

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
CYPRESS HILLS NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. NY-2-D

Location: 625 Jamaica Avenue, Brooklyn, Kings County, New York.

The coordinates for Cypress Hill National Cemetery, Lodge are 73.882867 W and 40.688264 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 Cypress Hills National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1886.

Builder/Contractor: Kryan Augustine Murphy.

Description: The L-plan lodge is a two-story, cross-gabled building made of brick masonry in the Queen Anne style. Segmental arches accentuate the windows and tucked high in the gable ends is a round or ox-eye window. The roof was originally covered in slate, and a large one-story garage extends off the rear of the building. Historic photographs show a porch and reveal the glazing in the windows as six-over-one lights.

Maintenance records for the Veterans Administration show routine painting of the building's trim and its interior from 1942 through the 1960s, the era for which there are extant ledgers. These ledgers also identify when changes were made, such as the replacement of the double-hung sash windows in 1949 and the installation of the storm windows in 1951. The hot water heater was replaced in 1951, the electrical system updated in 1955, and the heating system redone in 1962. Alterations to the living space came in 1957 with changes to the stairways to accommodate bathrooms and the cutting in of a closet in 1961. Repairs to the windows and doors were made periodically, with particular attention to the porch. Venetian blinds were added in 1961. Outside, a patio was created in 1959.

Site Context: The lodge is located east of the axial drive that leads from the cast iron gates on Jamaica Avenue to the rostrum on the north side of the cemetery. The lodge faces west toward the drive, and its south elevation is visible from the street. The south elevation is characterized by two gables. Additions to the lodge complex include a 1933 addition to the building for the office, storage, and public restrooms, and a 1938 utility building constructed east (behind) of the lodge.

Although the third lodge associated with Cypress Hills National Cemetery, it is the first built in the Jamaica Avenue 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 in 1886. 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 Cypress Hills lodge is significant as an extant example of the revised L-plan design, and represents an early attempt by the Office of the Quartermaster to accommodate shifts in living conditions as well as continued effort to adapt residential forms to the cemetery environment. Its multi-gable, Queen Anne style also marks a shift away from the Second Empire style of building aesthetically even as the L-plan was retained in lodge designs.

In 1862 a section of Cypress Hills Cemetery in Brooklyn was reserved for those who died in the war, and the plot became known as Union Grounds. New York City was far from the battlefields, but was home to several hospitals where the wounded were brought for treatment. Those who died from injuries or illness were buried in the Union Grounds. Cypress Hills Cemetery deeded the land to the government in 1870. Two discontinuous lots were added to the national cemetery's holdings, and the two-story, cross-gabled brick lodge was built on the parcel fronting Jamaica Avenue in 1886 to 1887. An earlier building for the superintendent was located on Union Grounds. W.C. Miller built the temporary wood lodge for \$1050 in 1867.

The lodge erected by Miller in Union Grounds was, by 1870, a two-room building made of wood frame set closely to the privy or outbuilding. The Quartermaster General's Office was asked to approve the digging of a cellar and the addition of another room to the building. With the building in its original state, allowing one room for the office left only one room available for the superintendent and his family. It was also recommended that the outbuilding be relocated because the privy odor was "offensive" in the heat of the summer months. John Bryson, the superintendent, suggested moving the privy and putting it in an outbuilding with the tool house and wood shed. The expansion of the lodge was disapproved; the Quartermaster preferred investing in masonry lodges not frame lodges by this time.

The following year, in 1871, requests for a cellar for health reasons were resubmitted, as well as requests for moving the outbuilding. Since title to the property was obtained, no real obstacle to constructing permanent buildings and components of the cemetery landscape remained. The Quartermaster then called for bids; among those received, the recommended proposal came from Guy & Duke who estimated costs for a new lodge to be \$3800. The price was too high and all the bids were rejected. Three other bids were then offered, with the low bidder Henry M. Smith anticipating expenses at \$3283. This lodge was brick, one and one-half stories, and although later described as having a linear floor plan, it followed the L-plan. This lodge is significant because it was the only lodge built using the third version of the plans for one and one-half story brick lodges. This draft of the plans for brick lodges featured the internal office chimney, and after it was completed, Thomas Chiffelle finalized what became the definitive standard lodge plan, a design applicable to both brick and stone construction.

In the mid-1880s, the cemetery expanded and Kryan Augustine Murphy built the L-plan lodge on the new acreage, along Jamaica Avenue. The Quartermaster checked Murphy's references, confirming his reputation as a builder and revealing he was responsible for the lodges in Richmond (HALS No. VA-22-B) and Fort Harrison (HALS No. VA-24-A). His contract was for

\$5950. By November 1886 the lodge was well underway with the plastering in progress. In 1889 and 1909 it was described as a building in the Queen Anne style with a slate roof and eight rooms inside. Two of those rooms were in the cellar or basement. This lodge remains in-situ in Cypress Hills National Cemetery today.

The brick lodge that Smith constructed in 1870-71 was demolished after the present lodge in the Jamaica Avenue portion of the cemetery was completed in 1886-87. The inspection report of 1874 and historic photographs document its presence in the cemetery however.

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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.