

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

FINN'S POINT NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. NJ-3-A

Location: Fort Mott Road, Salem, Salem County, New Jersey.

The coordinates for Finn's Point National Cemetery, Lodge are 75.555373 W and 39.611559 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 Finn's Point National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1877.

Builder/Contractor: Josiah Bickings and Son.

Josiah Bickings and Son, of Philadelphia, won the contract for the construction of the lodge, and masonry wall encircling the cemetery grounds in August 1876. The cost for the lodge was estimated at \$3190. The specifications for the lodge were those of the "usual mansard place" or "regular style of lodge" with three rooms on the first floor for a kitchen, living room, and office and three equal sized (14x16) bedrooms on the second floor or attic. Access to the roof was by way of a scuttle or hatch in the ceiling. The walls were to be made of stone, and plastered on the interior. The specifications called for five cellar windows, hinged, with grates. Slates laid in an overlapping diamond or fishscale pattern covered the mansard. Outbuildings included a tool house and privy, both made of wood. Landscaping in 1888 consisted of an osage hedge along three sides of the cemetery, arbor vitae along two sides of the lodge, evergreens, one willow and several maples.

In October 1876 some complaint was made about the quality of the workmanship, but by November, progress was satisfactory and the framing for the interior was underway. In May 1877 the walls were complete. In 1888 -1889 it was observed that the cellar was damp and so could not be used for any other purpose. Perhaps the high water table – the source of the dampness – and the initial stonework together made the settling of the building more severe than anticipated. Cracks in the north wall and adjoining interior partition wall are evident and likely they are a result of this settling process. Repairs to the interior plaster and vigilant maintenance, such as painting, reflect this settling and subsequent splaying of the walls.

The stones for the building were said to be from the Hudson River, and the standard plans indicate the closet in the northwest corner of the northeast room was original. Possibly the built-in cabinetry came later, perhaps when the room was used as a dining room.

Description: Finn's Point National Cemetery consists of about 4 ½ acres bounded by a stone masonry wall with iron gates at the front entrance and at a small portal in the wall near the lodge. The flagpole, roadway, lodge and two commemorative monuments distinguish the otherwise lawn-like setting of the cemetery. The national cemetery was established in 1875, and the lodge quickly followed. The timing of the national cemetery's genesis dictated the style of lodge built on the premises. Cottage-like in scale and monumental in materials, the lodge has load-bearing masonry walls about 2' thick and a wood-frame interior structure for the floors, ceilings, roof. The exterior walls are made of randomly laid field stones, with flat faces and naturally shaped edges, and granite quoins, lintels, and sills, all with dressed faces. There is a stone (projecting 5") waterable about 2' from grade and a beltcourse placed just below the boxed cornice. The wood cornice is presently covered in aluminum. The wood porch (10' x15' on the inside) at the southwest corner is an integral component of the lodge design, adding to the picturesque cottage presentation; the decorative, scrolled brackets are original. On the interior, floor construction included sound-proofing technologies such as the ledger strips, boards, and pugging (coarse plaster), seen in use with the first-floor joists.

The plan for the lodge followed the two-story, Second Empire style model established by the Quartermaster General's Office. The L-shaped plan featured three rooms on the first floor to accommodate an office, kitchen, and dining/living areas; the three corresponding rooms of the second floor provided space for bedchambers for the superintendent's family. This floor was tucked within the mansard roof and so, in some instances, the lodge is described as a one-and-a-half story structure. A wood porch, here on the southwest corner or inside of the L in plan, connected the public rooms and offered a fourth living space on the first floor. The principal or southwest elevation of the lodge includes this porch and the office. Beneath the stone masonry section of the building is a full basement, with stone foundation walls measuring approximately 5' in height.

The basement has a poured concrete floor and the stone walls have been plastered. The joists for the floor system above are exposed. An I-beam made of iron runs along the east wall of the southeast room to reinforce the floor above. Originally access to the basement was by way of a bulkhead entrance on the east side; evidence of this remains in the basement between the full basement area and the crawl space beneath the kitchen ell. In the northwest room, referred to as the coal room, there is a cabinet with beadboard doors. A laundry sink remains in situ in the northeast room, while the water heater and other mechanical equipment is in the room to the southeast. The current exterior entrance connects to this room; it consists of a single door cut in under the south stoop and accessed by way of a single run of steps made of concrete. An iron railing shields the stairwell and the stair head is inaccessible due to overgrown shrubbery.

