

Vancouver Barracks Cemetery

The Vancouver Barracks Post Cemetery hosts ordinary soldiers, general officers, civilians, pioneers, Native Americans, Italian and German Prisoners of War, repatriated Russian soldiers, and most notable four Medal of Honor Recipients. Prior to the establishment of the present cemetery, there was an older military cemetery, and even older cemetery established by the Hudson’s Bay Company within the Vancouver Barracks. At present there are over 1400 graves at the Vancouver Barracks Post Cemetery, 210 of which are unknown from the mid 1800's, probably when the older cemeteries at the Vancouver Barracks were moved to the present site.

According to the National Archive Document No. 351000:

“The original post cemetery was in the northwest corner of the reserve, area 4 acres, enclosed by a strong picket fence. Total internments to 12 August 1882 was 314. Of these the number of officers, as far as was known was six; number of enlisted men whose record could be obtained 30; the remainder civilians or person whose graves were without headboards or any other marks to designate who they were. Civilians we encouraged to reclaim and remove the remains of their relatives, about 72 disinterments of civilians occurred during the year 1881. The new cemetery, situated about ½ mile north of the old one, area 2 acres, was enclosed with a strong new picket fence. No new internments had been made to 12 August 1882. There was some dissention (local) to the disturbance of the burials for reinterment in the new cemetery. Rather it was recommended that the old post cemetery be declared a national cemetery as been formerly don by GO#4 of 1875 subsequently revoked by GO of 1876. The original post was needed for expansion of the building area of the Reservation.

There are four Medal of Honor recipients buried here. Sgt. James Madison Hill, Major William McCammon, Private Herman Pfisterer, and 1st Sgt Moses Williams.

James Madison Hill

During the Arizona Indian Campaign of 1873, First Sergeant James Madison Hill served with Company A, 5th U.S. Cavalry. His unit engaged the enemy at Turret Mountain, in Arizona on 25 March 1875. His medal citation simply says, “Gallantry in action,” leaving the reader to wonder what else was going on. Hill stayed in the Army, and became the Commissary Sergeant at Vancouver until he retired in 1899. He died in Vancouver on Sept. 17, 1919 of “arterio sclerosis.”

William W. McCammon -

In the Civil War, First Lieutenant William McCammon was a member of Company E. of the 24th Missouri Infantry. On October 3, 1862, his unit engaged Confederate forces near Corinth, Mississippi. And, “While on duty as provost marshal, voluntary assumed command of his company, then under fire, and so continued in command until the repulse and retreat of the enemy on the following day, the loss to the company during the battle being very great.” McCammon continued in the Army, eventually coming to the Vancouver Barracks. At one point, he was temporary commander of the Vancouver Barracks, but his normal position was commander of Company D, of the 14th Infantry.

Herman Pfisterer

Courage can come to anyone, when they need it, even to musicians. Private Herman Pfisterer came a long way from his native Brooklyn to become the bugler for Company H., 21st U.S. Infantry, during the Spanish American War in Cuba, in 1898. On 1 July of that year, his unit was heavily engaged in an attack at Santiago, Cuba, and suffered heavy losses. Private Pfisterer “Gallantly assisted in the rescue of the wounded from in front of the lines and under heavy fire from the enemy.” Later Pfisterer served as a bugler with the Company D, 14th U.S. Infantry at Vancouver Barracks. For at time at least, Pfisterer served in the same unit as William McCammon.

Moses Williams

First Sergeant Moses Williams was a “Buffalo” soldier, serving in Company I, 9th U.S. Cavalry during the Apache War in 1881, a unit made up primarily of African American troops. On 16 August 1881, while on patrol near the Cuchillo Negro Mountains of New Mexico, the Apache attacked. First Sergeant Williams: “Rallied a detachment, skillfully conducted a running fight of 3 or 4 hours, and by his coolness, bravery, and unflinching devotion to duty in standing by his commanding officer in an exposed position under heavy fire from a large party of Indians saved the lives of at least 3 of his comrades.” Williams remained in the Army, and became the Ordinance Sergeant at Fort Stevens, delivering supplies to various Coastal Artillery Batteries along the Washington and Oregon Coasts. When he retired in 1899, Williams moved to Vancouver, and died in bed, of heart failure, three weeks later.

