

WAR DEPARTMENT ERA, 1869-1933

By the time the Poplar Grove burial corps was officially disbanded on June 30, 1869, most of the burial space in the cemetery had been filled, completing the plan for the cemetery laid out three years earlier. During the ensuing seven decades of administration under the War Department, there were only sixty additional burials from later wars, despite expanded eligibility to include soldiers who did not die on the battlefield and veterans of subsequent wars. These burials amounted to just about one percent of all graves at Poplar Grove. Unlike many of its contemporary national cemeteries, Poplar Grove retained its primary association with the Civil War.¹

The landscape of the cemetery, although fixed in overall plan, was considerably improved in the years after 1869 in keeping with regulations of the War Department. In general, these regulations resulted in a landscape that was standardized as part of a larger system while also reflecting local materials and growing conditions; that minimized maintenance costs and was generally simple without excessive ornamentation; and that was in keeping with styles of landscape design and cemetery planning that had evolved through the middle decades of the nineteenth century.

The 1870s through the early 1880s were a time of development and beautification at Poplar Grove, corresponding with relatively high visitation and increased funding for capital improvements. After this time into the latter 1920s, Poplar Grove entered a sleepy period in which the landscape was maintained with few substantial improvements. Unlike national cemeteries in Virginia such as Cold Harbor and Culpeper, Poplar Grove during this time did not receive any commemorative monuments from states or societies, and apparently had few visitors. Administration was characterized by quick turn-over of superintendents. In the latter 1920s, following the establishment of Petersburg National Military Park in 1926, the War Department began a program of improvements at the cemetery and witnessed increased visitation. In 1931, the cemetery had what was probably its most notable ceremony since the 1870s, when twenty-nine Union soldiers unearthed at The Crater battlefield were reinterred. In the midst of this period of renewed activity, the administration of Poplar Grove was transferred in August 1933 from the War Department to the National Park Service.

Throughout its history of administration by the War Department, Poplar Grove remained a relatively remote place set in the midst of farm fields and pine woods, accessed by a government-maintained approach road from Vaughan Road, a poorly-maintained county road. Farms were generally widely scattered. [Figure

1.39] The Flower family owned the farm that surrounded the cemetery on three sides through the 1870s, and thereafter it passed to the Blaha family. Throughout this period, the cemetery was visible from Vaughan Road across the farm fields, framed to the east by woods of loblolly pine that extended to the old Petersburg & Weldon Railroad and Halifax Road. The Blaha farmhouse and barns were visible from the cemetery main gate looking south and west. The limits of the City of Petersburg, which saw little growth from its pre-Civil War prosperity until the early twentieth century, remained well to the north.²

For years after the war, the devastation from the Civil War remained a conspicuous part of the landscape surrounding Poplar Grove, along with the Union forts and lines of fortifications. These relics moved cemetery Superintendent August Miller to include them in a description of the cemetery he wrote in 1871: "...The most elevated points in the vicinity have been strongly fortified with Earthworks, some of these works are still in a good state of preservation, and give the land a martial and somewhat picturesque appearance; from the center of the Cemetery can be see Forts Clark, Dushane [rear line to the south], Wadsworth, Keene, Tracy, [Federal left flank to the north and west] Emory and Seibert... [to the southwest]" [see Figure 1.5].³ As the fields were returned to active agriculture and pine forests regenerated elsewhere on the war-torn landscape, the views to these fortifications were lost.

DEVELOPMENT AND BEAUTIFICATION, 1869-1882

Poplar Grove's period of development and beautification during the 1870s and early 1880s saw the addition of a masonry lodge, perimeter walls, entrance gates, marble headstones, benches, interpretive plaques, and plantings of specimen trees, shrubs, and flowerbeds. The Act of February 22, 1867, passed while many cemeteries including Poplar Grove were still busy with battlefield recovery and burials, outlined a number of specific improvements to be carried out at each cemetery, but these generally were not implemented until the 1870s once the burial work was substantially complete. The shift toward improvements in the 1870s was also brought about by the deterioration of the initial wooden features such as fences and headboards, which warranted rebuilding in more durable materials. Improvements also became increasingly necessary with the growing commemorative function of the national cemeteries, based on the precedent of Gettysburg National Cemetery with the central monument and reflected by the designation of Memorial Day in 1868. Improvements thus focused on landscape beautification and accommodating public visitation.⁴

Administration & Use

Maintenance and improvement of Poplar Grove National Cemetery in the years of War Department administration followed regulations established by the Office of the Quartermaster General (an agency within the War Department), which was responsible for the administration of all national cemeteries. Administration of Poplar Grove was carried out during the 1870s and 1880s through the Quartermaster's Washington (D. C.) Depot, with large construction projects handled through the Philadelphia Depot.⁵ The cemetery superintendent was required to submit to the Quartermaster General regular reports on burials, the condition of the cemetery buildings and landscape, and the need for improvements. Poplar Grove, along with all other national cemeteries, was inspected on a biannual basis by the Office of the Inspector General, established in the War Department by an act of 1813. In the early years of the cemetery, inspectors would write informal reports remarking on the condition of buildings, roads, vegetation, and grave markers; staffing and funding issues; and the need for improvements.

