

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### FORT GIBSON NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. OK-3-A

Location: 1423 Cemetery Road, Fort Gibson, Muskogee County, Oklahoma.

The coordinates for Fort Gibson National Cemetery are 95.229955 W and 35.805429 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 Fort Gibson National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1934, razed 1983.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: There were three lodges on-site from 1870 to 1983 when the last lodge was demolished. The first lodge was a temporary, wood-frame building one story in height and containing three rooms. This lodge was repurposed as a tool house when the permanent lodge was constructed in 1878-79. This lodge was stone, one and one-half stories with a L-plan. It was succeeded by a Dutch Colonial Revival style lodge in 1934. The Dutch Colonial Revival style lodge was built through financing from the PWA, in part, and it was razed in 1983.

The Dutch Colonial Revival style lodge had two floors, with the upper floor tucked under a gambrel roof and lit by dormers punctuating the front and rear slopes of the shingled roof. The roof was covered in slate. The gable ends were stuccoed and decorated with faux half-timbering. A dormer with four windows, each glazed with six lights in the upper sash, punctuated the gambrel on the west front; the rear dormer soon gave way to a sleeping porch. The sleeping porch was constructed in 1938, and three paired, double-hung sash windows illuminated the east rear elevation. The footprint of the lodge measured approximately 33' x 35', and the foundations were concrete.

Maintenance records reveal that the building was painted frequently, inside and outside, between the 1930s and 1960s. The kitchen floor was changed to linoleum in 1938, which was then replaced in 1952 when linoleum was installed in the pantry and toilet room. Linoleum in all three spaces was again replaced in 1961. Likely the linoleum was installed over the original wood floors. An attic fan was installed in 1947 and aluminum vents were added in 1960. The ceilings were changed in the kitchen, dining room and living room in the 1960s, around the same time as

the Venetian blinds were replaced and storm windows and doors affixed to the building. The porch was enclosed in 1961 with the intention of using the space as a reception room for the cemetery office.

Site Context: The original cemetery encompassed seven acres and was laid out in a rectangle with a flagstaff at the center of the grounds. The main entrance was from the north, and axial pathways intersected at the flagpole circle. The lodges were constructed in the same location, in proximity to the entrance, just east of the drive. The entrance porch of the Second Empire style, L-plan lodge was located at the northwest corner of the building, providing a northward looking façade (to the street) and a westward looking façade (toward the cemetery drive). The service building was behind the lodge, to the east. The Dutch Colonial Revival lodge that replaced the Second Empire, L-plan lodge appears to be oriented east to west, with the principal elevation to the west.

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.

Of the twentieth-century lodge forms, the design in the Dutch Colonial Revival oeuvre was selected most often. Fourteen lodges were built using this plan between 1921 and 1934. The design called for a one and one-half story building with masonry construction at the first floor and wood-frame gambrel roofs enclosing the upper floor. The building footprint was rectangular and included an enclosed porch and office in the front, a living room and stair in the middle, and a dining room and kitchen at the rear. The second floor contained three bedrooms and a bathroom opening off of a central hall. Three versions of the design were used. The first in four lodges erected between 1921 and 1928, with hollow core tile walls covered in stucco, shingled roofs and gable ends, and dormers two windows in width on the front and rear. The second version expanded the dormer from two windows to four, adding more light the upper floor. This plan was used twice, for lodges in Nashville and Chattanooga, in 1931. PWA funds paid for the construction of lodges in 1934, including eight built to a third rendition of the Dutch Colonial Revival design. In 1934, the building materials included a brick construction on the first floor and faux half-timbered or brick gables. The Fort Gibson lodge is significant as an example of the third expression of the Dutch Colonial Revival design, with the faux half-timbering. It cost \$11,472 to build.

Fort Gibson National Cemetery was established in 1868, and predominantly the first interments were the remains of those initially buried in former post cemeteries that were moved to the national cemetery as the other facilities closed. However the history of the military post reaches further back in time. The site was selected in the 1820s as a strategic outpost along the Minnesota to Louisiana frontier and ostensibly for keeping the peace between the Osage and Cherokee Indians and for protecting traders. Fort Gibson was at the end of the trail of tears for the Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles who were relocated from the east, and is located within the limits of the Cherokee Nation today. In the 1850s the Cherokees lobbied to have the fort – as the military cantonment was then called – removed and the settlement converted into a town. In 1857 the post was abandoned. A brief victory, as the Civil War again made the strategic location of the fort paramount to the army. In 1863 Brigadier General James Blunt re-established Fort Gibson.

Shortly after the national cemetery was established, the Office of the Quartermaster General solicited bids for the construction of a frame lodge. No contractors bid for the work. The superintendent was instructed to “employ the necessary labor” and purchase materials. The resulting temporary, wood- frame lodge was one story with three rooms inside. In May 1878 a contract for a new stone lodge was awarded to William J. Sterling. The next month, Civil Engineer Clarke wrote to the Quartermaster requesting permission to re-orient the lodge so that its two fronts faced the main road and the main approach to the cemetery from town. He suggested moving the cellar and kitchen area to the side, and by switching a door for a window and vice versa; Clarke’s changes would incur no extra cost. Clarke enclosed the plan with his notations, which reveal that the lodge under discussion was a stone masonry, three-room building in the Second Empire style with the kitchen, office, and living room on the first floor. It was L-shaped in plan, with a porch in the space of the L. In February 1879 the bill for moving the old lodge and converting it into a tool house was paid, and completion of the stone lodge was anticipated. Disagreement over the final cost of construction indicates that some of the materials were brought over from St. Louis, and the overrun in price was \$1457. The matter was referred to the Department of Justice, and the contractor William J. Sterling was sued. In 1890 another sketch of the Second Empire style lodge was submitted. This time a large crack was drawn onto the elevation to illustrate the “opening in the wall of the main portion” of the lodge. Likely this prompted a discussion on the building of a new lodge at Fort Gibson in the ensuing years.

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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.