

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

PORT HUDSON NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. LA-3-A

Location: 20978 Port Hickey Road, Zachary, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana.

The coordinates for the Port Hudson National Cemetery, Lodge are 91.275929 W and 30.660970 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 Port Hudson National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1879.

Builder/Contractor: Henry Wingate; completed by John J. Shipman.

Description: The Second Empire style lodge in Port Hudson National Cemetery exhibits all the hallmarks of the design: masonry construction, a mansard roof, and an L-plan design with three-rooms per floor. The principal elevation faces south. The lodge is one and one-half stories in height over a basement. A porch at the southeast corner connects the arms of the L in plan and it serves as transitional social space with doors opening from the living room and from the office. The mansard roof is covered in slate. It is surmounted by a shallow hip roof that was covered in sheet metal at the time of maintenance ledgers kept by the Veterans Administration in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The foundations are stone, and photographs suggest the water table is capped by a stone course, akin to a beltcourse, and the sills of the windows may be stone as well. The distinctive quoins at the building's corners are rendered in brick masonry.

The maintenance ledgers record the installation of a bathroom in 1913, but entries begin in earnest in 1931 recording the addition of a sun porch to the south front façade and the concrete floor in the basement. The building was rewired in the 1940. A rear porch was appended to the west end of the north elevation that same year. In 1941, some repairs were made to the roof, the building was painted, the pine floors refinished, and linoleum was installed in the kitchen. The exterior of the lodge was the subject of the next improvements, with the new steps to the side porch and other repairs as well as painting. In 1946 the porch was screened and the following year Venetian blinds were installed throughout the building. Mechanical systems were upgraded in 1949 with new bathroom fixtures and a new heating system for the building. In 1952, wood components were removed and replaced, including the porch columns, handrails, and the floor in the office, hall, and dining room. Attention to downspouts and weatherstripping suggest an effort

to waterproof the structure; casement windows were installed in the basement in this year as well. The lodge was painted again in 1955, the office was relocated in 1959, and the renovation was completed in 1962.

In the 1990s, the lodge was restored to its L-plan design with the removal of the additions and installation of historically appropriate trim, wood doors, and windows.

Site Context: The rectangular cemetery lot was divided into quadrants by axial drives and again by secondary pathways in the burial sections. At the center was the flagstaff. The main entrance drive extended through the cemetery on a east-to-west axis and divided to skirt the flagstaff circle. A brick enclosing wall defined the boundaries, and the lodge was placed north of the entrance drive and in proximity to the entrance gates. The principal elevation faced south to the drive. Historic maps indicate there were two small outbuildings off the northwest and northeast corners of the building, and a stable to the far north of the lodge, placed against the boundary wall. Contemporary aerial photographs show that the entrance drive loops around the flagstaff, rather than continuing east, and the secondary pathways and north-to-south axial drive are gone. The lodge precinct remains intact, with the front façade facing south and the utility buildings located to the rear (north) of the building.

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 Second Empire style, L-plan lodge built at Port Hudson is a significant survivor of a distinctive building type created by the Office of the Quartermaster to house the cemetery superintendents. Within the architectural history of the superintendent's lodges, the lodge at Port Hudson is important example of the type as built in brick to the definitive plan for masonry lodges issued in 1871. There were five lodges completed in 1879 using this version of the L-plan design. Of the 1879 class, Fort Gibson's lodge was constructed in stone, while the lodges in Andersonville, Baton Rouge, Fort McPherson, and Port Hudson were brick. Only two other brick lodges would be constructed with this plan, those in Beaufort and Mobile in 1881, and only three of the five constructed in 1879 remain in-situ. Of the three, the lodge in Andersonville was altered extensively in the 1930s, while the lodge in Port Hudson was restored in 1998 to its L-plan and the lodge at Fort McPherson retained its L-plan design albeit with a kitchen ell. All three embody the heyday of this seminal phase in the evolution of the national cemetery landscape, and the lodge at Port Hudson is integral to the story.

Port Hudson National Cemetery is part of the Port Hudson National Historic Site today, and it was first used as a burying ground in 1863. Port Hudson was strategically located north of Baton Rouge and overlooked the Mississippi River. After their defeat in Baton Rouge in 1862, the Confederate troops constructed earthworks and batteries at Port Hudson to check the Union Army's northward progress, with deadly success. The siege of May to June 1863 led to almost 4000 Union casualties. Vicksburg and Port Hudson remained the two strategic locations on the Mississippi River still held by the Confederates, and after the fall of Vicksburg, the Confederate Army surrendered Port Hudson to the Union forces. Port Hudson then became a recruiting center for black soldiers in 1863 and operated as such through the war's end.

Although declared a national cemetery in 1866, Port Hudson received its Second Empire style lodge a number of years later. The location for the masonry lodge was staked out in 1876, however, during excavation work for the basement, bodies were discovered and had to be

reinterred. Henry Wingate won the contract for the lodge with a bid for \$3619. Wingate died before the work was completed. After his death in 1878, John J. Shipman completed the lodge project.

A one-story, three-room wood cottage preceded the brick masonry lodge. It was built in 1868. As late as 1874, inspectors for the Quartermaster's office pronounced that with a little repair work the temporary wood cottage would "answer for a few more years." It did so. In 1876 inspections noted that the plaster was discolored where the rain water leaked in but otherwise the wood cottage was in good repair. Plans for a permanent lodge advanced, however, with the selection of a site.

The Second Empire style lodge was erected in 1878 to 1879. In 1880 the basement walls of the new lodge were whitewashed, and the next several reports called for painting inside and outside. By 1883 the tin roof was rusted in places for the want of paint and portions of the porches had rotted. Inside, two rooms needed kalsomining. By the time of the 1909 survey of the cemeteries, the construction date of the brick lodge was no longer known and few details were listed.

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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.