Other Burials within the Cemetery

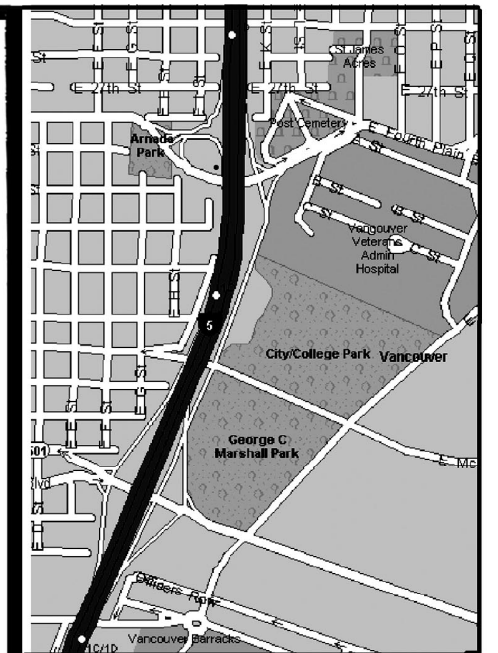
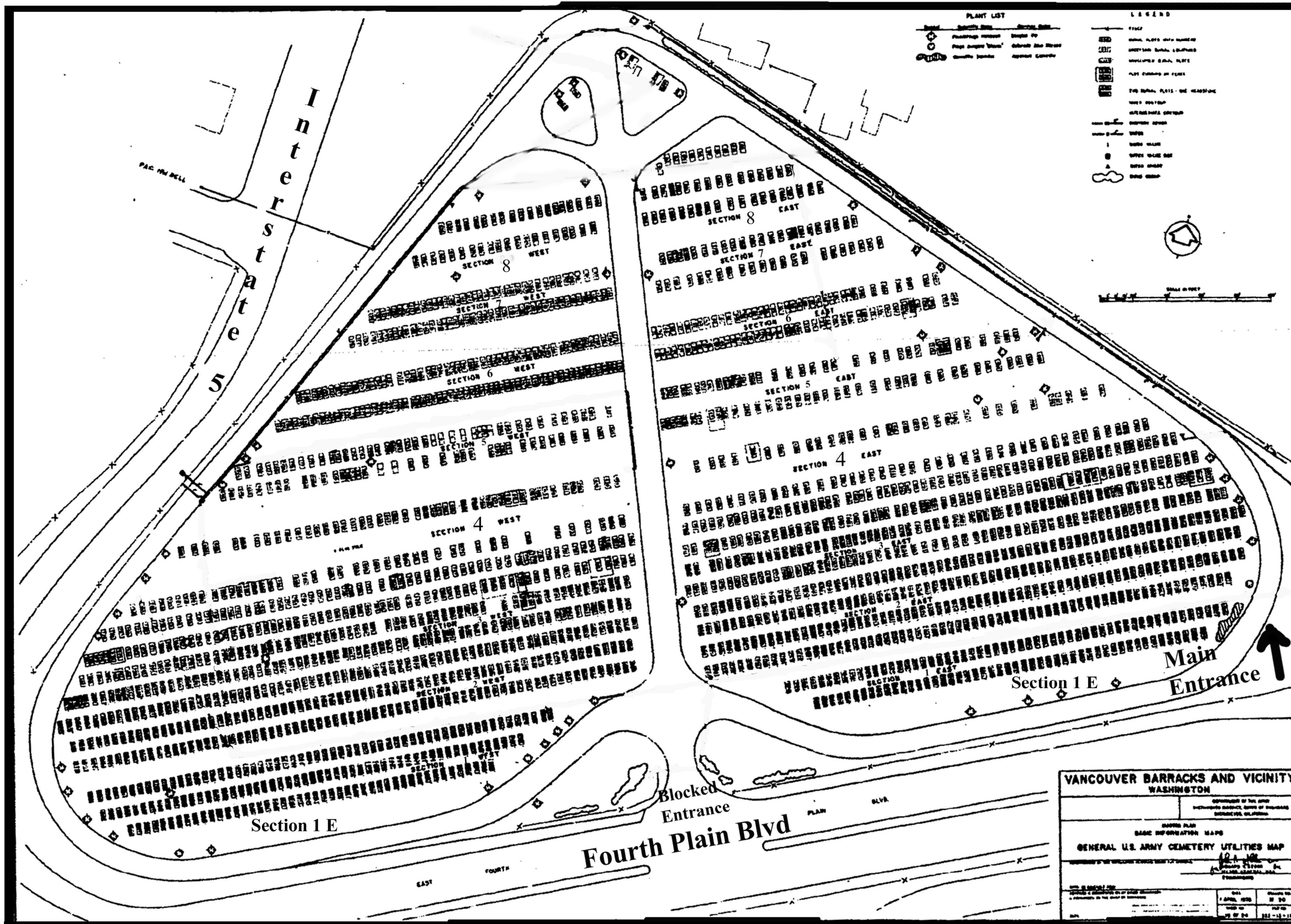
Former 104th Division Commander, Major General Retired Jack Howard King is buried here. In addition to soldiers, many wives, children, and civilians are buried within the cemetery. Probably the largest number of burials come from World War II. Some of these were people survived the war, and were buried there

