

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

STAUNTON NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. VA-20-A

Location: 901 Richmond Avenue, Staunton, Virginia.

The coordinates for the Staunton National Cemetery, Lodge are 79.049821 W and 38.140226 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 Staunton National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1871; second-floor addition, after 1886.

Builder/Contractor: Kyran A. Murphy.

Description: The Second-Empire style lodge is a one and one-half story building made of stone. It has an L-shaped footprint, and the principal elevation faces northwest. The southwest (side) elevation faces Richmond Avenue and is visible from the roadway. The cast-iron Gettysburg Address plaque is affixed to the west end of the front (northwest) façade and the entry porch is located in the west corner of the building, adjoining both arms of the L-plan. The lodge lacks a cellar. It has a mansard roof covered in slate, and a shallow hip roof covered in tin above. Dormer windows protrude from the mansard and give light the second-floor interior. The windows have stone sills.

The L-shaped footprint provided three rooms on each floor. Staunton's lodge had additional living space through the reuse of the earlier, temporary wood frame lodge as a kitchen and storeroom. The wood-frame building was moved to the rear (southeast) of the new, stone lodge where it remained until a kitchen ell was constructed of brick in 1930.

Historic photographs in the files of the Veterans Administration show that the window sash of the dormers was glazed with two-over-two lights early in the twentieth century, while the first-floor sash was glazed with six-over-six lights. One exterior door was glazed over the lock rail and paneled below. Contemporary aerials confirm the glazing patterns of the sash.

The walls of the lodge were plaster on lath and painted; the floors of the lodge were made of wood, although linoleum was later used in the kitchen (1949).

Maintenance ledgers for the cemetery reveal that lighting came to the lodge in 1923, and new heating in 1930. Both systems were updated in the 1950s. A closet was created in 1924, and another closet was made in 1949 as other renovations were done. The wood floors were refinished in 1959. Venetian blinds were hung in 1956. Storm windows were repaired and installed in 1961 after a storm damaged the roof. The tin roof and cornice had been replaced earlier, in 1927, but the storm took its toll on the building fabric. The kitchen ell was added in 1930 and the kitchen was remodeled in 1949. The kitchen porch was screened in 1939. Repairs to the stonework were done in 1957, and the cast-iron Gettysburg Address plaque was removed from the building in 1963 and placed nearby. A basement was dug over the building in 1934, and the exterior entryway framed over. The floor was concrete. A coal chute was also built at this time.

Sometime after entries in the ledgers cease the Gettysburg Address plaque was reaffixed to the building as it appears on the front façade today.

Site Context: Staunton National Cemetery contains just over one acre and is laid out in a square shaped lot. The perimeter is enclosed by a low, limestone wall and the main entrance is on the southwest boundary line along Richmond Avenue. The lodge is just south of the main entrance and looks northwest to the entrance drive that bisects the lot on a southwest to northeast axis and terminates at the flagstaff. The flagstaff is located in the center of the cemetery and the burial sections fill the remainder of the lot.

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 Staunton National Cemetery is important to the architectural history of the national cemeteries as a significant built example of the L-plan design readily associated with the Office of the Quartermaster. The Staunton lodge is particularly important because it was first built to plans for a one story, stone building covered by a hipped roof. This early iteration of the L-plan was used in national cemeteries in Virginia in 1871 and 1872, as well as in the Soldiers Home and Battleground cemeteries in Washington, DC. All of the lodges constructed with these plans were altered, including the one at Staunton sometime after 1886, plus those constructed in City Point, Cold Harbor, Fort Harrison, and Winchester. The alterations to these one-story, stone lodges involved changing the hip roof for a mansard roof to provide a second floor of living space for the superintendent. The change in roof type gave the Staunton lodge the same silhouette and floor-plan as the lodges subsequently built according to the definitive L-plan design for one and one-half story masonry buildings that became the standard issue.