Regular employees under Superintendent Miller dropped from his initial five in 1867 to two by the summer of 1870. Miller reported: "In regard to the employees under my charge, I have two good (colored) laborers at work in the cemetery, to keep the grounds in order."⁶ Through the remainder of this period, the superintendent generally had one permanent assistant, known as a gardener, and there were generally two additional staff hired during busy times, mostly in the spring and fall. Additional laborers and trades people, such as carpenters and masons, were brought in under contract as needed, while Quartermaster engineers and other professionals from various offices, such as the Philadelphia Depot and Fort Monroe, Virginia, were involved in drafting plans and inspecting cemetery conditions. In 1876, August Miller, unable to perform his job because he had become lame, was replaced as superintendent by H. C. Lacy, who remained in the position until 1890.⁷ The superintendents lived with their families in the cemetery lodge. Due to the remote location far from stores, the superintendents maintained a hedge-enclosed garden plot and chicken yard outside of cemetery gate, on the north side of the entrance drive (current site of parking lot) on the Blaha (Flower) farm.⁸ [Drawing 3]

During its early years, Poplar Grove National Cemetery received "a large number of visitors," according to Superintendent Miller, probably mostly Northerners searching for the graves of their family and friends.⁹ Decoration Day (Memorial Day) became the main public occasion at the cemetery, a date that generally saw the greatest visitation and the best level of maintenance in the landscape. May 30th was officially designated as Decoration Day in 1868 through General Orders No. 11 of the Grand Army of the Republic. The order called for "strewing with flowers

or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country (during the late rebellion)...”¹⁰ It was not until 1871, however, that Poplar Grove had its first Decoration Day ceremony. The people of Petersburg organized this ceremony for May 31, 1871, and a special train was run on the Petersburg & Weldon Railroad to shorten the five-mile trip to the cemetery. The Petersburg *Daily Courier* reported that the ceremony was attended by a large crowd of approximately 1,500 people: “...white and colored assembled...to join in the ceremony of decorating the graves of the federal soldiers buried at that place...Under the direction of the committee of arrangements, flowers were distributed upon the graves, and [flagstaff] mound and gateways were appropriately decorated...”¹¹ Decoration Day ceremonies were apparently held at Poplar Grove throughout the 1870s, such as one in 1875 in which it was reported that the visitors were “quite numerous, and flowers and evergreens plentiful.”¹²

Building of the New Lodge & Service Area

In the summer and fall of 1869 after the burial corps disbanded, Superintendent Miller oversaw a number of immediate improvements to the landscape. One area requiring substantial work was the one-acre addition [see Drawing 3]. In July, Miller reported to Quartermaster General Meigs: “The new Section [Division F], in which the late interments have been made, has been left in an unfinished state. The ground needs grading; and two hundred and sixty seven (267) Graves, have no mounds made, nor are they marked with Head Boards. Also Forty five Graves are not filled. Three Carpenters are now at work, in putting up a Fence around the lately added grounds.”¹³ By November, the old log barracks remaining from the engineers’ camp south of the entrance drive were taken down and the ground leveled, and Miller built a frame tool shed north of the drive.¹⁴ Soon after this time, plans were finally progressed for building a new lodge in the one-acre addition, following General Lorenzo Thomas’s recommendation made in his inspection report of June 1867.

Construction of a permanent lodge was one of the first major development efforts following the completion of burials. In c.1870, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, an architect-engineer by training best known for his work on the dome and extension of the United States Capitol, produced a prototype design for a national cemetery lodge in his role as head commander of the national cemetery system. [Figure 1.40] This lodge was intended to replace temporary wooden lodges that many cemeteries, including Poplar Grove, had initially erected to fulfill the requirements of the Act of February 22, 1867. Meigs designed a small, one and one-half story ‘L’-plan building in the fashionable Second Empire Style, characterized by a Mansard (French) roof and casement

(balcony) windows.¹⁵ The building style was contemporary and characteristically urban, and stood in stark contrast to the Gothic and Egyptian Revival styles then popular in rural cemeteries. These Meigs-designed lodges were built, with modifications, at most of the national cemeteries in the Virginia district under the supervision of Lieutenant Colonel James M. Moore, the first completed in 1870 at Richmond and Cold Harbor, and the last completed at Seven Pines in 1874.¹⁶ The lodge at City Point near Petersburg, built in 1871, was typical of the modifications to the Meigs prototype for a more modest building. [Figure 1.41] As with all lodges, the City Point building was located at the main entrance to the cemetery, inside the perimeter fence.

In February 1870, Superintendent Miller was reporting that the old frame lodge was too small for his family, and that it leaked and was cold in winter. Three months later, on May 27, 1870, the Office of the Quartermaster General had selected plans for the new lodge, using the same plan for a brick lodge then being constructed at Richmond National Cemetery. Three days later, an advertisement was issued seeking construction bids, and on August 16, 1870, papers were signed awarding the contract to James R. Dobbyn and requiring construction to be completed by October 31, 1870. The site selected for the lodge was in the one-acre addition on the north side of the main drive, just west of the old lodge [see Drawing 3]. By August 31, 1870, Dobbyn commenced work on the project with excavation of a cellar hole, but within a short time defaulted on the project, leaving a cellar hole, mounded earth, and lumber.¹⁷ In April 1871, the Office of the Quartermaster General advertised for new bids using the same plan. The low bid for the plan as specified, using brick, came in at \$2,892.00, but a bid by Kyran A. Murphy substituted stone for brick at a cost of \$2,700.00. Because of Murphy's low bid, he was awarded the contract and plans were changed to stone.¹⁸ On August 3rd, Stark Frank, an agent with the Quartermaster's Office, inspected the existing cellar hole, which had filled with water, and determined that the lodge should be instead built on the opposite side of the entrance drive. [Figure 1.42]

