

CANNON – SUNSET HILL CEMETERY

This Civil War era cannon is located near the center of Sunset Hill Cemetery in Herington, KS. The cannon was placed in Sunset Hill Cemetery in 1908 by members of the Grand Army of the Republic (G.A.R.) and its auxiliary organization, the Woman's Relief Corps (W.R.C.). The G.A.R. was a Civil War Union Veteran's organization founded in Decatur, Illinois in 1866. By 1890 the G.A.R. had a nationwide membership of 409,489 veterans of the "War of the Rebellion" as it was known in the North. The Kansas Department of the GAR claimed a membership of 19,000 members by 1890. Membership was limited to honorably discharged veterans of the Union Army, Navy, Marine Corps or the Revenue Cutter Service who had served between April 12, 1861 and April 9, 1865. The community level organization was called a "Post" and



each was numbered consecutively within each department. Nearly every town in Kansas had veterans of the Civil War and nearly 500 posts were formed in Kansas. Herington veterans formed Post #424 which was originally named the "Herington" post. The name was changed to the "Marshall" post on February 7, 1893. Records for the Marshall/Herington post exist for the years 1887 – 1924. The Woman's Relief Corps was a national charitable and patriotic group founded in Leavenworth in 1883 as an auxiliary of the G.A.R. organization.

Since the cannon was produced in 1866, it is not technically a "Civil War Cannon", that is, it never saw service during the Civil War. However, it is from the reconstruction era which immediately followed Lee's surrender at Appomattox. There have been many reproduction cannons produced of the type used during the Civil War. The one in Sunset Hill Cemetery is authentic, however. Generally, authentic cannons can be identified by the date and markings at the front end of the barrel. This cannon barrel at Sunset Hill Cemetery was produced in 1866 (after the close of the Civil War) by the Phoenix Iron Company (P.I.Co) of Phoenixville, PA. The barrel is from a 3-inch Ordnance Rifle designed by inventor John Griffen. As early as 1855, the Phoenix Iron Company foundry had been producing smoothbore artillery pieces known as "Griffen Guns" named after inventor John Griffen. These cannons used a 6 lb projectile. This design of the Griffen Gun was improved after 1861 following the advent of the longer

range rifled gun barrel. These designs were known as the 3-inch Ordnance Rifle. The Phoenix Iron Company produced over 1,000 of these 3-inch Ordnance Rifles for the Union Army during the American



Civil War. Manufactured using the company's unique rolling process, the wrought iron barrels were durable and resisted bursting, unlike other company's cast iron gun tubes. Quite a number of surviving pieces can be seen at the Gettysburg National Battlefield in Gettysburg, PA. The barrel of the cannon is also stamped with the year 1866 and the letters J.G.B. which is probably the

inspector's initials, John G. Butler who was an artillery piece inspector between the years 1864-1888

