



Washington Veterans Home, Port Orchard

Cemetery History:

The State Veterans Home in Retsil opened in February of 1910. In anticipation of the opening of the new Home, some of the applicants were already living in tents and shanties on a stretch of beach across the road from the Home. Among them was C.D. Rowley. He got up early on February 22nd and was first in line to be admitted. Although he fulfilled his wish of becoming the first member of the Home, Mr. Rowley did not have a long residence at the Home. He died on May 1, 1910, just sixty-nine days later. He was the first to be buried in the Home's cemetery.

The original cemetery at the foot of the hill had become too small and not suitable for a burial site. Ten acres of land had been purchased on the hill east of the Home, and in 1914, a portion of this land was cleared and fenced for a new cemetery. A road was graded and water service was extended to serve the cemetery. The remains in the old cemetery were then moved to the new location.

In 1935, ten more acres of land were purchased to add to the cemetery. With the help of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1935 and the establishment of the Works Progress Administration, many improvements were made to the cemetery during the next five years. The road was resurfaced, the headstones were reset, and the grounds were fenced. A rock wall was erected along the road which divided the two sections. The eastern, or old, part was set aside for the Civil War veterans and their wives and widows. The western area was dedicated for the veterans of the World War and their spouses.

There are three obelisks located in this cemetery honoring veterans of the Spanish American War, the Civil War and for Veterans from all Wars. They were erected in memory of our country's veterans at their final resting place. One of the monuments was donated by the Women's Relief Corps and the other by the United Spanish War Veterans. Veterans of World Wars were later honored by a plaque presented by the local American Legion Post #182, which was established at the Home in 1944.

Total Interred: 2749

Acres in Use: 13

Medal of Honor Recipients:

Army Medal of Honor recipient Pvt. Gotfred Jensen from the Spanish-American War is buried here. He was awarded the medal for his actions as a Private during the Philippine Insurrection on May 13, 1899.



Name: Gotfred Jensen

Home of Record: Devils Lake, North Dakota

Date of Birth: November 20, 1872

Place of Birth: Denmark

Date of Death: December 26, 1945

Burial Location: Retsil, (Section 60, Lot 5), LAT 47.5404 LON -122.6118



Citation: Awarded for actions during the Philippine Insurrection

The President of the United States of America, in the name of Congress, takes pleasure in presenting the Medal of Honor to Private Gotfred Jensen, United States Army, for most distinguished gallantry on 13 May 1899, while serving with Company D, 1st North Dakota Volunteer Infantry, in action at San Miguel de Mayumo, Luzon, Philippine Islands. With 11 other scouts, without waiting for the supporting battalion to aid them or to get into a position to do so, **Private Jensen charged over a distance of about 150 yards and completely routed about 300 of the enemy, who were in line and in a position that could only be carried by a frontal attack.**

Date of Issue: June 6, 1906

Action Date: May 13, 1899

Service: Army

Rank: Private

Company: Company D

Division: 1st North Dakota Volunteer Infantry

Private Jensen (later Sergeant) was a member of Young's Scouts. Young's Scouts was a select group of United States Army soldiers during the Philippine-American War organized under a Vermont civilian named William H. Young. Because of his previous experience as a soldier and soldier of fortune and his demonstrated coolness under fire, Young came to the notice of General Henry W. Lawton, who hired Young as his Chief Scout during Lawton's Northern Campaign. Young's Scouts acted as an advance guard and engaged in search and destroy missions. The exploits and valor of Young's Scouts soon brought them to the attention of the American public.

Members of Young's Scouts came from several units in Lawton's command, including the 1st North Dakota Volunteers, the 2nd Oregon Volunteers, and the 4th U.S. Cavalry (dismounted). Although the original unit was composed of 25 men, Scouts came and went as casualties and sickness took their toll. In two different engagements a number of Scouts were recommended for the Medal of Honor, including Private Jensen.