

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
ZACHERY TAYLOR NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. KY-6-A

Location: 701 Baxter Avenue, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky.

The coordinates for the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery, Lodge are 85.641630 W and 38.2777127 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 Zachary Taylor National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1928.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: Built in the Colonial Revival style, the lodge is two stories in height and covered by a side gable roof. The foundations and walls are stone, while the roof is covered in slate. The floors are wood and the walls are plastered and painted. There are two exterior end chimneys. The west front façade is five bays across with the door placed in the central bay; the door is set within a segmental arched opening. Adding to the Colonial Revival aesthetic, the roof has icebreakers, the wood sash windows have shutters, and the front door is capped by an ornamental fanlight. A small porch opens off the east (rear) elevation, and a one-story wing connects to north side of the building. The office is located in this wing. A vestibule for the exterior (public) entrance to the office was constructed in 1942.

Significant changes to the building came in 1934, with a partitioning in the basement; in 1948, when the rear porch was glazed and screened; and again in 1950, with the installation of a rest room, closets, and electrical outlets.

Other changes left the floor plan intact, such as the routine painting on the interior and exterior and finishing of the wood floors that occurred between the 1930s and 1960s according to the maintenance records of the Veterans Administration. New floors were laid in 1934 through the CWA programs. Venetian blinds were installed in 1938 and 1946, awnings in the 1940s, storm windows and doors in 1949, and the window in the east wall of the office was replaced in 1969. In the 1960s, the roof and gutters were repaired, and grading in the yard was done to mitigate flooding in the basement. The front door casing was repaired in 1942, the cellar door was replaced in 1953, and the front door was replaced in 1964. A dropped ceiling was installed in the

first floor hallway, living room, and bathroom in 1965, while flooring and paneling in the rear porch were replaced in 1966. Furniture for the office was purchased in 1961, and four aluminum chairs acquired in 1968. Linoleum flooring was installed in the kitchen and bathroom in 1940, and the floor covering of the kitchen was renewed or replaced in 1962. Bathroom, kitchen, and mechanical systems were periodically upgraded.

Site Context: The lodge is located in the southeast corner of the rectilinear cemetery lot, and is situated in proximity to the main entrance from Brownsboro Road. The gateposts and enclosing wall long the south boundary are stone. The entrance drive runs on a north-to-south axis and terminates at the flagpole circle. Regular rows of headstones follow this north-south alignment and are primarily west of the entrance drive.

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.

One of the historic revival and regional house forms that the Office of Quartermaster tried in the national cemeteries was the Colonial Revival style of building. Four lodges are described as Colonial Revival in style, and two of those were identical. These were the lodges constructed for Hampton and Annapolis. A third lodge, built for New Albany National Cemetery in Indiana, was a two-story brick building in the Colonial Revival idiom. It was constructed in 1942, and demolished in 1985. The fourth example of how the Colonial Revival style was used in the national cemetery system is the lodge designed for the Zachary Taylor site in 1928. The lodge is significant as an example of the revival of historic styles in architectural design and the adaptation of those design trends to the cemetery setting.

Although the National Cemetery Administration maintains the Zachary Taylor National Cemetery, the cemetery is not owned by the U.S. government. In the 1920s, the courts turned down the family's request for the government to assume the property. Taylor, a hero of the war with Mexico, became President in 1848 and died in 1850. His tomb and mausoleum are in the cemetery; the cemetery grounds consist of sixteen acres today. Nonetheless, it has many of the features of a national cemetery, including the walled perimeter and a superintendent's lodge in the Colonial Revival style.

Sources:

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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.