Although the roof over the lodge is a shallow hip, with its flat seam metal surface now covered in asphalt, the most visible element of the roof system is the mansard at the second floor. The mansard is characteristic of the Second Empire style of design, and here it is covered in slate

tiles. A shallow gable roof covered in standing seam metal extends over the ell. The east porch at the far end of the ell has a shallow hip roof that is also covered in the standing seam metal. Rolled rubber overlays the flat seam metal, low hip roof over the southeast porch. There is a metal hood, with iron brackets projecting over the south entrance. The gutters are built-in; additional gutters, downspouts and PVC boots are also present, supplementing the splash blocks and helping to drain water away from the building. The aluminum gutters and downspouts, plus the PVC boots, were installed sometime after the ell.

Along the north side of the roof there is a ventilating hood and a fan, and to the south is the chimneystack. The brick masonry chimney flue, that served the two fireplaces, is visible in the shallow attic.

Fenestration in the masonry sections of the lodge is substantial. Granite quoins, lintels and sills accentuate the openings, excepting the door thresholds, which are in line with the stone watertable. The arched window openings at the basement level are also highlighted by carved stone lintels set within the watertable. The placement of these windows corresponds to the first-floor window openings, but those on the east end of the north elevation are out of alignment by several inches. The first-floor wood sash is glazed with six-over-six lights; each window has an aluminum storm window covering. Many of the windows received a plastic sheathing along the sash bar and sill; the divider at the window head, that would receive the operable sash, is missing. Possibly these alterations represent an attempt at lead abatement. The basement windows have a wood frame, are glazed with three lights, and swing inward. The masonry opening is over 3 ½', and the wood framed opening just under 3'. Placement of the window at the exterior edge of the masonry wall created an interior recess of almost 2'. Although the position and shape of the openings are contemporary to construction, the inward swinging window casements likely came later. The joists adjacent to the openings have been cut back so the windows would be operable. The window in the east elevation has an iron grille covering; iron grates in lieu of glazing may have screened the window openings originally. Gable-roofed dormer windows light the second floor; presently covered in aluminum, the wood dormers originally featured a decorative pediment. The majority of the dormers are glazed with two-over-two lights; some feature two-over-one.

Two of the original exterior doors remain in place. These doors open onto the wood frame porch at the southwest corner of the building. They are more than 7' in height, are made of wood, and are paneled on both faces. The six panels of the door are marked by robust molding, and the lock rail is generously proportioned. The interior face of the door from the southeast room (office) to the porch has been covered in the faux wood paneling. The moldings for the panels were removed or cut back, however, the escutcheon was returned to its place even though the faux paneling covered the keyhole. The south doorway was fashioned from a window opening in the south wall of the southeast room (office); the sill was cut and reused as quoins for the longer door portal. The single door has two horizontal panels beneath the lock rail and is glazed with nine lights over the lock rail. The concrete stoop and three steps leading to this door also provide cover for the basement entry. The kitchen door opens onto the east porch, and like that found in the south elevation, it is a single door with two panels below the lock rail and nine lights above

it. The basement door is another example of this type of door, although the nine-light glazing above the lock rail has been covered with plywood for security purposes.

An ell addition for the kitchen is located on the east side of the building; constructed of wood – frame on concrete block foundations, the rectangular extension measures approximately 16' x 13' on the interior, with an 8' ceiling. The wood-frame structure is covered in stucco applied to metal lath and the jambs of the wood windows are embedded in the stucco. There are three sash windows lighting the kitchen interior. The one located in the north elevation is glazed with three over one lights, while the two in the south elevation are glazed with six-over-six lights.

The interior walls and ceiling of the lodge, and kitchen ell, are painted with the baseboards (mopboards historically) and shoe molding intact. The thickness of the load-bearing masonry walls (about 2') presented an opportunity for embellishing the interior. There are panels with gouge-work placed in the deep reveals of the exterior doors as well as corner beads on the interior face of the walls that effectively frames the set-back needed for the windows. Other decorative features include the built-in cabinet, found in the northwest corner of the northeast room on the first floor, and the two fireplaces, one each in the northwest room of each floor. The slate mantel shelf in the upstairs room has been replaced by wood shelf with a scalloped profile. The shelf was cut at the north end to accommodate the truncated space; where it came from originally is unclear.

Flooring consists of uniform boards, measuring 2 ½", placed over the joists. The replacement of the floor boards likely prompted the alteration seen in the basement wherein newer members were sistered to the joists to support and elevate the floor level above. The floor of the kitchen is covered with linoleum, while that of the office (southeast room) consists of tiles, 9" square.

