MEMPHIS NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE
3568 Townes Avenue
Memphis
Shelby County
Tennessee

HALS TN-3-A
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

MEMPHIS NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE

HALS No. TN-3-A

Location: 3568 Townes Avenue, Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee.

The coordinates for the Memphis National Cemetery, Lodge are 89.939746 W and 35.174785 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 Memphis National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1934; razed 2013.

Builder/Contractor: Unknown.

Description: The lodge constructed in 1934 at the Memphis National Cemetery was built in a Dutch Colonial Revival style recognizable primarily by the gambrel roof. The foundations are concrete, while the first-floor walls are faced in brick and the floor above is stuccoed with half-timbering details on the side elevations. A long dormer with four windows beneath a shed roof projects from the gambrel roof and provides light into the second floor; the windows in the side elevations are single windows glazed with multiple lights in the upper, fixed sash. The first-floor, on the front façade, contains a paired sash window each glazed with sixteen lights in the upper sash. On the inside, the floors are exposed wood, except in the kitchen where linoleum was used. It is likely the linoleum was rolled over wood flooring but the materials list omitted that detail.

Maintenance records for the cemetery provide an overview of the condition of the lodge between construction and the 1960s when the entries ceased. In 1944 a storm damaged the tiles of the roof and so repairs were made. At the decade's end, the linoleum floor in the kitchen was replaced, an asphalt floor tile was installed in the office, and the remaining wood floors were refinished. The window shades were replaced at this time as well. In 1956 an attic fan was installed, either for ventilation purposes or for air-cooling purposes. In the 1960s a major remodeling took place. The kitchen was updated and the front porch was enclosed to create additional office space; new exterior doors were hung. This also altered how the building was used, and accessed, by visitors. Once the transitional space of the porch was removed, the landing at the top of the concrete steps connecting the door to the walkway served a social sorting function. The cast-iron Gettysburg Address plaque (ca. 1909) was mounted on the brick wall to the left of the door.

Site Context: The large, rectangular cemetery encompasses about forty-four acres and is oriented northwest to southeast. The main entrance is located at the intersection of Townes and Jackson avenues, at the northwest corner of the grounds. A brick and wrought iron vehicular entrance flanked by wrought iron pedestrian entrances distinguishes this corner. Just inside the gate is the flagpole, and beyond the flagpole circle, the internal cemetery drive divides leading southeast and skirting the perimeter as it loops back around to the main entrance. Following the drive to the northeast to the northern boundary reveals another entrance gate and transverse drive that connects that former entrance to the perimeter drive at the southeast edge. To the south of the transverse drive is where the Second Empire lodge was situated. The principal elevation faced northeast. The Dutch Colonial Revival lodge constructed in 1934 and razed in 2013 was built in the same location and also oriented to the northeast toward the drive.

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.

Of the twentieth-century lodge forms, the design in the Dutch Colonial Revival oeuvre was selected most often. Fourteen lodges were built using this plan between 1921 and 1934. The design called for a one and one-half story building with masonry construction at the first floor and wood-frame gambrel roofs enclosing the upper floor. The building footprint was rectangular and included an enclosed porch and office in the front, a living room and stair in the middle, and a dining room and kitchen at the rear. The second floor contained three bedrooms and a bathroom opening off of a central hall. Three versions of the design were used. The first in four lodges erected between 1921 and 1928, with hollow core tile walls covered in stucco, shingled roofs and gable ends, and dormers two windows in width on the front and rear. The second version expanded the dormer from two windows to four, adding more light the upper floor. This plan was used twice, for lodges in Nashville and Chattanooga, in 1931. PWA funds paid for the construction of lodges in 1934, including eight built to a third rendition of the Dutch Colonial Revival design. In 1934, the building materials included a brick construction on the first floor and faux half-timbered or brick gables. The Memphis lodge is an example of the third expression of the Dutch Colonial Revival design and cost just over $12,000 to build.