On October 24, 1871, Kyran Murphy began construction of the new stone lodge, and by the end of the year, the building was substantially complete.¹⁹ The building featured the standard overall plan and form, with a concave mansard roof sheathed in diamond-shaped monochrome gray slate, six-over-six double-hung sash windows, a front porch with simple squared posts, overhanging eaves ornamented by dentils, and random-course, rough-faced ashlar with varying shades of grays and browns (origin of stone not known), similar to the stone used at the City Point lodge. [Figure 1.43] Work on finishing the interior lasted into the spring, and in April, Miller moved into the lodge. Soon after this, Miller moved the old frame lodge to the rear of the new lodge for use as a kitchen and storage room.²⁰

With the abandonment of the original lodge cellar hole, the area within the one-acre expansion on the north side of the main drive was developed into the cemetery's service yard, initially known as the wood yard [see Drawing 3]. The yard was a utilitarian space where the cemetery horse (used for lawn mowing) was stabled, and where fuel wood, building materials, and equipment such as lawn mowers, scythes, and wheelbarrows were kept. The first structure in the yard was probably a toolshed built by Superintendent Miller in 1869, followed by a twenty-foot deep well with a lattice well house and pump, probably built together with the lodge in 1871. In 1873, a frame building known as the tool house, with stable and privy under one roof, was constructed in the yard, and additional small shacks were also added over the years. Shortly after the addition of the tool house, the service yard was screened off from the rest of the cemetery by a six-foot high wooden lattice fence, inside of which was planted a boxwood hedge. In 1879, the numerous wooden buildings in the service yard were replaced with a three-bay brick tool house with an open central bay flanked by sets of swinging doors, and a privy at the side. Apparently the feed room in the new tool house (also known as the barn) was not adequate, and Superintendent Miller built a frame forage shed at the rear, probably out of materials salvaged from the old service buildings.²¹ [Figure 1.44]

Inclosure Wall & Boundary Adjustment

About the same time that Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs was designing the lodge, he also created a prototype plan for perimeter walls. The Act of February 22, 1867 had specified that all national cemeteries be enclosed by a perimeter fence made either of iron or masonry. Such walls—called an “inclosure” by the Quartermaster General—were necessary not just for aesthetic reasons, but also because of the substantial maintenance necessary on the wood paling fences, which were subject to rot as well as breakage from livestock common in the farms that surrounded most of the cemeteries. On August 12, 1870, Meigs filed plans for a prototype flat-top stone wall—rather than iron—approximately five feet high with dividing pilasters and coping stones.²² Over the course of the next five years, enclosing walls were completed at all Virginia national cemeteries, along with iron gates for the main entrance. The larger cemeteries, such as Richmond, generally were outfitted with central vehicular gates flanked on both sides by smaller gates for pedestrians, while the smaller cemeteries such as Cold Harbor and City Point had either a single vehicular gate or just one pedestrian gate [Figure 1.45, see also Figure 1.41]. As with the lodges, the walls varied in proportions and materials, using either stone, or brick with brick or stone coping.

Already in September 1869, Superintendent Miller was reporting that the perimeter paling fence was showing signs of rot along the bottom rails, and over the ensuing years, regular whitewashing and repair would remain a substantial task at the cemetery. To enhance the appearance of the cemetery perimeter and also to make it less penetrable (especially to livestock), the Quartermaster General began planning for the planting of a perimeter hedge of Osage orange at most national cemeteries. Osage orange (*Maclura spp.*, native to Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma), was a very popular hedge plant before the advent of wire fences due to its dense habit and spiky thorns.²³ Advertisements soliciting bids for “Setting Osage Orange Plants” were sent out on August 29, 1870 for national cemeteries in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Maryland, and North Carolina.²⁴ At the same time, Superintendent Miller was providing the Quartermaster General with total linear footage for the hedge at Poplar Grove—just over a half mile. Preparations for planting the Osage orange hedge were completed on October 25, 1870 by eighteen men working a total of thirty-five days on digging a trench along the inside of the inclosing fence and backfilling it with manure. The contract for work at Poplar Grove was awarded to J. E. Bailey of Georgetown, District of Columbia, who completed the work in early March 1871 with the planting of 4,042 Osage orange saplings. In April, Superintendent Miller reported: “An ‘Osage Orange’ hedge has been planted during this Spring, which will take the place of the old fence when it commences to decay...”²⁵ Miller apparently did not know that the Quartermaster General was planning at the time for the eventual placement of the wooden fences with permanent walls.

In the summer of 1873, the year after the new lodge had been completed, the Quartermaster General’s Office took out newspaper advertisements to solicit bids on building the inclosure wall at Poplar Grove, together with the wall at Yorktown National Cemetery. [Figure 1.46] Plans and specifications were developed by the Quartermaster’s office at Fort Monroe, Virginia, calling for a brick wall instead of stone as had been specified in the Meigs prototype and used at the City Point National Cemetery wall. The Quartermaster awarded the bid to B. F. Childrey & Company, which began work on the project at Poplar Grove in the fall of 1873 with the production of bricks made in two kilns built outside the cemetery. On December 16, 1873, Mr. Chenoweth, a civil engineer with the Quartermaster General’s Office, reported: “I visited the kiln Dec 12, which is adjoining the Cemetery, and found the brick of a very inferior character....the kiln contains one hundred thousand bricks...No work has yet been done on the enclosing [sic] wall.”²⁶ The Quartermaster General soon rejected the work, and Childrey stopped the project and tried to sell his contract. The project stalled for two years and in the meantime the paling fence deteriorated, although it was hidden in part by the Osage orange hedge that was trimmed to the height of the fence. A cemetery inspection on August 11, 1875—two years after the wall contract

had been awarded—reported: “...The fence is in very bad condition, having to be propped up in many places; this with the dilapidated gate and gateway give the Cemetery a very unprepossessing appearance as you approach it.”²⁷

