

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

FORT SMITH NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. AR-3-B

Location: 522 South Garland Avenue, Fort Smith, Sebastian County, Arkansas.

The coordinates for the Fort Smith National Cemetery, Lodge are 94.428207 W and 35.384473 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 Smith National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1898.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The lodge built in 1898 to the elongated L-plan is a large, two-story building made of brick on a stone foundation. It is covered by a cross-hip roof. The roof was originally shingled in slate and the slate was later replaced with asphalt shingles. The principal elevation faces south. There are two chimneystacks visible in historic photographs, and a dormer window in the front and rear elevations. The massing of the building is in keeping with previous designs for the lodges, including the entrance porch tucked into the L of the floor plan, but its scale is grander than the Second Empire style models. Moreover, the treatment of the porch roof distinguishes that element rather than integrates it into the main building. A small screen porch is to the side of the building, and a one-story, hip roofed ell extends off the north rear elevation. The wood sash was glazed with one-over-one lights at the time of the photographs in the maintenance ledgers.

In the years 1929 to 1931, the mechanical systems of the lodge received upgrades. This included the water and electrical systems, bathroom fixtures, and kitchen sink. Gas heating units were installed in several of the rooms: the office, living room, dining room on the first floor and two bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. In 1944, concrete steps were made, awnings installed, and the building painted. A storm damaged the awnings in 1946 and so they were repaired at that time. Likely related to the impact of the storm, the roof was re-laid in slate in 1947. The gutters and downspouts were repaired at this time as well. Weatherstripping was done in 1949 and in 1950 the kitchen floor was rolled with linoleum. The lodge was painted, wherever necessary, at this time too. A central heating system was installed. More painting occurred in 1952, the floors were refinished in 1955, and a drain was put into the basement in 1957. The electrical wiring was modernized in 1959, and vinyl tile added to the kitchen and office. In 1961

repairs to the roof were made and Venetian blinds were hung. Painting occurred throughout this era in an effort to keep the lodge in good order.

Site Context: In 1892 the lodge was located in the southeast corner of the cemetery and south of the entrance drive. The L-plan of the building was oriented with the arm of the L to the southwest, toward the burial ground, with a secondary building behind the lodge and with a rostrum to the east side of the building at some distance. Today, the lodge appears in photographs as close to the entrance gates and facing south to the drive that circles the flagstaff. It is likely the footprint of the lodge rendered in the 1892 map was drawn slightly off-axis as the building is not known to have been moved.

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 built at Fort Smith in 1898 is significant as an example of the Quartermaster's adaptation of the definitive L-plan for the lodges into a more elongated floor plan in an effort to accommodate changes in living standards. The elongated L-plan lodge form was built just three times, with the second example at Fort Smith, before new designs for the lodges were drafted.

Because of its significance as part of the national cemetery system and the number of interments within its boundaries, Fort Smith National Cemetery remained under the jurisdiction of the War Department in 1871 by order of President U.S. Grant. This was an important distinction because the remainder of the post transferred to the Department of the Interior in that year. The historic fort was established at the confluence of the Poteau and Arkansas rivers in 1817, and a stockade was constructed. The small garrison stationed there was charged with peacekeeping missions, between incoming settlers to the Louisiana Territory and the Native Americans, and between the Cherokee and Osage nations. Some months after an attack by members of the Osage tribe in November 1823, it was decided to close Fort Smith and transfer the troops and all materials, including doors and windows, to Fort Gibson. Its closure proved temporary. Troops returned permanently in 1838 and the new buildings erected by about 1842. Two garrisons were stationed in the fort during the Civil War, and Colonel W.F. Cloud took command of it for the Union Army in September 1863. Because Fort Smith was both a Confederate and Union fort, large numbers of men from both armies were buried in the cemetery. The burying ground became a national cemetery in 1867, and was enclosed by a picket fence. Records of the Veterans Administration indicate a one-story, stone lodge in a linear plan was in service by 1874, but it was destroyed by a storm in 1898. The present, two-story, L-plan lodge succeeded that building.

The first lodge was constructed by Charles McCreanor in 1868-69 and was located outside the cemetery fence before the cemetery acreage was expanded.

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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.