

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

SEVEN PINES NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. VA-23-A

Location: 400 East Williamsburg Road, Sandston, Henrico County, Virginia.

The coordinates for the Seven Pines National Cemetery, Lodge are 77.301332 W and 37.520267 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 Seven Pines National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1874.

Builder/Contractor: J.C. Comfort.

Description: The Second Empire style lodge is a complex masonry structure with a stone foundation and brick walls. It is one and one-half stories in height with the second-floor tucked behind its mansard roof. The mansard is covered in slate, with tiles arranged in ornamental patterns, and it is surmounted by a shallow hip roof covered in tin. The lodge follows the definitive version of the L-plan design and includes quoins at the corners and window openings. The first-floor windows have stone lintels and sills. The windows are double hung, wood sash glazed with six-over-six lights, while the gable-roofed dormer windows are glazed with multiple lights. The principal elevation faces south while the east side elevation abuts the boundary wall.

Photographs attached to the maintenance ledgers kept for the Veterans Administration between 1920 and the 1960s show an ell off the rear (north) of the building. It is one story in height and covered by a gable roof. A tall, narrow chimney extends above the gable. This ell likely is the kitchen. A small frame shed extends off this space; the frame rests on brick piers, later in-filled. This likely was the enclosed porch constructed in 1934 and noted in the ledger. There are eight dormer windows that records indicate were remodeled into casements in 1934. The floors were all originally wood, and pine was laid in 1934, except in the kitchen where linoleum flooring was installed. Linoleum also was put in the bathroom (1946), redone for the kitchen (1947), and ultimately replaced with vinyl (1960). Ceiling tiles were installed throughout the lodge in 1960; over the years the plaster and the interior woodwork and wall paint were renewed. A folding door was inserted in the living room (1960) and shades were added to the front porch. Nine doors were replaced in 1968. Two closets were expanded in size at this time too.

The ledgers note that upgrades to the mechanical systems began in 1927; the system maintenance continued throughout this period. The kitchen and bathroom were modernized in 1950 and 1952. The kitchen chimney was removed in 1959.

Site Context: The approximately one-acre cemetery lot is laid out in square plan and is enclosed by a brick wall along the perimeter. The main entrance is along the southern boundary and opens into the pedestrian-only interior from East Williamsburg Road (State Route 60). The lodge occupies the southeast corner of the lot, and faces south to the road. The entrance porch is nestled into the arm of the L-plan and forms the southeast corner of the building. The flagstaff is placed at the center of the cemetery and the graves are aligned in regularly spaced rows throughout the burial ground.

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 lodge at Seven Pines National Cemetery is significant to the architectural history of the building type and cemetery landscape as one of the early examples of the one and one-half story, brick lodges built to the definitive L-plan in the Second Empire idiom.

The Seven Pines National Cemetery took its name from the seven trees planted within the enclosure walls in the 1860s. The cemetery was established in 1866 and remains of the Union soldiers who died during the fight for Richmond were reinterred in the national cemetery. Many who died were buried where they fell, without identifying who they were or having the sanctity of a formal cemetery. After the war, a monumental effort to find these men began, and cemeteries such as Seven Pines were created for them to honor their memory.

Seven Pines is located southeast of Richmond and is in proximity to the site of the Battle of Fair Oaks (Battle of Seven Pines) that took place in May 1862 as General McClellan edged toward the Confederate Capital. Heavy casualties occurred. The Confederate General Joseph E. Johnston was wounded, and as a result General Robert E. Lee was put in command of the Army of Northern Virginia. Six battles were fought over seven days in late June to July 1862 in this area as Lee held Richmond. The dead from those battlefields, the former farms of Fair Oaks, Gaines Mill and Malvern Hill, were reinterred in Seven Pines National Cemetery as well.

There was a lodge for the superintendent constructed shortly after the cemetery was established. It was a temporary, wood-frame building one story in height. A new lodge was underway – or at least planned – in July 1873 when correspondence within the Office of the Quartermaster General stated that the old, wood lodge needed to be moved to the rear of the new lodge site. The older structure would then be converted into the tool house. A bid from J.C. Comfort to remove an existing cistern for \$100 and to build a new one for \$250 likely was judged too high since the Quartermaster urged continued use of the pump already in place. Comfort also contracted to construct a one and one-half story, Second Empire style, brick lodge. He later defaulted on the contract, and the lodge was completed by the Quartermaster's department.

In January 1889 an assessment by the Office of the Quartermaster judged the lodge to have been poorly constructed. It was brick, with a rubble stone foundation. The L-plan accommodated nine rooms in all. The building measured approximately 32' x 16'; the tool house behind it measured 22' x 18'. In 1909, the survey of the cemetery noted an annex to the lodge was built the previous year. It was one story and contained one room; likely this is the precursor to the ell seen in the

historic photographs. The tool house had been replaced by the 1909 survey as well, and the new tool house measured 14' x 26'.

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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.