

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
CAMP NELSON NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. KY-1-A

Location: 6980 Danville Road, Nicholasville, Jessamine County, Kentucky.

The coordinates for the Camp Nelson National Cemetery, Lodge are 84.604175 W and 37.785777 N, and they were obtained in August 2012 with, it is assumed, NAD 1983. There is no restriction on the release of the locational data to the public.

Present Owner: National Cemetery Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Prior to 1988, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs was known as the Veterans Administration.

The Veterans Administration took over management of Camp Nelson National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1875.

Builder/Contractor: Job Winans Angus.

Description: The Second Empire style lodge is a one and one-half story building over a basement. The principal elevation faces north. The foundations are stone and the walls are brick. The corners of the building are augmented with projecting quoins, also rendered in brick. The lintels and sills of the first-floor windows are stone, likely granite. The first-floor windows are double-hung, wood sash glazed with six-over-six lights. Dormer windows light the second floor. A slate covered mansard roof distinguishes the building, lending it an air of the contemporary Second Empire style; the mansard is surmounted by a shallow hip roof that is covered in tin.

The building has a L-shape footprint and this floor plan allowed for flexibility in use, enabling the superintendent to attend to his public duties and providing him a place to live. In the space of the L in plan was a porch; two doors opened onto it, one from the office and the other from the living room. This entrance porch is located at the northwest corner of the building. Historic photographs show that the porch pillars are brick, not wood, suggesting a variation to the standard-issue plan and design sent by the Office of the Quartermaster General.

Maintenance records kept by the Veterans Administration outline changes to the building from the 1920s through the 1960s. The mechanical systems were continually monitored and updated when feasible; this includes the heating system (last changed in 1969), plumbing (first upgraded in the mid 1920s for a bathroom), cisterns (added 1928), and electrical wiring. The building was regularly inspected and painted; caulking around openings and repointing of the brickwork also was done. The chimney was repaired in 1934, gutters and downspouts replaced in 1962, and some repair work on the roof was done in 1968. The windows received screens in the 1930s,

storm windows in the 1950s, and were repaired in 1969. Inside, the bathroom had new fixtures in 1939, the wood floors were refinished in 1939 and again in 1959, the bathroom was retiled in 1956 and the kitchen in 1960. The basement was overhauled in the 1950s when the plaster coating on the walls was removed and a waterproof sealant applied. The stairs leading to the basement were replaced at this time as well. A laundry tub had been installed in the 1940s, and by the 1950s, furnaces and hot water heaters assumed their present places in the basement service area.

Changes to the floor plan include the addition of a kitchen in 1929; the ell was constructed of brick masonry and aerial photographs place it at the east end of the south rear elevation. The frame porch was replaced with a concrete porch at this time, and was re-roofed. In the mid 1920s a bathroom was inserted into the second floor and in 1935 the partition wall for that space was built along with a new window. The kitchen was replaced in 1966, and a closet was created upstairs in 1968.

Site Context: The original cemetery lot was rectangular in shape and divided into four burial sections with a flagstaff at the central intersection of the quadrants. The lodge was built on an irregularly shaped parcel added to the west of the initial boundary line. Access to the cemetery is from Danville Road (State Route 27) on the far west side of the lodge; Camp Nelson Cemetery Road runs from Danville Road past the north front façade of the lodge.

History: Please see the contextual report for an analysis of the architectural development of the lodge as a building type for the national cemeteries and its place within this prescribed landscape (HALS No. DC-46).

In 1862 Congress authorized the appropriation of land for use as national cemeteries so that the Union soldiers who perished in service to their country could be buried with honor. These became the first cemeteries in the national cemetery system; by the end of the decade almost 300,000 men were buried in seventy-three national cemeteries. By that time the Office of the Quartermaster General, and the Quartermaster Montgomery C. Meigs in particular, had developed an architectural program for the cemetery. The program created for the national cemeteries included an enclosing wall demarcating the grounds and ornamental iron gates cast to instill reverence to those who entered and calm the wrought emotions of a nation in mourning for its lost sons. Specific plantings, such as the Osage-orange hedge and various trees, were selected to give a pleasing appearance and, likely, to screen outbuildings - the business of cemetery maintenance - from public view. Less a commemorative architectural statement, the superintendent's lodge combined practicality with a respectful presence.