The walls of the southeast room (office) have been covered in faux wood paneling reminiscent of aesthetics dating to the mid-twentieth century. Other changes to the plaster include the furring out of the ceilings for acoustical, fiber-based tiles in the southeast (office) room on the first floor and the rooms of the second floor.

The bathroom walls are partially tiled, with 4" square ceramic tiles, and the floor consists of vinyl tiles. The linen closet, with its slab doors and spring catch latches, is contemporary to the installation of the bathroom in the 1940s. With the exception of this alteration, wherein a two-panel wood door was installed in the doorway to the southeast bedroom and another for the bathroom, the original six-panel doors remain in place. The panels are raised and defined by applied moldings on the original, nineteenth-century doors whereas the newer two-panel, single doors have large, flat panels slightly recessed from the rails and stiles. These newer doors were installed as part of the renovation of the southeast bedroom.

There are two interior staircases in the lodge. A single run of ten steps (with risers about 8" and treads 9") on a closed stringer connects the basement and first floor. The enclosed stair feels narrow, although the opening measures approximately 3' across. The stair to the second floor is located at the south end of the northeast room (dining room). There are three steps to a landing and, from the landing, a quarter turn to an enclosed, single run of stairs. These steps are smaller

than the steps below the landing and are of the same proportions as the stair to the basement (8" risers, 9" treads). A non-slip or skid surface has been applied to these stairs. A modern metal handrail has been installed; likely it was an exterior rail and re-used here. It was installed upside down.

The hardware for the lodge includes several generations of butt hinges, sliding bolt locks, sash locks, knobs, and escutcheons. A surface box lock was present on the original doors.

The building systems include plumbing for the kitchen and bathroom as well as the steam heating system. The installation of radiators marks the shift from coal and the supply of heat to each room of the lodge. The lodge is also wired for electricity. The two smoke detectors are surface mounted and battery powered. Vandals let off the fire extinguisher inside the building, and so the interior was coated. There is no other fire suppression system in place.

There are two maintenance buildings on the property, both located to the northeast of the lodge: a small gable roofed, one-room utility shed that originally was for oil storage and a two-story garage with a gable roof. The garage was a stable originally, and the second floor was used as a hay loft. It was completed in 1925, and remodeled in 1949. Likely the small addition to the east end of the garage/stable dates to the 1940s improvements. Both buildings are painted blue.

Since its construction in 1877 the lodge underwent several phases of renovations as technologies and living standards changed. The first major improvements came in 1922 with the introduction of the steam heating system and radiators. The maintenance ledgers also note the installation of an enameled iron bathtub so some provision for a bathroom was made at or by this time. There is another reference to replacing the mechanical systems in 1929 and the bathtub in 1931, but the substantial alterations to the building occurred at the end of the decade. Funded through the WPA, work on site in 1939 included a comfort station and upgrades to the living quarters of the cemetery superintendent. The kitchen was rebuilt and a laundry room fashioned in the basement; two years later, the base of the kitchen was enclosed and the interiors were redecorated. In 1945 the floors were refinished; in 1947, the I-beam was installed in the basement, along the east wall, to underpin the floor joists of the office (southeast room). Around 1949 the second wave of alterations occurred. At this time, the kitchen was rebuilt. This change spurred several others because it obscured the exterior entrance to the basement. A new entrance was cut into the south wall of the office, through what was a window, and below grade, space was created for a door into the basement. Steps made of concrete served the basement door. Inside, the basement received the poured concrete floors and an iron handrail was affixed to the wall for the interior stair connecting the first and second floors. The partition for the bathroom became a permanent feature in 1948, and new fixtures were installed in 1953. Further upgrades occurred in the 1960s, including the tiles for the wall. Similarly the kitchen was updated in the 1960s, and the office got its vinyl tile flooring. Weatherproofing the lodge prompted weatherstripping of the doors and windows (1950), installing insulation in the attic (1951), and adding aluminum storm doors and windows (1956). The porch was screened in the 1968. Sometime after 1968, when the last entry in the ledger was made, the plaques along the drive were relocated to the west side of the lodge and the plaque with the Gettysburg Address inscribed on it was removed from the porch and repositioned near the drive.

As late as 1959, two hundred or so visitors came to the cemetery for Memorial Day events, and a new flagpole was contracted for in 1961. Concrete walkways were replaced in the late 1960s and this suggests a steady use of the grounds.

Site Context: The entrance to Finn's Point National Cemetery is by way of Fort Mott State Park, and a stone wall defines the perimeter of the cemetery grounds and holds sway against the surrounding tidal marshes. The main entrance is to the south and a paved drive leads into the cemetery, looping around the flagpole and past the lodge and utility buildings in northeast quadrant of the property. The Second Empire style lodge faces southwest, looking across the grounds notable for an expanse of grass and a lack of grave markers.