It was not until February 1, 1876 that the Quartermaster General’s Office, under the direction of A. F. Rockwell of the Washington District (Depot), solicited new bids on the Poplar Grove wall through newspaper advertisements. The tabloid-size advertisements also specified work for lodges at Salisbury, North Carolina and Fort Donelson, Tennessee; and for the inclosure wall at Seven Pines near Richmond (Chenoweth had apparently succeeded in building the brick wall at Yorktown National Cemetery under the initial contract).²⁸ In running the lines for the new wall at Poplar Grove in February 1876, Oliver Cox, civil engineer with the Quartermaster General, found that the original survey as recorded in the deed did not correspond with the line of the picket fence and boundaries as marked on the ground. Cox discovered that the northeast and southwest corners of the cemetery were actually not on government land, as shown on a survey he drafted showing the boundaries according to the deed and those corresponding with the enclosing fence. [Figure 1.47] To rectify the situation, Cox recommended that a ten-foot strip be acquired around the actual perimeter of the cemetery to provide a buffer strip for the graves (some of which were less than a foot from the enclosing fence), for proper drainage, and to provide space for an embankment needed for the new wall.²⁹

It would be more than a year before the government acquired the ten-foot buffer strip from the adjoining property owners, but in the meantime the Quartermaster General continued to develop plans for constructing the brick inclosure wall. The project also included the main entrance gateway of granite piers and iron gates, with a central carriage way flanked by two pedestrian entrances, the same design as used for the gate at Glendale and Fort Harrison National Cemeteries near Richmond. [Figure 1.48] On May 22, 1876, the Quartermaster Department selected a bid by John Brennon and Archibald L. Hutton of Washington, with a completion date set for October 31, 1876. A. F. Rockwell accepted the contractor’s recommendation to substitute Ohio sandstone for brick on the pilaster caps, each of which were specified at twenty inches square and four-to-five inches thick with hammer-dressed sides, for the additional cost of \$400. Rockwell also requested an additional change, to increase the width of the carriage way entrance gate to ten feet, to which the contractors agreed for an addition sum of ten dollars. Total cost for the project amounted to \$10,187.³⁰

Brennon and Hutton began work on the wall in June 1876, using new bricks made in Alexandria, Virginia. James Gall, Quartermaster General civil engineer

responsible for on-site supervision of the project, reported that 250 feet of the wall had been completed by August 7, and by September 20th, that the wall, together with the entrance gates, had been completed. Gall reported:

The wall is well built, of the correct materials, and presents a very good appearance. The stone caps at the pilasters give strength and protection to the work and improve the general appearance of the wall. The gate parts are of good granite neatly cut and well set and the gates are strong...The ground on both sides of the wall has been graded to conform with the ground line of the wall at all points, thus giving the entire wall a uniform height of four feet six inches (4' 6") above the surface. Care has been taken to provide drainage outlets at all proper points, and to grade the ground in their vicinity as to permit discharge of all surface water from the cemetery grounds.³¹

The spring following the completion of the wall, the Quartermaster Attorney General endorsed the addition of the buffer strip around the perimeter of Poplar Grove. The addition was not a continuous ten-foot strip, but rather an overlay on the existing survey (in two places, the deeded survey extended beyond ten feet of the perimeter wall). The delay in progressing the acquisition was purportedly due to ownership by minors on both the Flower and Farley farms. On April 30, 1877, two deeds, one for the Farley property, consisting of 0.919 of an acre (strip along the south boundary), and the other for the Flower property, consisting of 0.5019 of an acre (strips along east, north, and west boundaries) were signed by J. Wesley Friend, Special Commissioner acting on behalf of the Farley and Flower families, and the United States. The Flower purchase also provided the government with a right-of-way of unspecified width along the approach road (although the original 1868 deed purportedly included a thirty-foot easement, this provision apparently did not make it into the final deed). On May 14, 1877, the Quartermaster Attorney General reported, "...the Govt. has deed for all the land enclosed for cemetery purposes, together with the right of way thereon which through some oversight, has not heretofore been secured."³²

With the wall complete and the property boundaries corrected, there apparently still remained many refuse bricks outside of the cemetery, probably left over from the first contractor. Superintendent Lacy, who was appointed soon after the wall was completed in 1876, made plans to use at least some of these bricks for a new kitchen. In 1879, he was granted authority to remove the wooden kitchen at the rear of the lodge—the old frame lodge that Superintendent Miller had moved. At his own expense, Lacy built the new kitchen out of the refuse bricks, set back from the lodge near the inclosure wall [see Drawing 3].³³ The new toolshed in the

service yard, built in 1879, was probably also constructed out of the same refuse bricks.