In 1867 Memphis National Cemetery was established and became the burying ground for the many who had been hastily buried during the war years either where they fell in combat or near to the military camp hospital in which they died from their wounds. Of the national cemeteries, Memphis has the second largest number of soldiers whose identities remain unknown. Also buried in Memphis are the remains of those who perished in the *USS Sultana* disaster in April 1865. The ship was overloaded with passengers who were released from the prisoner of war camps when a boiler exploded just after leaving Memphis. Around 1700 men died, having survived the war and interment, their deaths en route home became even more tragic.

By 1869 the cemetery superintendent occupied a frame cottage. These impermanent buildings marked the first phase of the national cemetery architectural development, and in Memphis, the temporary frame lodge was superseded by a Second Empire style, masonry lodge in the 1873-74. This nineteenth-century building served as the office and residence of the superintendent until 1934 when the present lodge was erected.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster indicate that in 1873 J. C. Comfort was awarded the contract to build the one and one-half story, brick lodge. It followed the Meigs plan, with three rooms on each floor. Comfort's initial bid was $2400; with a change order regarding the walls,

the proffered price rose to $2850. Comfort used a sub-contractor, and difficulties in that arrangement became apparent through discussions of materials and workmanship in late 1873 and into 1874. The lodge was well constructed, however; in 1876 it was noted that the cellar was dry. Some repairs were necessary by the late 1880s. Also by that time, the temporary wood cottage or "old lodge" had worn out.

Discussion about what to do with the temporary wood building began as early as December 1873 when the Second Empire style lodge was "nearly complete"; then the wood building was judged to be too substantial a structure to be discarded and a proposal to move it for re-use as a tool house and stable was suggested. The main part of the building would suffice for the stables. A report dated to November 1875 noted that the "old lodge" was moved to the rear of the stables and placed on brick pillars. It served as tool house, storehouse, and privy. Subsequent reports, such as that in 1881, record frame outbuildings and specifically mention the old lodge used for a storehouse, old shed building and privy, stable and tool house "combined." The outbuildings were in need of underpinning and repairs to the steps. These repairs must have been completed since the buildings remained on site for several more years. In 1888 inspections called for the replacement of the outbuilding (old lodge). It was categorized as

> one story frame. Walls upright, rough boards battened. Contains stable, cart room, tool room, fuel room & privy. Roof shingle and worn out. The whole building very rotten and dilapidated. A new brick Outbuilding is imperative.

In 1890, the outbuilding – then highlighted with the "stable and tool house are in a miserably dilapidated state" – again consists of more than one space although it is unclear how those spaces were framed specifically. Initial proposals to gather stables and storage together and later references to "stable and tool house combined" likely describe the collective service area of the cemetery rather than one building fulfilling all needs. Likely the outbuilding consisted of the stable and wood cottage joined in some fashion or perhaps just merely placed adjacent to one another as the 1875 report implies. Nonetheless, the transformation of the wood cottage into a service building to the new brick lodge was in accordance with the architectural program devised for national cemeteries. Removal of the 1873-74 lodge and its replacement by a Dutch Colonial Revival lodge in 1934 followed a pattern of reuse and cyclical modernization for the national cemeteries as they evolved in the twentieth century.

The Dutch Colonial Revival lodge was razed in 2013 and replaced with a contemporary structure.

<u>Sources</u>:

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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.