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. That year saw the establishment of fourteen national cemeteries. These were the first cemeteries in the national cemetery system; by the end of the decade almost 300,000 men (and at least one woman) 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 Army created a regimented landscape with specific components including 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 hedge and various trees, were selected to give a pleasing appearance and to screen outbuildings - the business of cemetery maintenance - from public view. Less a commemorative architectural statement, the lodge for the cemetery superintendent had to combine practicality with a respectful presence.

The lodge at Finn's Point is the most intact example of the two-story, stripped-down Second Empire style design for the superintendent lodges approved by the Office of the Quartermaster General in the 1870s. Sources for the aesthetic include the dwelling of the Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs in Washington, DC, as well as the oeuvre of Edward Clark, then Architect of the Capitol, who used the Second Empire Style in many of his designs for projects distinct from his work on the Capitol building. Circumstantial evidence for the preferences of both public architects suggests some discussion of the lodge's appearance and size before Meigs affixed his name and the stamp of his office on the plans. The masonry lodges typically replaced those made of wood initially. The lodges constructed of wood served an immediate need for domestic space for the cemetery superintendents, but were merely a stop-gap measure in the evolution of the architectural program of the national cemetery. The shift to more permanent materials for the buildings reinforced the concept that emerged in the late 1860s of what features a cemetery should contain. Solidly built of substantial masonry, the cottage-scaled lodges were just one element of the regimented landscape of commemoration entrenched within the stone masonry and iron fences.

Finn's Point National Cemetery is in proximity to coastal defense fortifications that were built up in the prelude to the Spanish-American War of 1898. Emplacements for guns were constructed at Finn's Point Military Reservation in 1896, and the name of the installation was changed to Fort Mott in 1897 in honor of Major General Gershom Mott. Mott commanded the New Jersey Volunteers during the Civil War. The national cemetery is located to the north end of Fort Mott today.

No military action occurred near Finn's Point during the Civil War, however, nearby Fort Delaware was a prisoner of war camp. Its population swelled after the Battle of Gettysburg in July 1863. Many of the men held there died in the months following the battle, particularly in the 1863-1864 winter season, but the high water table made underground burials impractical. Weather permitting, the remains were transferred to Finn's Point for interment. Otherwise, the dead were buried on Pea Patch Island near Fort Delaware. In 1875 Virginia Governor James Kemper complained to the Secretary of War about the condition of the graves, and as a result, the Office of the Quartermaster General was charged with exhuming those who had been hastily buried near Fort Delaware and re-interring the remains at Finn's Point. In all there were 2436 Confederate prisoners of war buried at Finn's Point. Their graves consisted of long trenches marked by evergreens; the cemetery also received the bodies of 135 Union soldiers, men who died guarding the camp, and wood headboards marked those graves.

Also at this time, in October 1875, the Secretary declared Finn's Point a national cemetery and the first Superintendent, Frederick Schmidt, took up his post shortly thereafter. Schmidt rented quarters in Salem, New Jersey, until the lodge could be constructed. Schmidt and a laborer landscaped the cemetery grounds, planting grass and soliciting permission to plant maple and pine trees. In 1879 a marble monument to the Union dead was placed in the cemetery; by then most of the wood grave markers had deteriorated. In 1936 a Tempietto-inspired feature was erected over the monument. Although described in documents as a columned cupola or as cupola housing erected for the monument, the architectural form is reminiscent of Bramante's Tempietto over the site of St. Peter's martyrdom. It was said, however, to be modeled on Grant's Tomb in New York, a mausoleum completed in 1897 and restored in the 1930s with WPA funding.

In 1910 the Confederate dead were honored with an 85' high obelisk erected in their memory. The obelisk was made of concrete and faced with Pennsylvania granite. The names of the dead appear on bronze plaques at the base of the memorial. Legislation in 1906 regarding the burials of those who died in prisoner of war camps prompted the placement of the monument in Finn's Point. Similarly, white marble headstones mark the graves of thirteen prisoners of war who died while held at Fort Dix during the Second World War.

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Historian: Virginia B. Price, 2012.

Project Information: The documentation of the superintendent's lodge at Finn's Point National Cemetery was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) division of Heritage Documentation Programs, 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 Lavoie, Chief of HABS. The historical research component 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. The field work was undertaken and the measured drawings were produced by HABS architects Paul Davidson, Daniel De Sousa, and Jeremy Mauro.