Headstones

At Poplar Grove and nearly every other national cemetery, improvement of the grave markers was one of the most pressing issues of the 1870s. The wooden headboards were not just a constant maintenance nuisance, requiring continual repainting and often replacement due to rot, but were inconsistent with the Act of February 22, 1867, which specified that each grave be marked by a “small headstone or block.”³⁴ As part of a War Department board of officers charged with considering the appropriate headstone design, Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs proposed in 1867 that each grave be marked by a small, trapezoidal zinc-plated cast-iron monument placed at the foot of each grave, a design that apparently could have been executed within the initial appropriation provided by Congress. Meig’s untraditional design proved unpopular, yet he continued to press for the zinc monument, delaying a final decision by the War Department. Public opinion favored the use of more expensive but traditional marble or granite.³⁵

Congress finally settled the question through passage of the Act of June 8, 1872, which amended the Act of February 22, 1867 by specifying that each grave be marked by a small *headstone*, thereby eliminating the use of alternative materials such as zinc. Congress appropriated one million dollars for the new headstones, specifying that they be of “durable stone,” and thereafter the War Department developed specifications, which were finalized in 1873 under Secretary of War William W. Belknap.³⁶ Two specifications were developed: one for a tablet headstone for known graves, the other for a block (square post) for unknown graves. The tablet headstones were specified to be polished white marble with a slightly curved top, at a height of eighteen inches above grade, with raised lettering inside a recessed shield indicating the name, state regiment, and grave number in bas relief within a sunken shield. The blocks for the unknown graves were also specified to be of white marble, at a height of six inches above grade with only the incised grave number on the top surface. The tablet form for the headstones was unfashionable in high-style cemeteries, but was consistent with the traditional form of military wooden headboards and also minimized costs. The selection of the block, referenced in the Act of February 22, 1867, was a new type of grave marker in military cemeteries, and was probably selected to minimize costs. The contract, for a total of 265,000 markers, was awarded to Captain Samuel G. Bridges in December 1873. The supplier and finisher for the headstones, made of Vermont marble, was Sheldon & Slason of West Rutland, Vermont. The company used the “sand blast” method for inscribing the stones.³⁷

While the grave marker project was begun in 1874, it was not until 1877 that Captain Bridges got to Poplar Grove, which was the very last of the national cemeteries to receive the new markers. Prior to Bridges' arrival, James Gall, Jr., Civil Engineer with the Quartermaster General's Office, visited Poplar Grove in June 1877 to make arrangements and in particular to determine the exact placement of the new stones with respect to the graves. He reported:

*...On the large circular sections surrounding the flagstaff the headboards stand near the center of instead of at the heads of the graves and cannot therefore be taken as guides in setting the headstones, and I find it necessary in order to have the stones set in solid ground and to avoid placing them on or over the coffins, to make thorough tests by digging before establishing the head stone lines. This work has been begun to day and the Supt. Instructed to give close attention to it.*³⁸

The stones for Poplar Grove arrived on June 28, 1877 via ship on the Appomattox River, as reported by the Petersburg *Daily Post*: "Our wharf now presents a lively appearance. There are twelve schooners now unloading and among them are two three masters, one of which came up this morning, drawing 10 ½ feet of water. She is loaded with headstones for the National Cemetery, Poplar Grove."³⁹ The next day, Captain Bridges and his crew of between 150 and 160 men began work at the cemetery by distributing the stones to each grave. In just one week, Bridges completed the \$15,500 project (headstones at \$3.39 each, blocks at \$2.42 each), encompassing approximately 2,200 headstones and 3,355 blocks. The Petersburg *Index and Appeal* reported that the project "...has been done not only very quickly but remarkably well."⁴⁰ The *Daily Post* reported on the following day: "...The work is of the most approved style, and is just such as ought to mark the resting place of these soldiers, whose names, rank, regiment, and company, are now carved in enduring marble that will last for generations to come."⁴¹ A ceremony, attended by 150 people assembled around the flagstaff with speakers seated on top of the flagstaff mound, took place the Monday after the work was completed.⁴²

Although the new headstones continued the same white tablet form in the landscape, the substitution of blocks for the headstones at the unknown graves—amounting to over sixty percent of all grave markers—changed the uniformity of the circular plan. [Figure 1.49] The new stones made clearly visible the enormous number of soldiers who died on the battlefield without proper identification and registration.

As part of the headstone project, the cemetery lawn was also improved through removal of remaining grave mounds, leveling, and application of lime and muck compost. This work had been recommended by James Gall at his June 7, 1877 visit: “A large number of grave mounds still remain and interfere considerably with the cutting of grass and hurt the appearance of the place. These will be leveled and other necessary grading [will be undertaken] with the headstone work.”⁴³

Drives & Walks

While the use of two types of grave markers changed the uniformity of the circular plan, an equally conspicuous change was also underway at the time on the drives. The burial corps had completed all of the gravel, brick-gutter lined drives by circa 1869, except for the portion of the main drive within the one-acre addition. This part of the main drive was then probably just a simple graded earth surface, the same as the approach road leading out to Vaughan Road. The main drive was most likely rebuilt to conform to the design of the other drives in the cemetery, with brick gutters and a gravel surface, during construction of the lodge in 1871. The improvement of the main drive included the addition of a circular turn-around that branched off the south side east of the lodge [see Drawing 3]. Measuring approximately ninety feet across, the turn-around featured a central planted island and a straight east side that aligned with the grave rows in Division F. It was most likely intended for parking carriages that did not enter the cemetery proper, and perhaps also as a public gathering area. A walk branched off the south side of the circle, passing the rear and west sides of the lodge.

