

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### SAN ANTONIO NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. TX-6-A

Location: 517 Paso Hundo Street, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas.

The coordinates for the San Antonio National Cemetery are 98.466764 W and 29.423964 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 San Antonio National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1910; demolished after 1969.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: There were three lodges built for the San Antonio National Cemetery. The first lodge was a stuccoed-stone building containing two rooms on a small, approximately 16' x 20', footprint. The roof had a high pitch and lent the lodge a "Swiss cottage" style. In 1878 this lodge was replaced with a stone lodge built in the Second Empire style on the L-plan. The Swiss cottage styled lodge was adapted for use as an office and later as a chapel, until its demolition in 1945. The L-plan lodge was razed in 1910 and replaced with a two-story, brick Four-Square. This was the last of the Four-Square lodges built by the Quartermaster, and like those in Florence, Barrancas, Knoxville, and Little Rock, it too was demolished.

The Four-Square lodge constructed in 1910 was two stories in height with two interior chimneystacks. Its hip roof was covered in slate, while the walls were a brick veneer. The foundations of the building were concrete. Inside, the walls were plaster on lath and the floors were wood, except in the kitchen and bathroom wherein linoleum flooring was used. Piercing the roofline was a centrally-located eyebrow dormer; the opening was louvered rather than glazed. Early photographs indicate all the windows visible, except those on the second floor above the half-story office, had cloth awnings. Similarly, the photographs show the porches enclosed with screens. From the two-story façade projected a one-story, one-room wing that created a similar L-shape footprint to the long-established lodge plan used by the Office of the Quartermaster General. Records of the Veterans Administration indicate this lodge contained four bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor, and accommodated a living room, dining room, kitchen, and office on the first floor.

Maintenance records begin in the 1930s and continue through the 1960s, although little was done in the 1930s once the hot water heater and new kitchen sink were installed. Mechanical systems were upgraded in the 1940s, with steam heating and electrical wiring; the wiring would be modernized twice in the 1950s. The interior walls were periodically repaired and painted, and the exterior painted as well. Guttering on the lower porch was replaced, as well as multiple awnings that were destroyed in a storm. In the mid 1950s, redecorating occurred. The kitchen and bathroom were renovated, asbestos tile was laid in the office, and an acoustical tile ceiling was added in the hallway. Wood shelving in the pantry was removed, and the basement ceiling was repaired. In 1960 the back steps were repaired and in 1969 the roof was replaced. In the interim, more cosmetic changes came to the lodge. Examples include the placement of acoustical tile in the dining room and Formica countertops in the kitchen.

Site Context: The rectangular cemetery plot is distinguished by two large circular drives, to east and west sides, linked by an axial drive. A transverse drive connects the entrance gates on the southern edge of the grounds to the east circle where the drive terminates at the flagstaff. To the east of this entrance drive is where the Second Empire style lodge built in 1878 was located, and to the west of the drive, opposite the lodge, was the two-room building erected in 1869 or 1870 for the superintendent and, after 1878, used as an office and chapel until 1945. The walkway leading to the old lodge, that is, the office or chapel building, remains in place. The rostrum, built in 1889-90, is also to the west of the entrance drive. The Four-Square lodge erected in 1910 to replace the Second Empire style lodge was likely built in the same location and oriented to face west to the drive as the Second Empire style building had done.

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 Four-Square plan used by the Quartermaster between 1906 and 1910 was among the earliest of the suburban house forms adapted for the national cemetery system. The Quartermaster's department first tried the Four-Square in wood-frame construction, adding double verandas to the plan for the two lodges in Florence, South Carolina, and Barrancas, Florida. The Four-Square was then repeated in six lodges made of brick. The brick Four-Squares are found in Gettysburg, Knoxville, Camp Butler, Little Rock, Andrew Johnson, Tennessee, and San Antonio. The Four-Square plan provided space for the hall, office, parlor, dining room, pantry and kitchen on the first floor, and space for the hall, four bedrooms and bathroom on the second floor. These were nearly identical in plan and form, each with center hallways and hip roofs and a projecting room for the office marked by a balustrade along its roofline. San Antonio's lodge was the last built in the Four-Square plan and matched its predecessors in form and plan. All of the lodges erected along the Four-Square plan derive their significance as a collective example of an early twentieth-century house form adapted for use in the national cemeteries. Their construction marks a point of departure from the long standing L-plan lodge.

