

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

NEW BERN NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. NC-1-A

Location: 1711 National Avenue, New Bern, Craven County, North Carolina.

The coordinates for the New Bern National Cemetery, Lodge are 77.051948 W and 35.123792 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 New Bern National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1916.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The bungalow-inspired lodge is a one and one-half story frame building measuring approximately 42' x 37' and resting on a shell rock foundation and covered by a side gable roof. The roof is covered by asbestos-based shingles and, on the front (northeast) façade, is pierced by five tightly spaced windows to create one, long dormer under a under shed roof. Another long dormer punctuates the southwest rear slope of the roof as well. Adding to the bungalow aesthetic are the exposed rafter ends. The slope of the side-gable roof extends over the front doors to create a small porch or covered entryway, also in keeping with the bungalow design. The use of two front doors carries over from the long-standing plan for the lodges that the Office of the Quartermaster General developed in the nineteenth century; initially the floor plan was in a L-shape and the two doors opened onto a porch from contiguous sides. Here, the two doors open onto a landing and are approached by a wide, low run of steps. An iron railing with balusters is to either end of the stairs. The doors are glazed at the top and appear to be paneled; screen doors mask the materials and construction of the doors in part. The cast iron Gettysburg Address plaque was placed between the two front doors. The wood sash windows appear to be glazed with six lights in the upper sash; it is unclear from the historic photographs taken for the Veterans Administration's maintenance files if the lower sash is glazed with one light or if Venetian blinds or interior shutters just obscure the view. On the front (northeast) façade and side elevations, the sash windows are paired. Gutters and downspouts are present. Inside, the floors are pine.

Maintenance records for the cemetery date the siding and the iron railings along the front steps to 1960. The screens on the windows and doors were installed in the 1950s, after repairs were made

on the east wall. The ledger did not enumerate what those repairs entailed. The roof, gutters and downspouts were renewed even earlier, and those changes date to the mid to late 1940s. Two phases of remodeling occurred, the first in 1932 when the second floor was altered for another bedroom, bathroom and alcove area and the second in 1961 when the bathroom was updated. The wood floors were refinished in the 1940s and the bathroom floor replaced in 1951. The lodge was painted several times, and its mechanical systems were upgraded beginning in 1924 and throughout the period documented through the ledgers.

Site Context: Over seven acres, the national cemetery has a rectangular footprint and is bisected by an axial drive leading from the main entrance on National Avenue on the northeast edge of the grounds to the circular turn-around on the southwest. A brick wall marks the perimeter of the cemetery, and separates the burial ground from the city street. The lodge built 1916 is located in the east corner section of the cemetery and faces northeast to National Avenue. A sidewalk connects the lodge entrance to the sidewalk. Wrought iron gates were added to the main entrance in 1934. Behind the lodge is a service or utility building erected in 1932 and expanded in 1949.

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 the 1910s, the Quartermaster's department tried a bungalow design for the national cemeteries in keeping with trends in domestic architecture at the time. Only two lodges were built using the bungalow design which specified a one and one-half story wood frame building with shingle siding. The floor plan accommodated four rooms on the main floor and a bedroom tucked under the side gable roof. The first of the bungalows was constructed in New Bern in 1916 to replace the Second Empire style lodge on-site, and the second was erected in Mill Springs in 1920. The Mill Springs lodge was slightly smaller than the New Bern example and was demolished after the 1960s. Both lodges are significant as early twentieth-century examples of a residential architectural form adapted for use in the national cemetery system, and the New Bern lodge especially so as the sole surviving representative of the type.

New Bern National Cemetery was established in 1867 and became the burial ground for those who had died along the Carolina coast during the blockade. The remains of over 1000 unknown soldiers were reinterred in the cemetery after the war. During the Civil War, Pamlico Sound came under Union control in August 1861 and the capture of New Bern in 1862 reinforced their hold over the waterways. Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General contain an early plat of the cemetery, ca. 1867, and it marks the location of the lodge (32' x 18'), kitchen (16' x 12'), and tool house (20' x 12'). All three buildings were drawn with rectangular footprints and it is likely this was a proposal for their location in the cemetery rather than documentation of existing conditions. A temporary, wood-frame lodge was built in 1868; it was one story and contained two rooms. The kitchen was detached, as the ca. 1867 plan indicated it would be. It was not until 1873 that records point to the construction of a lodge made of permanent materials. It was planned as a one-story building, but during the original bidding process in 1871, plans were changed to the one and one-half story Second Empire design. Moreover the Quartermaster also explored the use of shell rock, rather than brick or stone, as a construction material.

The coastal location of New Bern made shell rock readily available but concerns lingered over its appropriateness as a construction material for the lodge, specifically whether it would shed moisture and create a damp, unhealthy microclimate. Brick was offered as a substitute, if the traditional rubble stone could not be procured. By fall 1873 plans emerged that would link the

new lodge to the temporary wood lodge through piazzas, and the failure of the initial contract to F.A. Gibbons became evident. The current contractor, and Gibbons's surety, Mr. Gover, wanted written orders to use the shell rock before beginning work. Gover built the enclosing walls at four of the national cemeteries in Virginia: Glendale, Danville, Seven Pines, and Staunton. Evidently this experience served him well, and the lodge at New Bern was built. The temporary, wood-frame lodge was reused as a tool house and privy. In 1880 the Second Empire style lodge was described as being one and one-half story in height, with front and back porches of the new style, and six rooms. There was no basement.

The report in 1888 thoroughly records the appearance of the lodge. It was built using the shell rock and built according to the "usual plan." The exterior woodwork was decaying but with painting would last several more years. Inside, the woodwork also needed painting and the recommendation was for oak graining instead of paint that would have to be reapplied. The window sash lacked cords and weights and so the top sash was fixed. It was suggested that the windows be replaced with casements and the old sash stored for reuse in an outbuilding. The stair leading from the office proved to be a faulty arrangement; the office itself had walls and ceilings of plaster and was furnished with a simple desk made of pine, two tables and a bookcase. Generally the first floor rooms were damp, likely due to the application of plaster on the stone, rather than with furring strips as had been done upstairs, and to the humid climate. By 1909, the building's dampness made it "unsanitary."

Conditions of the temporary, wood-frame lodge-cum-tool house also deteriorated, yet it survived. It was a one-story building with upright boards battened together and whitewashed. The roof was shingled but leaked badly. At the time of the late nineteenth-century surveys it was used as a kitchen. Probably both were torn down in the early twentieth century when the bungalow-styled lodge and current utility building were built in 1916 and 1932 respectively. Most likely, too, the bungalow was placed where the Second Empire style lodge had been located. The bungalow cost \$3386 to construct in 1916, replacing the Second Empire style building estimated at \$3340 by the initial contractor Francis Gibbons.

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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.