Changes to the design of the drives, together with the system of underground wooden culverts that drained the gutters, were spurred by ongoing maintenance problems. The drives in particular required continual work to keep the gravel surface free of grass. Already in July 1869, Superintendent Miller was reporting that “constant labor is required to keep them in good order.”⁴⁴ The grass was typically removed by hoeing with hand tools. The brick gutters also clogged with debris, became weedy, and required repointing and replacement of deteriorated brick. In addition to the routine maintenance, by the summer of 1871 the wooden culverts were beginning to rot. Miller began work to replace the culverts with a drainage system that required less maintenance and would be more durable. He changed the smaller culverts to brick box culverts, and over the course of the next year, replaced the larger culverts—ranging from twenty-four to 210 feet in length—with grass swales that had gravel French drains at drive and walk crossings.⁴⁵

By the early 1870s, Superintendent Miller received concurrence that the gravel surface of the drives was simply too difficult to maintain and could be changed to a grass surface, to match the grass surface of the walks. By August 1874, the drives were, according to Lieutenant Major O. A. Mack's inspection report, "overgrown with grass, which is kept close cut with the lawn mower."⁴⁶ This new turf on the drives, probably matching that in the rest of the cemetery, was a Bermuda grass that was rolled to maintain and even surface.⁴⁷ The change to a grass surface was certainly motivated primarily by maintenance issues, but may have also been viewed as an aesthetic improvement in keeping with the lawn style, creating a more expansive and uniform feeling to the landscape. Despite the change in materials, the drives remained visually distinct by the edging of brick gutters. Where there were no brick gutters—along the circular turn-around and the walk that ran from the lodge around the perimeter of Division G—a low hedge or border was planted, most likely to define the edge.⁴⁸

In Lieutenant Major Mack's report of August 1874, he remarked that some of the bricks in the gutters were soft and crumbling, although his subsequent report of January 1876 noted that the gutters were overall in sound condition, and kept free from grass and weeds.⁴⁹ A technological improvement in lawn mowing—the acquisition of a horse-drawn lawn mower in the spring of 1878—would, however, soon result in the demise of the brick gutters. Up until this time, the cemetery lawn had been cut with scythes and hand mowers. In his May 1878 inspection, James Gall reported that the new mower had led to an improved appearance and reduced maintenance burden: "...the grounds had been newly cut over with the lawn mower and looked very fine...It is very gratifying to see with what ease and efficiency the machine does its work...the grass need never be higher at any time than two or three inches." The brick gutters, however, proved to be an impediment to the operation of the new lawn mower. By October 1878, all of the gutters, including those along the main drive, were filled with earth and turfed to facilitate mowing.⁵⁰ With the covering of the brick gutters, the cemetery lawn extended over the entire cemetery landscape with interruption. Instead of defined features in the landscape, the drives largely became undefined areas of open lawn between the cemetery sections and divisions.

In contrast to the roads within the cemetery the 1,050-foot long approach road was improved in 1878 into a more formal and refined entrance. Up until this time, the approach road was an earthen track through the open fields of the Flower Farm. By the fall of 1878, a year after the government had secured the right-of-way along the road from the Flower family, a gravel surface had been laid down and plans were made for planting an allee of shade trees. Quartermaster General inspector James Gall reported in October 1878: "The approach avenue leading from the County road to the Cemetery was recently graveled and arrangements

are made for planting shade trees (tulip trees, maples, etc.) along the borders. This avenue, when properly planted and graveled will give a very beautiful approach to the Cemetery...”⁵¹

Plantings & Small-Scale Improvements

Aside from the major structural elements in the landscape—the wall, buildings, drives and walks, and gravestones—the landscape of Poplar Grove was enhanced during the 1870s and early 1880s through replacement of the flagstaff, and the addition of ornamental plantings, benches and signs.

The flagstaff together with the six-foot high flagstaff mound and encircling drive and gun monuments comprised the visual and symbolic center of the cemetery. The original wooden flagstaff, erected in 1866 by the burial corps, began to rot after several years and plans were made for its replacement. On June 6, 1873, Assistant Quartermaster General Major Erickson requested that Quartermaster General Meigs accept a proposal by John C. Comfort of Shiremanstown, Pennsylvania, to “...erect a good, stout flagstaff at Poplar Grove national cemetery properly sheathed with copper and completed ready for halliards [sic]...” for \$250.00.⁵² Comfort was given the contract, and after some initial problems with the construction were corrected, completed the project in the spring of 1874. The new wooden flagstaff was fifty-six feet high and twelve inches in diameter, and was painted white and set in a black-painted iron socket, which drained through a pipe to the brick gutter along the drive. Although an improvement, an inspection of the cemetery the following August remarked on the inadequacy of the new flagstaff, noting “...it is rather small for this place, where there are quite a number of tall pines, and standing between it and the Weldon Rail Road.”⁵³ As part of the project, the flagstaff mound, which Quartermaster O. A. Mack had found “much too large” for the cemetery,” was reduced to four feet in height from six, and to twenty feet in diameter at the base from approximately forty. [Figure 1.50; See Figure 1.46 for photograph of a similar flagstaff mound at Cold Harbor National Cemetery] The mound, in the shape of a frustum of a cone, was ascended by a flight of unpainted wooden steps, and was planted with shrubs and beds of flowering annuals.⁵⁴