The city of San Antonio donated the land for the national cemetery in 1867 and confirmed the transfer of the property to the U.S. government by deed in 1871. The remains of those Union soldiers who died in San Antonio or nearby the city during the Civil War were reinterred in the national cemetery. Of those men, the remains of 314 soldiers were unidentified. A monument to the unknown dead was erected in 1912.

Once the grounds for the cemetery were defined, a request of the Quartermaster General for a porter's lodge was submitted. San Antonio National Cemetery was about a mile from the city,

and so when storms came, it was difficult for the caretaker to find shelter. A small porter's lodge offered shelter for the caretaker and storage for the tools he used on-site, and so authorities requested funds for such a structure. By April 1868, when the request for a porter's lodge was repeated, the notice to the Quartermaster suggested that the porter's lodge was the only outstanding feature of the cemetery landscape, and with its construction the cemetery in San Antonio would be "complete." This refers to the architectural program of the national cemeteries that included an enclosing wall, flagpole, lodge, drives and walks, and a rostrum.

The porter's lodge for San Antonio was intended to be small, measuring 16' x 20' and only one story in height, but substantially made of stone. Stone was preferred because by July 1867 the Quartermaster recognized that stone was plentiful, and wood was scarce. Residents of San Antonio carted away the planks made for the initial enclosing wall, which they used for firewood. The one-story, stone lodge and the enclosing wall were completed by 1872. At that time, the Quartermaster appointed the first superintendent. Previously a caretaker hired by the month looked after the cemetery.

Perhaps due to the increased use of the building after the appointment of the superintendent repairs were soon needed and proposals for enlarging it were discussed. Records for 1873 and 1875 note repairs for the lodge, including some work on the chimney and gutters. In 1875 plans for an addition to the lodge were drafted by Geo[rge] H. Griebel, an architect for the Quartermaster. His expansion made the plan "as near as possible" to that of the other lodges, referring to the L-shaped footprint of the Second Empire design then being built throughout the national cemetery system. Griebel's plan provided an office, kitchen and living room, plus a porch, on the ground floor. The elevations show a cross-gabled cottage with long, narrow window openings capped by pointed hoods or steeply pitched pediments. The height to the ridge of the roof was 22', that of the first floor, 12'. Cost estimates were also prepared.

The expansion was not completed, however, since in December 1877 recommendations to the Quartermaster favored a new building. In 1878 the Quartermaster accepted the proposal from James Murphy to build a one and one-half story lodge, one-story high, with a mansard roof. That April the Quartermaster concurred with a change in the specifications, for substituting French casement windows for windows "with pulleys" (i.e., sash) in the attic level because the sash leaked in other lodges. The Quartermaster's office approved the change order and the Second Empire style lodge was accepted as complete in July 1878.

Inspections in the ensuing years revealed how well the lodge served its purpose. In 1879 and 1880 it was good condition, as were the graves, walks, and enclosing wall. The old lodge, the one-room, one-story stone structure erected around 1868, was extant; it measured 10' x 12' in 1880 somewhat reduced in scale from the proposed specifications (16' x 20'). The survey of 1889, however, cited its dimensions as 15' x 20' with a high roof. The walls were stuccoed and the roof was shingled. In addition to the old lodge was an outbuilding containing a woodshed, tool room, water closet, and stable. It was wood, and utilitarian in appearance. The wood outbuilding(s) remained viable for several more years, only being replaced with a masonry structure in 1890.

In 1884 the national cemetery expanded and proposals were sought for a new boundary wall and the following year a plat was made to highlight the new burial section. The buildings within the

walls remained in place through the 1909 survey.

The Second Empire style lodge was razed in 1910, while the 1870 stone lodge continued in service as an office and then as a chapel. It was razed in 1945.

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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.