."

The congressional act of 1867 defines the general plan of all cemeteries. "Each grave to be marked with a small headstone or block, with the number of the grave (and name of deceased, if known) inscribed thereon, which number shall correspond with the number in the quarter-master general's registry of burials, kept in the superintendent's office of the respective cemeteries, which shall set forth the name, rank, company, regiment and date of death of the officer or soldier, or, if unknown, it shall be so recorded."

Thus the record of every soldier becomes perpetual and forms an integral part of American history. Section 2 of the same act directs that a suitable building be erected within the inclosure, in which shall reside a superintendent, "selected from enlisted men of the army, disabled in service." Such is the general plan. How far-reaching and ample its provisions is manifest in the following to date list of national cemeteries, divided into first, second, third and fourth classes: Arkansas, 3; Alabama, 1; California, 1; Custer battlefield, 1; District of Columbia, 2; Florida, 2; Georgia, 3; Indian Territory, 1; Iowa, 1; Indiana, 2; Kentucky, 5; Kansas, 2; Louisiana, 4; Maryland, 4; Mississippi, 4; Missouri, 3; North Carolina, 4; New York, 2; New Jersey, 3; New Mexico, 1; Pennsylvania, 2; South Carolina, 2; Texas, 2; Tennessee, 7; Virginia, 16; Old Mexico, 1.

The greater number of these have been located in proximity to old battlefields, such as Antietam, Gettysburg, etc. The old trenches of death at Andersonville are now grass-grown and guarded.

It will be remembered when General Custer and his gallant band met Sitting Bull and his braves the entire command fell before the savages. The General Custer cemetery embraces the soil drenched with the blood of that ill-fated band, whose bodies are there interred.

Under act of 1873, general orders 47, national cemeteries, "was established in the City of Mexico, Old Mexico, a national cemetery for the interment of the remains of officers and soldiers of the United States and of citizens of the United States who fell in battle or died in and around said city."

These cemeteries are maintained by permanent congressional appropriation, annual estimates being submitted by the several superintendents.

What possible feature of American civilization gives higher index of the strength of the republic than this provision for the perpetual care of the sacred dust of those by whose death the nation's unity is established?

Queer

American Pictorial Monthly: "Queer, isn't it?"
"What's queer?"
"That night falls."
"Yes."
"But it doesn't break."
"The day breaks."
"Yes."
"But it doesn't fall."
"No."
"Queer, isn't it?"
And he was gone.

In China

Detroit Journal: Today the plenipotentiaries entered the throne room together. "The powers," they said, "submit collectively a note!"
"An oat?" giggled the emperor, being of weak mind.
Things looked black for a while, until the empress dowager's ready tact came to the rescue.
"It's a matter of horse sense, in any event!" interposed she, with a bright smile.

Director of the Mint George E. Roberts

The possibilities that open up under our American institutions to young men of pluck and energy, who are willing to pay the price for success by hard work, are forcibly illustrated in the life of George E. Roberts, who has been director of the mint since 1898. Mr. Roberts is a native of Iowa. He was born in Delaware county August 19, 1847. In his early youth he began serving an apprenticeship in the office of the Fort Dodge Messenger and learned the printer's trade, thoroughly mastering all the details of a newspaper office. His thrift and business ability are shown by the fact that at the age of 21 he bought an interest in the office and a year later became sole

owner. He was elected state printer for Iowa by a joint ballot of the general assembly when only 24 years of age.

Director Roberts has been chairman of the republican central committee of the Tenth Congressional district for twelve years and has been actively interested in all of Senator Dooliver's political contests as proprietor of his home paper and as an intimate friend. He attained a national reputation as a writer on financial legislation when he wrote "Coin at School in Finance" in 1895 as a reply to "Coin's Financial School." In 1896 he wrote the pamphlet, "Iowa and the Silver Question," in which the interests of the Iowa farmer in relation to the silver question were particularly considered. It was widely circulated during the presidential campaign of that year. In 1897 he wrote "Bimetallism in France" and "Money, Wages and Prices" for the National Sound Money league. In January, 1898, he was appointed director of the mint by President McKinley. This appointment was made at the instance of Secretary Gage, who became acquainted with Mr. Roberts through his writings. The Iowa delegation in congress knew nothing of the selection until asked if it would be agreeable to them, and Mr. Roberts had no knowledge of it until the place was tendered him.