Around the central flagstaff, and probably scattered along the main drive and throughout the cemetery, were settees, a term for a bench popular in the nineteenth century. The Quartermaster General’s Office had begun soliciting bids in June 1878 for the installation of 1,100 settees at the national cemeteries, in apparent response to the growing visitation and commemorative use of the cemeteries. The Composite Iron Works Company, of New York City, submitted a proposal for the “Composite Settee” at a cost of \$3.00 each, the second lowest

bidder. [Figure 1.51] Twenty settees were installed at Poplar Grove, most likely in the fall of 1878. They were similar to the Composite Settee, but without arms and less curve to the frame. Each measured approximately four feet long and had a slender cast-iron frame with a tie rod between the legs, and wood-slat back and seat, painted dark green.⁵⁵

Flowerbeds were features that the Office of the Quartermaster General generally did not promote for the national cemetery landscapes. In its regulations for national cemeteries, the Quartermaster General cautioned:

*A well-kept sward, graceful shade trees, pretty shrubs and evergreens are of greater importance and contribute more to the beauty of the cemetery than a promiscuous distribution of flower beds. A few flowers about the lodge and at one or more other prominent points are all that should be maintained, as the expense and attention required in the cultivation of a large number of flowers can be better utilized in the care of the lawns.*⁵⁶

While the national cemeteries were designed in keeping with the simplicity of the lawn style, the addition of flowerbeds reflected ornamental qualities popular in garden cemeteries, and may have been added in many cases by superintendents. Superintendent Miller's flowerbeds were most likely in the style of Victorian carpet beds, consisting of flowering annuals arranged in patterns and in a low, uniform height, perhaps with a vertical feature such as cannas or grasses.⁵⁷ Already in 1870, Superintendent Miller had sown flower seed in hot beds, low covered frames that were probably located along the perimeter south of the main gate, and was ordering flowering shrubs. On May 31, 1870, he wrote: "I have now 50 rose bushes in bloom in the cemetery, and have set out about 380 flowering plants, mostly annuals."⁵⁸ Although the exact location and dimensions of the flowerbeds is not known, there were beds located around the gun monuments and the new lodge, in addition to those on or surrounding the flagstaff mound. The roses were scattered throughout the cemetery.⁵⁹ In another indication of poplar Victorian tastes, Miller also clipped shrubs into geometric shapes. Such clipped shrubs were too ornamental for the Quartermaster General's Office, as suggested in Lieutenant Colonel Mack's inspection of Poplar Grove in January 1876: "The evergreens are mostly cedars—common junipers—some of them have been trimmed in fancy shapes as the Supt. was not able to accompany me over the grounds I forgot to tell him to let nature attend to the forms of the rest of these trees."⁶⁰ Miller was probably responsible for an ornamental boxwood hedge in front of the lodge that was clipped in the shape of a Maltese cross (an eight-pointed cross symbolic of a Christian warrior), as well as the addition of plum

and peach trees along the walk near the circular turn-around and side of Division F.⁶¹

As suggested by the Quartermaster General regulations, specimen trees played a central role in beautification efforts of the 1870s. [Chronological list of plantings in Appendix H] While Lieutenant Colonel Mack had observed that most of the evergreens in the cemetery were cedars, the largest trees were loblolly pines that the burial corps had retained from the pre-existing woods. Approximately 150 specimens still remained in the cemetery, down from the roughly 180 recorded in 1867, with trunks ranging in diameter from four to six inches.⁶² The first systematic program of tree planting at Poplar Grove took place in winter 1871, based on a Congressional appropriation of \$20,000 made in 1870 for landscape improvements at the national cemeteries. In January 1871, a total of 183 trees ranging from one to seven feet in height arrived at Poplar Grove under the supervision of Major Henry G. Hodges of the Quartermaster General's Office. The shipment had nineteen species of evergreen and deciduous trees that included horse chestnut, silver and sugar maples, box elder, linden, silver poplar, oak, ash, willow, Kentucky coffee tree, Norway and white spruce, Balsam fir, cedar, magnolia, purple beech, English hornbeam, and American larch. By April of 1871, Superintendent Miller reported that the new plantings were doing well, except for the Norway and white spruce, box elder, and sugar maple. Some of the other trees, particular the balsam fir that was outside of its natural growing range, most likely did not survive long. A year later, in August 1872, Miller reported that 150 of the trees were doing well, and the rest were making "little progress."⁶³

In May 1871, five months after the large tree shipment, 101 American elms were shipped to Poplar Grove to plant in a formal allée called a sylvan hall. The sylvan hall concept had been devised by the Quartermaster General's Office as part of the 1870 Congressional appropriation for landscape improvements. The concept may have been designed to provide a ceremonial approach walk to the flagstaff. At Poplar Grove, the sylvan hall of American elms was planted in the form of a cross, most likely along the north-south and east-west axis drives that crossed at the flagstaff [see Drawing 3]. The elms were apparently planted three or four rows in from the drives, and an understory border of shrubs, probably boxwood and an unknown conifer, were planted directly along the drive.⁶⁴ Lieutenant Major Mack reported in his August 1874 inspection: "The elms, which have been dormant for two years and more, have taken a start this season, and are growing vigorously now."⁶⁵ The walk between Divisions D and E may have served as the approach to the sylvan hall from the main drive. This walk was bordered on each side by a hedge of boxwoods, which were shipped along with the trees in January 1871. Some of the boxwoods were also planted around the

perimeter of the island in the circular turn-around and maintained as clipped shrubs in a pyramidal shape.⁶⁶

