

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

BLACK HILLS NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. SD-2-A

Location: 20901 Pleasant Valley Drive, Sturgis, Meade County, South Dakota.

The coordinates for the Black Hills National Cemetery, Lodge are 103.472906 W and 43.440517 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 Black Hills National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1951.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The Suburban Rambler lodge was built with a L-plan, with the main entrance door at the south end of the southeast (front) elevation and secondary entrances located at the north end of the east elevation and, as suggested by historic maps, at the northwest and northeast elevations. Sidelights flank the main entrance door, and a small porch covers the entrance. The southwest elevation faces the main entrance drive and sidewalks connect the building to the roadway.

The lodge is one of two examples of the Suburban Rambler design used in the national cemeteries. The lodge is a brick building with reinforced concrete foundations. It is a one-story structure, containing five main living rooms plus the bathroom, office and public rest room, with a hipped roof and central chimney. The windows are double-hung wood sash and glazed with multiple lights. Combination storm and screen door and windows were installed in November 1951, and those doors were replaced with aluminum doors in 1957. The interior walls are plastered. The floors are wood, linoleum, and tile. The oak floors were refinished in 1956, and the linoleum flooring in the office was replaced in this year as well.

Maintenance ledgers record changes to the building from the time of construction through the 1960s. After this time the lodge was renovated, as shown in contemporary aerial photographs. Alterations to the building include the installation of snow guards on the roof in 1952 and the repairs made to the windows after a tornado in 1953 and to the roof after a hail storm damaged the structure in 1963. The kitchen was improved in 1958, and the bathroom walls and tiling repaired in 1960. Safety treads were put on the steps to the basement in 1962. In 1965 the north

side porch was replaced. Painting routinely occurred throughout the 1950s and 1960s, and the building was renovated in 1966. At that time sheetrock ceilings were installed and carpeting was replaced. Light fixtures and air conditioning were upgraded or added at this time. In 1967, wood posts for the porch were replaced.

Site Context: Black Hills National Cemetery is to the south of the city of Sturgis, and the grounds extend west from the entrance off of Pleasant Valley Drive. Railroad tracks run between Pleasant Valley Drive and the main entrance gates. The lodge and service buildings are located in proximity to the main entrance gates and to the north of the entrance drive, occupying the northern section of the cemetery.

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 1949 and 1951, the Quartermaster built identical lodges in a suburban rambler design. These lodges were constructed in Woodlawn, New York, and in Black Hills, South Dakota, and the buildings were one story with an open plan. The brick lodge in Black Hills National Cemetery is significant as one of the two examples of this house type used in the national cemetery system.

In Dean Holt's *American Military Cemeteries*, the author notes that the Black Hills National Cemetery originally was known as Fort Meade National Cemetery. The cemetery was established in 1948, but the name was changed in 1949 to distinguish it from other military installations. The first interment was in 1948.

Sources:

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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.