ADDENDUM TO:
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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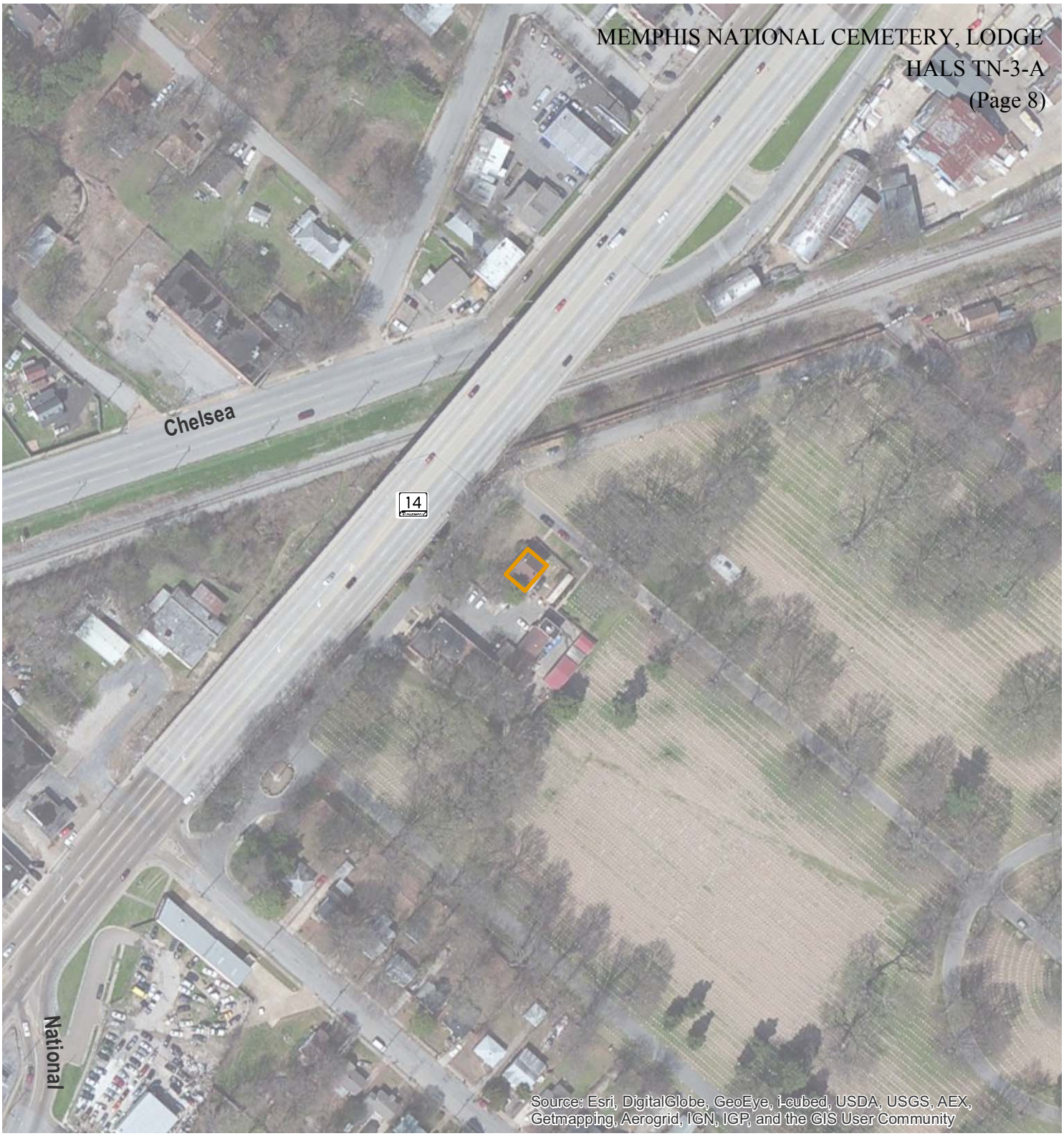
A six-page report was previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

Location: 3568 Townes Avenue
Memphis, Shelby County, Tennessee

The Lodge was located at latitude: 35.174785, longitude: -89.939746. This point was obtained in September 2016 using Google Earth (WGS84). There is no restriction on its release to the public.

Project Information: This documentation was completed because of a determination of adverse effect to historic properties within the Memphis National Cemetery, as part of proposed improvements to the site. This documentation was completed in order to meet Stipulation 2.B. as identified in the *Memorandum of Agreement Among the Department of Veterans Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, Tennessee State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding Demolition of Historic Resources and Construction of a New Administration Building at Memphis National Cemetery, Shelby County, Memphis, Tennessee*. The documentation was completed in 2013.

Appendix: Project location map and sketch map.