In 1866 Staunton National Cemetery was established on just over one acre of land near the heart of the city. Staunton's location in the Shenandoah Valley and near to the Massanutten Mountains was pivotal to the Confederate strategy in the early years of the war. General Thomas J. (Stonewall) Jackson set up his headquarters there in 1862. Jackson's maneuvers in the Shenandoah alleviated pressure on General Robert E. Lee during the defense of Richmond and forces under General George B. McClellan were diverted with instructions to trap Jackson in the Valley of Virginia. In 1864 General Philip B. Sheridan took the city during his sweep through the Shenandoah. President Woodrow Wilson's father, a minister, turned his church in Staunton into a Confederate hospital and two years after Woodrow's birth moved the family to Georgia. When Staunton National Cemetery opened, the initial burials were the remains of Union soldiers transferred from the city's cemeteries and other graveyards in that part of the Valley.

Work on the cemetery's infrastructure began immediately, and in 1867, the superintendent at Staunton could report not just on interments but also on the emergence of a formal cemetery landscape with the placement of the flagstaff and the construction of a temporary, wood-frame lodge. A sketch map of the cemetery shows a quadrangle lay-out and the plan includes the one-story, two-room frame lodge to one side. It was drawn as a rectangular building with a side gable roof. By November 1870 discussion within the Quartermaster's office debated whether it was feasible to continue repairing the wood lodges, impermanent structures like those at Staunton and Fort Harrison (HALS No. VA-24), or if the department should invest in masonry buildings. The Quartermaster's office decided to erect permanent lodges at these cemeteries, and bids were received by the end of the year. A \$2550 contract was awarded to Kyran A. Murphy of Washington, DC, in January 1871.

In May 1871 the site of the new lodge was cleared. Sixty-three bodies were exhumed and reinterred elsewhere in the cemetery and the wood-frame lodge was moved. Construction on the new lodge commenced shortly thereafter, and it was largely complete by October 1871. At that time, discussions about the quality of work occurred, and of particular concern to the Quartermaster's department was the foundation wall. Recommended measures to reduce the load on the foundation included changing the partition walls above from 22" on the specifications to 18." Murphy wrote to the Quartermaster's department about furring out the interior of the walls to the correct depth while lessening pressure on the faulty foundation. He also sank the foundation further in an effort to stabilize it. As Murphy justified his work, in February 1872, he also noted the imperfections in the specifications that made them hard to implement strictly.

An inspection in January 1874 of the temporary, wood-frame lodge then serving as a kitchen and storeroom and the new, L-plan lodge, reveal that the two buildings were connected through a covered way. It also revealed a discoloration of the plaster in two rooms and the need for some repairs. The downspouts needed paint, as did the frames and sashes of the windows. The windows were not yet furnished with beads. By 1886 the front verandah, with its floor on the ground, needed an "overhauling" and the chimney smoked badly. A rim lock was requested as well. The inside had been renovated, and the outside was overtaken by ivy and honeysuckle. The covered way connecting the old and new lodges was in poor condition. The 1909 assessment of the cemetery landscape noted the presence of the Second Empire style, L-plan lodge in the cemetery; by the time of that survey, the lodge received its second-floor addition.

Sources:

Annual Report of the Secretary of War. [to Congress]. Washington, DC: GPO, 1865-1920.

Deetz, James. *In Small Things Forgotten: The Archaeology of Early American Life.* New York: Doubleday, 1977.

Dickinson, William C., Dean A. Herrin, and Donald R. Kennon, eds. *Montgomery C. Meigs and the Building of the Nation's Capital.* Athens: University of Ohio Press for the U.S. Capitol Historical Society, 2001.

General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries, 1865-ca. 1914, Record Group 92, Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Holt, Dean W. *American Military Cemeteries: A Comprehensive Illustrated Guide to the Hallowed Grounds of the United States, Including Cemeteries Overseas*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 1992.

Message of the President of the United States [to Congress]. Washington, DC: GPO, 1862-63.

Meyer, Richard E., ed. *Cemeteries and Gravemarkers: Voices of American Culture*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 1992.

National Cemetery Historical File, Department of Memorial Affairs, Record Group 15, Records of the Veterans Administration, National Archives Building, Washington, DC.

Sloane, David Charles. *The Last Great Necessity: Cemeteries in American History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

Zipf, Catherine W. "Marking Union Victory in the South: The Construction of the National Cemetery System." In *Monuments to the Lost Cause: Women, Art, and the Landscapes of Southern Memory*, edited by Cynthia Mills and Pamela H. Simpson. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2003.

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.