

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

ALEXANDRIA NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. LA-4-A

Location: 209 East Shamrock Street, Pineville, Rapides Parish, Louisiana.

The coordinates for the Alexandria National Cemetery, Lodge are 92.432727 W and 31.321412 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 Alexandria National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1931.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The present lodge, completed in 1931, is in the Cape Code style. The building's main elevation faces northwest, consisting of five bays, and a wing to each end. The cross-gable roof was originally covered in slate, and replaced with asphalt shingles in 1961. The walls are hollow tile and stucco, and the building rests on a reinforced concrete foundation. The sash windows are glazed with six-over-one lights; there are also three dormer windows glazed with six-over-six lights. Likely these are double-hung sash, but operation of the upper sash is not evident in photographs of the building. Inside, the floors are wood and tile; during the first half of the twentieth century, linoleum and vinyl tiles were installed in several of the rooms.

In 1938 the porch on the north end of the building was enclosed, a concrete floor was poured and eight windows were installed. The sun porch was renovated in 1964.

Throughout the 1940s and through the 1960s, routine maintenance occurred. Projects typically included painting, refinishing the wood floors, inserting linoleum or vinyl, upgrading bathroom fixtures and adding in kitchen and laundry sinks, repairs to and replacements of faulty screens, the addition of awnings, work on gutters and mechanical systems, and new lighting. Other changes saw the wood pillars replaced with ones made from concrete (1946), and the addition of an attic fan (1947).

Site Context: The eight-acre cemetery has a square footprint and is enclosed by a low brick wall at the perimeter. The wall was built in 1878, but the structures on the grounds today date to the 1930s. The lodge faces northwest toward the entrance drive. The building is located southeast of

the drive and in proximity to the southwest boundary wall at Shamrock Street. The main entrance gates open from Shamrock Street and the drive connects the gateway to the circle at the flagstaff at the center of the cemetery lot.

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.

In 1931, concurrent to the construction of Dutch Colonial Revival style lodges, the Quartermaster's office also experimented with a Cape Cod form. Similar building materials and technologies were used in the two models, such as the hollow-core tile and frame structure and the use of dormers to illuminate upper floors. Rather than a gambrel roof, as the Dutch Colonial Revival style lodges had, the Cape Cod design called for cross-gable roofs with a trio of dormers in the front. The floor plan for the Cape Cod lodge was for a one-story building with symmetrical porch and office wings. The rooms along the front of the lodge were the porch, dining room, living room, and office, while the rear housed the kitchen, bathroom and three bedrooms. The lodge at Alexandria National Cemetery is significant as an example of this suburban house form adapted for use in the national cemetery system. It cost \$9292 to build.

Alexandria National Cemetery is sited along the Red River opposite the city of Alexandria and in heart of Pineville, one block from the main street. The location of the cemetery in the middle of Pineville limited the cemetery's ability to expand. The national cemetery was established in 1867 on land appropriated from Francious Poussin, and the ensuing litigation finally was settled in 1874. At the time of litigated settlement, the court ordered the government to pay \$1200 to Poussin's heirs.

In 1871 there were almost 1400 interments in the cemetery. In the twentieth century, further interments were made as remains were transferred from Fort Ringgold and Fort Brown, both in Texas, and also from Brownsville National Cemetery when it was abandoned in 1911. The remains of five German prisoners of war were buried in Alexandria National Cemetery in 1946. Improvements to the grounds occurred periodically, such as in the 1870s and again in the 1930s that saw new lodges for the superintendent constructed.

Not long after the cemetery was established, a temporary wood-frame lodge was built for the use of the superintendent. Contractors F.M. Roxsdale and P. Forsy completed the building in 1868-69. It was one story and the floor plan accommodated three rooms. In 1871, the lodge was described as a "neat wooden cottage." It was in good order, excepting the leak in the roof. There were no shutters or blinds in the windows in the windows of the lodge, and the inspector argued that due to the heat of the climate, shutters or blinds were absolutely essential. There was a small cistern attached to the lodge. Yet by 1877 this building was in decay, and because plans were mooted for a new lodge, with only whitewashing recommended for maintenance.

In the late 1870s, officials reported to the Office of the Quartermaster General about conditions in the cemetery and recommended improvements for the care of the property. In the case of Alexandria, wherein so many of the dead buried there were unknown, the inspector hoped with pretty flower gardens and shrubbery planted in the neat and orderly cemetery that the community might take more of an interest in it. Of the graves marked as unknown he said, "[they were] therefore in the 'fullest' sense the nation's dead – where their memory can scarcely be expected to be cherished [as it] should be more than a simple yard of gravestones [...] and trust that [we] will make this cemetery a place worthy of those who gave their lives to their country." His hope

for the cemetery in Pineville is representative of that which inspired the building program for cemeteries on a national scale, and shortly after the report was filed, plans were issued for a new lodge and enclosing wall.

Proposals for a permanent lodge to replace the wood-frame lodge and to build an enclosing wall at Alexandria National Cemetery were solicited in conjunction with work at Baton Rouge National Cemetery and Port Hudson National Cemetery, grouped as the cemeteries of the southwest. Likely due to cost considerations, contracts for only part of the work were let. The masonry for the lodges and wall was to be brick, and the Office of the Quartermaster General requested a sample of the hard brick manufactured in St. Louis that a potential contractor intended to use. In May and June 1877, two contracts were awarded, one to Henry Wingate for the lodges in Alexandria and Port Hudson and the other to J. Dette for the enclosing wall. Wingate estimated his costs of construction at \$3873 for the Alexandria lodge. Vouchers from Dette were paid in June 1878, and mention that the completion of the one and one-half story, brick lodge was anticipated in another ten days. In December 1878, the condition report offered no comment on the Second Empire style, brick lodge beyond dismay at the copious amount of water that cascaded into the basement through the foundation walls. Besides the expense of erecting the enclosing walls, Dette was also compensated for the removal of the old, wood lodge from the grounds.

The one-story lodge in the Cape Cod design replaced the L-plan lodge erected in 1878 by Wingate.

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.