Source: 106 Group

Map Produced by 106 Group 12/9/2013

Historic American Landscape Survey
VA Memphis National Cemetery
Shelby County, Tennessee

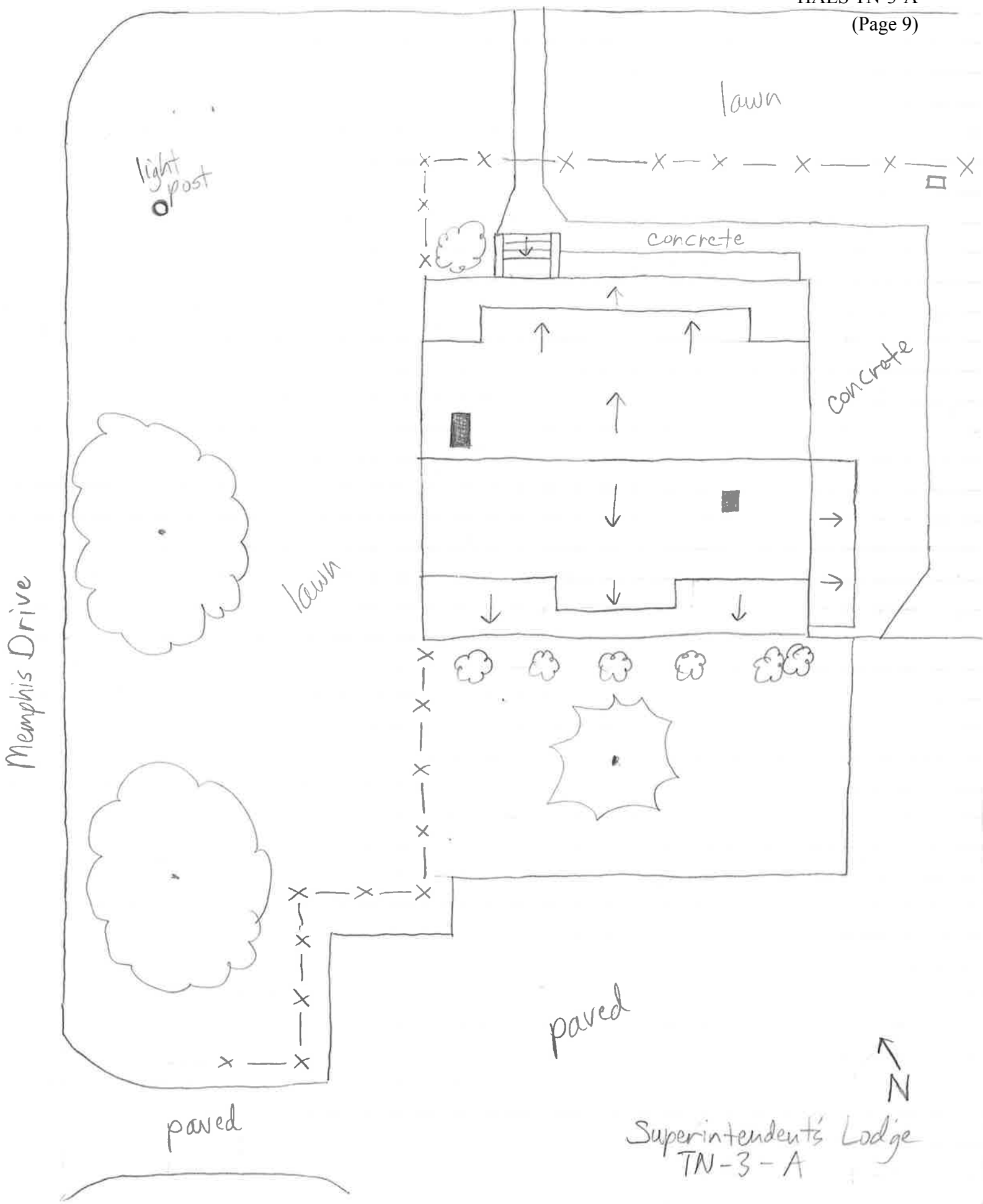
Superintendent's Lodge (TN-3-A)

Building Footprint

0 40 Meters
0 100 Feet
1:2,000

106GROUP

Figure 1


Morgan Rd.
lawn
light post
concrete
concrete
lawn
Memphis Drive
paved
paved
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Superintendent's Lodge
TN-3-A