

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
CAMP BUTLER NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. IL-7-B

Location: 5063 Camp Butler Road, Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois.

The coordinates for the Camp Butler National Cemetery, Lodge are 89.557907 W and 39.831957 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 Butler National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1908.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: Photographs show that the lodge erected in 1908 is a two-story brick building on a stone and concrete foundation. There are two interior chimneys made of brick visible above the roofline, and records indicate that the hip roof was covered in slate initially. The symmetrical façade is three bays wide with a center entrance as well as an eyebrow dormer to add visual emphasis. The west (front) façade is characterized the one-story projecting ell with a balustrade roofline and porch to its side. This porch was later enclosed.

The floor plan is a Four-Square with a basement, providing living space in four main rooms on the first and second floors, plus closets, pantries, bathrooms and hallways. The office was located in the balustraded-portion seen at the north end of the west (front) façade and the porch facilitated access to the door for the office as well as for the superintendent's living quarters similar to that accommodated by porch in the L-plan formula. In the Four-Square, the office was pulled out of the main block and, in Camp Butler and the other Four-Squares built in brick, accentuated with the balustrade.

Maintenance ledgers note that the water and septic systems for the lodge were upgraded in 1926 and in 1935 the kitchen was updated and space for a pantry was made. Oak flooring was laid over the original pine. The next year the plumbing was modernized, and a rear porch measuring almost 19' x 9' was built. Iron railings were installed after the old porch was removed. In 1942 the front porch was enclosed with brick and the openings glazed. The interior was painted in 1943 and the windows glazed in 1947. A crack appeared in the foundation wall by 1950, and in 1951 it was repaired. Linoleum flooring was put into the kitchen in 1952 and storm windows

were added to the building. Changes to the floor plan came in 1959 when the chimney serving the dining room and living room was removed and evidence of it in the interior walls, floors, and roof surface was erased. A door into the hall was enlarged, further shifting the spatial relationships of the rooms and responding to use of those spaces. The exterior of the building received attention in the 1960s when the necessary tuck-pointing was done to repair the mortar joints. Throughout these years, and up to 1970 when entries in the ledgers cease, regular painting was done and the gutters and downspouts were routinely cleaned.

Site Context: The lodge at Camp Butler National Cemetery faces west to the entrance drive to the burial ground, with its (south) side elevation visible from the roadway. The lodge is positioned in proximity to the entrance gates and is accessible from the drive by way of a long sidewalk. The north-to-south entrance drive terminates in a roundabout, and then extends eastward past the lodge. The drive turns north into the larger cemetery grounds, and here in this section of the cemetery northeast of lodge is the flagstaff.

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 Four-Square plan used by the Quartermaster between 1906 and 1910 was first tried in wood-frame buildings with double verandas in Florence, South Carolina, and Barrancas, Florida, and then repeated in six lodges made of brick. The brick Four-Squares are found in Gettysburg, Knoxville, Camp Butler, Little Rock, Andrew Johnson, Tennessee, and San Antonio. The Four-Square plan provided space for the hall, office, parlor, dining room, pantry and kitchen on the first floor, and space for the hall, four bedrooms and bathroom on the second floor. These were nearly identical in plan and form, each with center hallways and hip roofs and a projecting room for the office marked by a balustrade along its roofline. The Camp Butler lodge, and the others erected along the Four-Square plan, derive their significance as a collective example of an early twentieth-century house form adapted for use in the national cemeteries and mark a point of departure from the long standing L-plan lodge.

Close to the Sangamon River and the Wabash Railroad, and six miles northeast of Springfield, Camp Butler was ideally located for a training camp for soldiers in 1861 and it remained a vital post throughout the war years. Beginning in 1862 it also served as a prisoner of war camp. Men held there represented all the Confederate states, save Florida, and many were traded in prisoner exchanges. Many also died in the stockade built for them inside the camp. It was crowded and unsanitary. Almost 700 men died in an outbreak of smallpox in the first summer. Camp Butler National Cemetery was established that same year, 1862, on six acres of land in the camp. More land was acquired in 1948.

Early superintendents to the national cemetery lived in rented quarters, even as late as 1868 wherein the Quartermaster General's correspondence referred to the cost of fuel and two rooms lodging. In August 1870, the infrastructure and formal program for national cemeteries had evolved enough for the Quartermaster to question an invitation for construction of a wood building versus a masonry one. The subject was the lodge. The defense for soliciting bids for a frame lodge, rather than a brick one, was cost based. In 1871 bids were opened for lodges and walls in three cemeteries, that Jefferson City, Springfield and here in Camp Butler. For Camp Butler, the bids returned and recommended were for the enclosing walls not for a lodge. By 1875, however, a lodge was on the premises.

This first lodge was constructed of brick, and was only one story in height. It consisted of three rooms that in the inspector's opinion were not comfortably arranged although the superintendent kept the spaces neat. The form of the building, also, added "little" to the overall appearance of the cemetery and lacked height to command a presence in the landscape. By 1877, the lodge was expanded and now contained five rooms. The walls of the addition needed kalsomining and painting for they were streaked. The lightening rods at the tops of the chimney needed repairing. The cellar was dry. In 1889 this building was described as having five rooms and a cellar. No further reference is made to the lodge in the Quartermaster's records, but it was torn down sometime between 1889 and 1908, when the Four-Square lodge shown in the Veterans Administration records was erected.

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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.