COLD HARBOR NATIONAL CEMETERY, LODGE
6038 Cold Harbor Road
Mechanicsville
Hanover County
Virginia

HALS VA-4-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

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Location: 6038 Cold Harbor Road, Mechanicsville, Hanover County, Virginia.

The coordinates for the Cold Harbor National Cemetery, Lodge are 77.279958 W and 37.589200 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 Cold Harbor National Cemetery from the U.S. Army in 1973 (Public Law 93-43).

Date: 1871-72; second-floor addition, 1873-74.

Builder/Contractor: Kyran A. Murphy and Miller; John C. Comfort.

Description: As completed in 1874, the Second Empire style lodge resembles the stone lodges erected according to the definitive L-plan design issued by the Office of Quartermaster General that called for brick chimneys, wood sash windows, dormers, wood floors, and paneled doors. Historic photographs show the building with window shutters and sash glazed with six-over-six lights; likely the sash is double hung. The principal elevation faces south to Cold Harbor Road, and the entrance is by way of the screen porch at the southwest corner of the building. A garage on the east side of the lodge also faces south and connects to the road by a driveway and entrance cut into the boundary wall.

The mansard roof was originally covered in slate, and it was surmounted by a shallow hip covered in tin. Maintenance ledgers kept by the Veterans Administration note that the roof was recovered in 1950. Likely this refers to the metal roof. The ledgers also reveal that the original three-room, L-shaped plan was extended by a small rear porch. This porch was replaced in 1925 with one made of concrete. Other changes to the floor plan included adding a garage to the east elevation and creating a basement under the dining room in 1932. Structural work included putting a new roof on the front porch, rehabilitating the lower-floor joists, sub-floor and flooring and relocating the rear door in 1960, and conducting similar work on the first-floor joists in 1962. Radiators were installed in 1941, and the heating system updated in 1964.

The building was routinely painted inside and outside, storm windows and doors were added, linoleum rolled out in the kitchen (1936, 1944) and then replaced with asphalt-based floor tiles (1960), asbestos ceiling tiles were installed in the bedrooms (1962), the kitchen was renovated

(1953), the bathroom was modernized (1952), and Venetian blinds were installed (1948). Outside, concrete steps were added to the front of the lodge in 1932 and a picket fence was placed around a children's play area in 1962.

Site Context: The small, square cemetery lot is enclosed by a low, brick wall. The main entrance opens into the cemetery from the south, along the boundary line parallel to Cold Harbor Road. The lodge is in proximity to the gates. The L-plan building faces south to the road and west to the entrance walkway. Off the northwest corner of the lodge is the flagstaff; the flagstaff is placed in the center of the cemetery, at the heart of the four burial sections. The graves are aligned in rows and the grounds are pedestrian-only.

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.

Within the evolution of a standard design for the superintendent's lodge in the national cemeteries, the lodge at Cold Harbor National Cemetery is a significant as an extant example of the Second Empire style, L-plan design readily associated with the Office of the Quartermaster. The Cold Harbor lodge is particularly important because it was initially built to plans for a one-story, stone building covered by a hipped roof. This early iteration of the L-plan was used in several 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. The alterations primarily involved changing the hip roof for a mansard roof to provide a second floor of living space for the superintendent and his family. The change in roof type gave the buildings, like the lodges at City Point, Cold Harbor, Fort Harrison, Staunton, and Winchester national cemeteries, 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 hallmark of the Quartermaster's office in the late nineteenth century.

Cold Harbor National Cemetery was established in 1866 and commemorates two costly battle campaigns aimed at taking Richmond in 1862 and 1864. The first campaign led by General George McClellan ended in the Seven Days battles outside of Richmond in 1862, and two years later, General Robert E. Lee turned back General U.S. Grant. Many lives were lost in the struggle for the Confederate Capital. The two trenches along the north side of the cemetery grounds mark the final resting place for those whose remains could not be identified. In 1877 the U.S government erected a marble sarcophagus to honor the memory of those unknown, Union soldiers.

Soon after the national cemetery was established at Cold Harbor, a temporary lodge for the superintendent was built. The temporary lodge was a wood-frame building, one-story, and likely just two rooms. This temporary lodge was completed in 1867 and in need of repairs by 1868. At that time, the roof leaked. The Quartermaster's office dispatched mechanics to make the lodge habitable again. This building remained in use for several more years.

In 1871, the Quartermaster's office solicited proposals for the erection of a masonry lodge in either brick or stone. Construction of a permanent lodge for the superintendent at Cold Harbor was considered along with projects in Fredericksburg and City Point, Virginia. Contractors Murphy and Miller offered a price of just under $2500 for a stone lodge, and estimated a total of $7400 for the work in all three cemeteries. Francis Gibbons submitted the lowest bid for building

in brick, with $2500 estimated for the lodge. The Quartermaster opted for stone.

The temporary wood-frame lodge was moved to clear the site for the permanent, stone lodge in the Second Empire style. Murphy and Miller completed the stone lodge in early 1872, but its single-floor design with just three rooms proved too small to accommodate the superintendent and his family. Therefore, John C. Comfort was contracted to add three chambers under a new mansard roof in fall 1873. The superintendent moved into the old wood-frame lodge, which had been repurposed as a tool shed when the stone lodge was finished in 1872. The superintendent complained that his temporary quarters in the old frame building were cold, open, and admitted rain.

Correspondence with the Quartermaster's office also addressed providing a cellar. It was said that digging a cellar under the new lodge would be unsafe because of the soil, and so constructing a separate cellar was recommended instead. The cellar was to be about 7' deep with a wood superstructure, and was to be placed to the north of the lodge. Mr. Comfort proved too slow in advancing the work, so his contract was abrogated, and the renovation completed under the direction of Capt. T.J. Eckerson, assistant quartermaster. In February 1874 the lodge was complete. The inspector's report complimented Mr. Comfort's craftsmanship, with the only flaw being in the quality of the ceiling joists retained from Mr. Murphy.

The costs to the government for completing the lodge were deducted from Comfort's final payment and a differing of opinion – work being done twice – continued throughout the year without apparent resolution. In 1885 the inspection of the lodge revisited its uneven workmanship. The stonework was judged inferior because of the cracks evident in the walls. Moreover, wood throughout the building had decayed and needed painting; the plasterwork was poorly applied and needed redoing; the door frame for door connecting the office and kitchen pulled away from the jamb; the brick backing in the partition for the fireplace was too thin; the lining of the parlor fireplace and chimney burned; first-floor walls and ceilings needed plastering and painting, and the second-floor rooms needed some whitewashing. The rear porch was thought to be too small and it was suggested a larger one be constructed in its stead. In the 1909 survey of the national cemeteries, the Cold Harbor lodge was described as one and one-half stories, with a mansard roof, three rooms per floor, and no basement. An annex or ell addition was built in 1907 for a kitchen and dining room.

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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.