OFFICERS' QUARTERS AT FORT M'PHERSON.

impossible under such conditions. Good times come from the full employment of all the wealth producing factors of society. The output of all the comforts of modern life is vastly greater in modern times than in the past, from the fact that our labor is reinforced and made more effective by accumulated capital. Under modern industrial conditions capital and labor work together, and when either ceases to work the other is idle and earning nothing. Under the threats of Mr. Bryan and the Chicago platform in 1896 capital was frightened, lost all interest in earnings and looked only for self-preservation. Millions and millions went to Europe for security and practically everybody who had anything preferred to hide it or sit down on it until the situation changed. The result, naturally, was that all kinds of property were almost unsalable, for when nobody wants to buy there is no price for anything, and wage-earners were out of employment by thousands.

Mr. Bryan and his followers pointed to this condition, due to their own alarming proposals, as proof of the evil influence of the gold standard. The low price of grain was caused by the gold standard. Every business failure, every factory shut down, every man out of employment was pointed to as one of the logical and necessary results of the gold standard. Such tendencies, he said, must inevitably continue and conditions must get constantly worse so long as the gold standard was maintained. Bryan staked his reputation, his standing as an economist and statesman, upon that proposition. He was creating and aggravating the very conditions he described. He was like a man who sets fire to his house and then complains that he has no place to sleep. Out of that condition of chaos and alarm the country began to emerge soon after the election of McKinley. Naturally, time was required to accomplish a general revival of industry. Modern industry is so complex and its various divisions so dependent upon each other that when all are prostrate no one can spring suddenly into full activity alone. First there must be confidence in a better time coming and with that capital begins, cautiously, to prepare for it; then, as capital employs labor, the various industries begin to act and react upon each other, supporting and stimulating each other, until all reach their highest activity, which is when the productive forces of society are all in action, perfectly balanced, engaged in supplying each other.

Present Financial Conditions.
When asked for an expression of his opinion on the financial conditions of the United States today he said:
"The contrast between financial conditions now and four years ago are so

great as to be almost inconceivable. None of us fully appreciate it, for the events of today so soon efface the impressions of yesterday that we cannot now realize the alarm, paralysis and distress of the situation four years ago. We have almost forgotten that in August, 1896, you could scarcely borrow money on any terms. Not a dollar could be had on a first-class farm mortgage. Enterprise was dead. Capital was in hiding. Men of wealth, instead of pursuing the natural impulse to employ and increase it, were possessed of but one idea, and that was to keep from losing what they had. Prosperity was

impossible under such conditions. Good times come from the full employment of all the wealth producing factors of society. The output of all the comforts of modern life is vastly greater in modern times than in the past, from the fact that our labor is reinforced and made more effective by accumulated capital. Under modern industrial conditions capital and labor work together, and when either ceases to work the other is idle and earning nothing. Under the threats of Mr. Bryan and the Chicago platform in 1896 capital was frightened, lost all interest in earnings and looked only for self-preservation. Millions and millions went to Europe for security and practically everybody who had anything preferred to hide it or sit down on it until the situation changed. The result, naturally, was that all kinds of property were almost unsalable, for when nobody wants to buy there is no price for anything, and wage-earners were out of employment by thousands.

Mr. Bryan and his followers pointed to this condition, due to their own alarming proposals, as proof of the evil influence of the gold standard. The low price of grain was caused by the gold standard. Every business failure, every factory shut down, every man out of employment was pointed to as one of the logical and necessary results of the gold standard. Such tendencies, he said, must inevitably continue and conditions must get constantly worse so long as the gold standard was maintained. Bryan staked his reputation, his standing as an economist and statesman, upon that proposition. He was creating and aggravating the very conditions he described. He was like a man who sets fire to his house and then complains that he has no place to sleep. Out of that condition of chaos and alarm the country began to emerge soon after the election of McKinley. Naturally, time was required to accomplish a general revival of industry. Modern industry is so complex and its various divisions so dependent upon each other that when all are prostrate no one can spring suddenly into full activity alone. First there must be confidence in a better time coming and with that capital begins, cautiously, to prepare for it; then, as capital employs labor, the various industries begin to act and react upon each other, supporting and stimulating each other, until all reach their highest activity, which is when the productive forces of society are all in action, perfectly balanced, engaged in supplying each other.

Money Comes Out of Hiding.
"Mr. Bryan showed his ignorance of this natural recuperation and again staked his reputation on his fallacies by sneering comments upon conditions at that time. Crossing Iowa on his return to Nebraska, shortly after election, he said he was hurrying home to keep from being engulfed by the wave of prosperity that was rolling over the country. That was the foolish boastfulness of a man who did not dream that he could be in error. And yet, before President McKinley's administration was six months old there were substantial evidences of returning prosperity everywhere. The first result was an abundance of money to loan. It came out of hiding to earn something again. Before the end of 1897 the Union Pacific reorganization was accomplished on a basis which gave the government every dollar of its claims,



STUDENTS' LIBRARY IN CREIGHTON UNIVERSITY, OMAHA.