Lodge plans first evolved from expedient wood-frame "cottages" to masonry buildings one-story in height and with a three-room floor plan. Construction of the temporary wood-frame lodges took place in the years 1867 to 1869, and overlapped with the construction of the first permanent masonry lodges built to a standard, single-story design from 1868 to 1871. Officers in charge of the cemeteries soon found the floor plans of the temporary wood lodges and the first permanent masonry lodges inconvenient and, increasingly, unattractive.

Moreover, representatives from the Quartermaster General's Office noted these three-room models were often too small for a superintendent and his family, and so in 1869, plans for a six-room, one and one-half story type were acquired from Edward Clark, Architect of the Capitol Extension. The design was refined over the next two years and in 1871 drawn for the Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs's approval. This standard plan featured a mansard roof and so became associated with the French or Second Empire style. Contemporary buildings, domestic and civic, exhibited this aesthetic and so the choice of the Quartermaster for a Second Empire style lodge is in keeping with national architectural trends as well as the personal taste of Meigs whose house also was erected in the Second Empire style. On the national stage, Alfred Mullet designed the Old Executive Office building in Washington, DC, a building whose construction in the 1870s coincided with the building of lodges in the Second Empire style in many of the national cemeteries.

The National Cemetery Administration identifies the Second Empire style lodge, referred to in the 1880s as the "usual" type, or even the "full Meigs plan" likely in reference to the Quartermaster's endorsement of the design, as the first generation of permanent lodges. It reflects a concerted effort to standardize what a national cemetery, including the lodge, should look like. The last cemeteries for which the Quartermaster contracted for this style of lodge were for Mobile, Alabama, and Beaufort, South Carolina, in 1881.

The L-plan was revised in 1885 for the lodge in San Francisco, and then employed for the lodges in Mound City and Loudon Park. The revised plan was further improved for the construction of the lodge at Cypress Hills. The revision to the standard L-plan primarily included a change in roof form from the mansard to a cross-gable and the use of banded brick in the exterior walls. Cypress Hills was a simpler expression of the type, with segmental arches over the windows instead of stone lintels and having no banded exterior brick in the walls. In the 1890s, the plans called for an elongated office wing. This change to the L-plan accommodated an entrance hall in the middle of the building; the elongated L-plan was built in Santa Fe, Fort Smith, and Fort Leavenworth.

By the century's end, standards of living called for conveniences the L-plan lodges lacked. Advances in plumbing and heating technologies, in particular, made the L-plan outdated as expectations about the appropriate level of domestic sanitation that the government should provide to its employees changed. Even so, the Quartermaster omitted indoor toilets from the lodge floor plans until 1905. Maintenance of the existing lodges, as well as ell additions, addressed some of the inconveniences of the older buildings, and made the lodges more comfortable as living spaces. Between the 1880s and 1940s, improvements to the existing lodges included the installation of indoor plumbing and bathrooms, central heating, closets and cupboards; adding a kitchen ell and converting the original kitchen into a dining room; and maintenance of windows, shutters, and porches.

By 1905, the Quartermaster determined some lodges warranted a complete overall, rather than renovation, and the department began to replace some of the buildings in the national cemeteries. For the new lodges, it created a succession of twenty-two different plans between 1905 and 1960. Nine of these plans were used to build multiple lodges, but thirteen were unique designs,

used only once. Compared to the extended popularity of the L-plan, which lasted from 1870 to 1881 in its mansard-roof form and to 1904 in its later variations, the rapid succession of designs in the twentieth century suggests a new awareness among those directing the cemeteries of the need to construct lodges that were aesthetically and technologically up-to-date. Over five decades, the Quartermaster endorsed a progression of plans from four-squares to bungalows to Colonial Revival designs and then to suburban ramblers. This progression paralleled the changes in form, style, building materials, and construction practices that occurred in the private housing market.

