

**HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY**  
**BATON ROUGE NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE**

**HALS No. LA-5-A**

Location: 220 North 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish, Louisiana.

The coordinates for Baton Rouge National Cemetery, Lodge are 91.169099 W and 30.449019 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 Baton Rouge National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1931.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The lodge is a one and one-half story building in the Cape Cod style. The building has a stucco exterior, a concrete foundation, and a cross-gable roof. The main elevation faces north toward the entrance drive, and is five bays across the main block with a wing to each side. Three dormer windows draw light into the second floor. The windows appear to be double-hung sash. Throughout the building, the windows are glazed with three or six lights in the upper sash and, in early photographs, shown to have shutters. Contemporary aerials and street-view imagery indicate the shutters have been removed. Exterior steps with a handrail to each side lead to the center entrance of the lodge; there is also a side entrance into the west wing and this likely serves as the office doorway.

Maintenance ledgers for the lodge indicate that there was continued effort to waterproof the lodge after its completion in 1931; for example, a sump pump was installed in 1935. The floors were refinished in 1940 and the kitchen floored in linoleum; the walls of the sunporch were rebuilt at this time as well. In the 1940s, the lodge was painted, cracks in the walls repaired with a plaster of Paris, an attic fan was added, and the roof repaired. The 1950s brought similar maintenance tasks, like the painting, but also work on the screens and the rebuilding of the flooring in the office. In 1960 the kitchen was renovated and in 1962 so was the porch. The last entry was for more painting, in 1968.

Site Context: The Baton Rouge National Cemetery occupies a long, narrow rectangular plot of land and is enclosed by a low brick wall. The wall was stuccoed in 1962. The main entrance to the cemetery is on the west boundary line, along 19<sup>th</sup> Street, and the gates at the entry date to the

1930s. A pathway or driveway bisects the cemetery and along this axis is the lodge and rostrum platform, both sited south of the path. Iron gates mark the entrance on the east side of the cemetery, at the terminus of the axial drive, on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street. The lodge faces north, with its west elevation looking to 19<sup>th</sup> Street. It is in proximity to the boundary wall and iron entrance gates.

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 1931, concurrent to the construction of Dutch Colonial Revival style lodges, the Quartermaster's office also experimented with a Cape Cod form. Similar building materials and technologies were used in the two models, such as the hollow-core tile and frame structure and the use of dormers to illuminate upper floors. Rather than a gambrel roof, as the Dutch Colonial Revival style lodges had, the Cape Cod design called for cross-gable roofs with a trio of dormers in the front. The floor plan for the Cape Cod lodge was for a one-story building with symmetrical porch and office wings. The rooms along the front of the lodge were the porch, dining room, living room, and office, while the rear housed the kitchen, bathroom and three bedrooms. The lodge at Baton Rouge National Cemetery is significant as an example of this suburban house form adapted for use in the national cemetery system. It cost \$9607 to build.

In Baton Rouge, during the Civil War, soldiers were buried in Magnolia Cemetery and in the adjacent woods. The forest quickly became an official permanent cemetery and the government purchased the land in 1868, just a year after the burying ground was designated a national cemetery. The original structures and enclosing fence were likely made of wood, and proposals were solicited for masonry walls and a lodge in 1873. Recommendations to accept W.C. Henry's bid for the walls in Baton Rouge, and also in Port Hudson, were forwarded to the Quartermaster. Evidently construction of a permanent lodge was delayed. In 1878 Henry Wingate entered into a contract to build a brick lodge and by March 1879 it was complete.

The lodge was built in the Second Empire style on the L-plan, of brick but with stone trimming. A variation on the plan was the use of transoms on all the doors, which subsequent inspectors approved. By 1880 the settling of the walls began to cause noticeable cracking and it was suggested those be filled and the lodge painted. Three years later the problem was severe, particularly along the south side of the building. The source of the problem was discovered to be a faulty city sewer line running underground in that location. As a result the southeast corner settled to the extent that the interior partition walls had "cut loose" from the brick walls, the south wall leaned out at the top, other walls were cracked, the front steps were decayed and "worthless", the porch floor and joists needed replacing, and the rear porch required work. The contractors, Hannan and Voss, recommended hog chaining it to prevent any further separation of the walls and the installation of cement concrete at the intersection of the walls and the ground as an impermeable barrier. In 1886 it was observed that the basement was "underdrained" but that the building was in good condition, suggesting that the stabilization measures were taken. The only substantive recommendation was in the 1888 report calling for screens in a "mosquito infested country." The interior of the lodge was painted white at that time, and the basement walls whitewashed. Sometime after 1889, when the last entry for the lodge was found in the Quartermaster's records and 1931 when the current lodge was built, this lodge was demolished.

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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.