years later. Others died during the war, and their bodies were returned to Vancouver for burial. A small number of soldier buried at the Vancouver Barracks were not Americans. During the war, several thousand Italian and German soldiers were interred in the northwest. Most survived the war, and returned home. A handful died before that could happen, and were buried among their former enemies, equal in death.

“Another notable of Fort Vancouver was Sarah Winnemucca, the daughter of a Paiute Chief (1844-1891), who was fluent in English and several native languages. She served as an Army scout, an interpreter among numerous tribes, as peace negotiator with Lt. C. E. S. Wood for the Bannock Treaty in 1878 and as an instructor for the Bannock tribe children incarcerated with adults at Vancouver Barracks in 1879. To the end of her life, Winnemucca continued to teach and campaign for decent living conditions and peaceable compromises in the west.“

From: <http://robert-crouch.com/vanbar.html> this website has a listing of the location of many tombstones, in alphabetical order.

<u>Name and Rank</u>	<u>Section/Stone Number</u>
Hill, James Madison, Sergeant Medal of Honor Recipient	4W/#650
Pfisterer, Herman, Private Medal of Honor Recipient	4E/#448
McCammon, William, Major Medal of Honor Recipient	4E/412
Williams, Moses, First Sergeant Medal of Honor Recipient	8W/393
King, Jack, Major General Former Commander, 104 th Division	3E/902
Leonhardt, Frederick, Staff Sergeant German Prisoner of War	9E/01
Dioguard, Vincenzo, Sergeant Italian Prisoner of War	9E/08
UNKOWN	5E, 6E, 6W, 7W
Although there are many stones marked Unknown, these concentrated interments are probably due to the mass movement of graves from the old cemetery to the present one.	



To locate the entrance to the Vancouver Barracks Cemetery:

From the South, head north of Interstate 5, take Exit 1c/d, pass Mill Plain, and take the Fourth Plain Exit east. The main entrance is located on the north (left,) between the Military and St James Cemeteries.

From the North, take Exit 1d, take Fourth Plain east, across the freeway overpass. The main entrance is located on the north (left,) between the Military and St James Cemeteries.

VANCOUVER BARRACKS AND VICINITY WASHINGTON	
OPERATION OF THE AREA INDEPENDENT BARRACKS, BARRACKS OF THE ARMY DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA, WASHINGTON	
BASIC INFORMATION MAPS	
GENERAL U.S. ARMY CEMETERY UTILITIES MAP	
REVISIONS TO THE BARRACKS AND VICINITY MAPS	
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