Most of the lodges built in the twentieth century are indistinguishable from typical American middle-class and upper-middle-class suburban dwellings, with the exception of a second entrance for the superintendent's office. In some instances, such as in Hampton, Virginia, and in Annapolis, Maryland, the army made a particular effort to match new lodges to their local surroundings, usually by building period-revival designs in places where those designs would have particular resonance. In a nod to the colonial heritage of the Chesapeake, the Quartermaster built one-and-one-half-story brick lodges in a Colonial Revival style at these cemeteries in 1940. In another example, the desire to match designs to localities prompted the alteration of the L-plan lodge at San Francisco into a Spanish Mission Revival building in 1929 and the similarly extensive reconstruction of the Santa Fe lodge into the Pueblo Revival style in 1942.

The lodge at Camp Nelson National Cemetery was one of six constructed through the Office of the Quartermaster in 1875. The use of the definitive version of the L-plan design for this lodge makes the Camp Nelson lodge a significant example of the building type as it was developed by the Quartermaster's department. The adoption of a standard design for the lodges corresponded to a standardization occurring in the construction industry and facilitated the department's ability to oversee several projects concurrently. Camp Nelson's L-plan lodge provides an extant example of a building form and style that became synonymous with the Quartermaster in the late nineteenth century.

During the Civil War, Camp Nelson was an enlistment base for African American soldiers. Many of the burials in the camp's cemetery, therefore, were from the U.S. Colored Troops (USCT). After the war, Camp Nelson was a refugee camp and the Freedman's Bureau administered the site. The grounds for a cemetery in Camp Nelson were reserved in 1863, and by 1866, the remains of nearly 1200 men were buried there. This became the nucleus of the national cemetery today. The land for the national cemetery was appropriated in 1866, and in 1868, the remains of over 2000 Union soldiers who had died in training camps or hospitals and on the battlefield were reinterred in Camp Nelson National Cemetery. Once it became part of the national cemetery system, Camp Nelson was enclosed by a masonry wall and a brick lodge in the Second Empire style was constructed for the superintendent. Job Winans Angus won the contract to build the lodge on his bid of \$4600. This brick, L-shaped lodge in the Second Empire style replaced the temporary wood-frame lodge erected in 1867 or 1868.

Sources:

Annual Report of the Secretary of War. [to Congress]. Washington, DC: GPO, 1865-1920.

Deetz, James. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life*. New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Dickinson, William C., Dean A. Herrin, and Donald R. Kennon, eds. *Montgomery C. Meigs and the Building of the Nation's Capital*. Athens: University of Ohio Press for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 2001.

General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, 1865-ca. 1914, Record Group 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Holt, Dean W. *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to the Hallowed Grounds of the United States, Including Cemeteries Overseas*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1992.

Message of the President of the United States [to Congress]. Washington, DC: GPO, 1862-63.

Meyer, Richard E., ed. *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992.

National Cemetery Historical File, Department of Memorial Affairs, Record Group 15, Records of the Veterans Administration, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Sloane, David Charles. *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Zipf, Catherine W. "Marking Union Victory in the South: The Construction of the National Cemetery System." In *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, edited by Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.

Historian: Virginia B. Price, 2012.

Project Information: The documentation of the lodges and rostrums in the national cemeteries was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), one of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief. The project was sponsored by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Sara Amy Leach, Senior Historian. Project planning was coordinated by Catherine C. Lavoie, Chief of HABS. Historical research was undertaken by HABS Historians Virginia B. Price and Michael R. Harrison. NCA Historians Jennifer Perunko, Alec Bennett, and Hillori Schenker provided research material, edited and reviewed written reports. Field work for selected sites was carried out and measured drawings produced by HABS Architects Paul Davidson, Ryan Pierce, and Mark Schara.