

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### CORINTH NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. MS-3-A

Location: 1551 Horton Street, Corinth, Alcorn County, Mississippi.

The coordinates for the Corinth National Cemetery, Lodge are 88.508364 W and 34.925304 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 Corinth National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1934.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The Dutch Colonial Revival-style lodge is one and one-half stories, with the upper floor under the gambrel roof. The building has a concrete foundation. Sketch maps of the cemetery today suggest the lodge faces east, given the orientation of the boxy rectangular building ( 29'3" x 35'3") to the east and west and the placement of exterior steps on the south and east sides, however, tree cover in contemporary aerial views precludes confirmation. Historic photographs suggest the lodge faced west, with the service buildings behind, to the east. Of the building itself, photographs reveal that the lodge has a shed-roofed dormer with two pairs of sash windows in the front slope of the gambrel roof. Glazing in the dormer windows appears to be twelve-over-one lights, while that of the sash on the first floor of the front façade looks to be sixteen-over-one. The upper sash may be fixed. The front door is a wood paneled door, with twelve lights above the lock rail. The sills look to be concrete. The first floor is veneered in brick while the second floor is stucco over wood, with faux half-timbering in the end walls. Gutters and downspouts are present, and there is a louvered vent for the attic in the end wall.

Maintenance records show a diligence in regard to keeping the building clean and freshly painted. Changes to the building are largely superficial and the floor plan remains intact. Linoleum flooring was laid in the kitchen in 1939, for example, and a rubber-based, vinyl tile (9" square) was put down in the office in 1947. Copper gutters and downspouts were installed in 1948 and the front porch was enclosed in 1952. Sash chains replaced the sash cords in 1952, and the next year, the windows were further embellished with Venetian blinds. The wood floors were refinished in 1953. Safety concerns guided the next several entries in the ledgers, such as the

railings installed on the cellar steps and for the single run of steps to the second floor as well as the treads placed on the cellar stairs. Storm windows and doors were added in 1961.

Site Context: The square cemetery lot is bounded by a low brick wall and historically was divided into smaller burial sections by axial pathways. A north-to-south drive connects the two entrances to the cemetery, and bisects the cemetery grounds. The flagpole is located near the north entrance, in alignment with the central drive which divides to create a circle around the flagstaff, while the lodge is located in the southeast section of the cemetery and in proximity to the south entrance. The Dutch Colonial Revival style lodge was built in the same location as the Second Empire style lodge it replaced; the current service building to the east of the lodge likely stands on the same location as the historic tool house that preceded it.

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 Corinth lodge is significant as a surviving example of the third expression of the Dutch Colonial Revival design. Built in brick and frame, the lodge cost \$9200 to construct.

Almost ninety miles west of Memphis, Tennessee, Corinth protected one avenue to Vicksburg and the Mississippi and formed the nexus of rail lines into the South. U.S. Grant sought Corinth as a prize in his western campaign; Confederate troops retreated to Corinth after the Battle of Shiloh in April 1862 and the city fell to Union forces that October. The national cemetery at Corinth was established in 1866 and again the city served as a locus, this time for the remains of those Union soldiers who had died in the battlefields of western Tennessee, Mississippi, and northwest Alabama. Internments included almost 4000 unknown soldiers who gave their lives for their country. Three Confederate soldiers are buried in the cemetery as well.

In 1872 the Quartermaster's department built a brick lodge in the "new style" – that is, the Second Empire style – in Corinth National Cemetery. It replaced the temporary wood lodge erected in 1867 or 1868, a structure described in 1871 as "very plain and cheap." The new, brick lodge was L-shaped in plan. It was one and one-half stories over a one-room cellar and had a shallow hip roof over the mansard. The mansard roof provided room for the second floor inside, adding three bedrooms to the traditional three-room floor plan for an office, kitchen and living room found on the lodge's first floor. The hip roof was covered in tin. Fenestration included gable roofed dormers and wood sash with cut granite sills and lintels. The brick walls were

reinforced at the corners by projecting quoins also rendered in brick. The interior walls and ceilings were plaster on lath and the floors were wood, except in the cellar wherein the floor was laid with brick and then coated with cement.

The quality of the workmanship fell short of expectations and characterized the next twenty-five years or so of evaluations of the building, ending with the caustic answer to the 1909 survey question about how it was built: “constructed in the interest of the contractor.” The inspectors for the Office of the Quartermaster General recorded the building’s conditions, notes that culminated in the 1909 evaluation. By 1886 the cornice had decayed and needed to be replaced, along with other exterior woodwork. And while the carpentry was poorly executed, the plaster was pronounced “worse” casting a pall over the conditions of the interior. The windows lacked sash cords and weights and new box frames were needed to correct the omission. One alternative was to install casements instead. The slats were broken in the blinds. There were no closets, and the stair beginning in the office and rising to the second floor was very steep and separated from the kitchen only by boarding. The front porch or verandah was so badly built it that needed to be replaced altogether; the inspector recommended reconstructing it on order of that done for Mound City (HALS No. WI-5). By 1888 the tin roof leaked too. This further deteriorated the woodwork, and general dampness prevented the superintendent from using the cellar room. This lodge was demolished for the 1934 Dutch Colonial model currently on the property.

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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.