Following the tree plantings made in 1871, there were apparently no further trees planted within the cemetery through the early 1880s except on a replacement basis. In January 1876, Lieutenant Colonel Mack reported: "The trees in this cemetery are numerous, and in about the right proportion of evergreen and deciduous. I do not think any more are needed, except to replace such as may perish from time to time."⁶⁷ Two years later, inspector James Gall made a similar report on the trees and shrubs, noting that they had: "...received the necessary care and look well, especially those in the Sylvan Hall, which are about 4 inches in diameter and vigorous and well shaped."⁶⁸

Aside from the trees within the cemetery, the Quartermaster General's Office also oversaw the planting of the allee of trees along the approach road in 1878. The trees were saplings dug up from surrounding woods. Many did not survive, and few except for some of the tulip trees promised to grow into healthy specimens. By the spring of 1881, inspector James Gall was recommending that new trees be planted, "...with the best obtainable trees from the nursery, and that such care be taken in the preparation of the holes....The avenue, if properly planted and shaded, will form an attractive feature of the place."⁶⁹

James Gall's spring 1881 inspection report outlined a program of improvements for Poplar Grove that were implemented over the course of the following year. The program involved replacement trees along the approach road that were planted in spring 1882 and included red maple, elm, pin oak, and linden, spaced at twenty-five feet [see Drawing 3]. At the same time, additional replacement trees were planted within the cemetery walls, sunken graves and low spots within the cemetery were filled and turfed, headstones were reset where they had begun to lean, and a new sign board at the entrance on Vaughan Road was probably installed.⁷⁰

The 1881-1882 improvement program also included the addition of interpretive and directional signs known as tablets, which were installed as part of a systematic project at all national cemeteries and reflected the increasing importance of commemoration. The tablets, made by the Army's Rock Island Arsenal, consisted of cast-iron rectangular placards of various sizes set at an angle on posts, approximately two to three feet in height and painted black with the lettering highlighted in silver.⁷¹ [Figure 1.52] At Poplar Grove, there were a total of sixteen tablets placed along the main drive and around the flagstaff, and scattered along the outer drives [see Drawing 3]. These included a 2'6" x 3'10" tablet near the main gate inscribed with language of General Order No. 80 (cemetery use

regulations issued in 1875); four tablets measuring 1'10" x 3' inscribed with the "Act to Establish & Protect National Cemeteries Approved February 22, 1867," located near the main entrance, one near the flagstaff, and two along outer drives; and ten small tablets (1'2" x 1'8") each containing a four-line verse of Theodore O'Hara's poem, "The Bivouac of the Dead;" and one tablet (unknown dimension) on the circular drive adjoining the lodge stating "Visitors Notice, Invitation to Register."⁷²

LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE, 1882-1925

The installation of the iron tablets in c.1882 was the last significant addition to the landscape of Poplar Grove National Cemetery in its initial period of development. Ten years later, a plan of the landscape was drawn by the Quartermaster General's office as part of a systematic documentation of the national cemetery system completed in 1892-1893. For each cemetery, the plans showed the local context, drives and walks, inclosure walls, central flagstaff and flagstaff mound, buildings, and trees and shrubs. The plan for Poplar Grove was completed on May 18, 1892.⁷³ [Figure 1.53]

Administration & Use

Into the first decade of the twentieth century, Poplar Grove National Cemetery continued to be administered through the Quartermaster's Washington Depot. In 1912, the Quartermaster Department (Office of the Quartermaster General) was reorganized and became the Quartermaster Corps, shifting functions from civilians or detachments to specialized troops. Administration of Poplar Grove was transferred to the Quartermaster's Third Corps Area Headquarters based in Baltimore.⁷⁴ Although always standardized, administration became increasingly so during this period. Cemetery regulations governing in exacting detail issues pertaining to staffing, building and landscape maintenance, and burial procedures were published in manual form in 1911. Beginning in 1913, reports filed by the cemetery superintendents had become standardized questionnaires, replacing the earlier hand-written reports. [Example report in Appendix G]

Although it had few spaces left, there were approximately twenty new burials made between 1896 and 1925, including the first Civil War veteran burial in 1896 (earlier burials were reinterred Civil War remains) [see Drawing 3]. The most active year for burials was 1918, when seven new graves were dug for Civil War veterans and casualties of World War I.⁷⁵ Since most all of the original burial plots in the cemetery were occupied, most of the new burials were made in the walk north of the flagstaff in Division C. Other burials were made at the ends of grave rows (for an unknown reason, the incomplete row in Division D was not

used). For these new burials and to replace broken markers, the Quartermaster General continued to use the standard Civil War-type headstone until 1904, when a slightly revised specification was issued for the same general design, but slightly larger dimensions and a different font for the inscription. At the same time that the design of the headstone was revised, the War Department abandoned the use of the block for unknown graves. A standard headstone was used in place of the block, with the inscription “Unknown U. S. Soldier,” along with the grave number.

The lack of a substantial number of new burials at Poplar Grove eventually led, along with its remote location, difficult access, and other factors, to declining visitation by the late nineteenth century.⁷⁶ During the late 1880s, visitation was still substantial, as evidenced by ruts in the main drive caused by “considerable driving,” according to a Quartermaster Inspection report.⁷⁷ By the 1890s, with the Civil War growing more distant, relatives and friends of the Union soldiers visited less frequently. Poplar Grove, as was typical of older or inactive cemeteries, became a sleepy place without new burials to infuse new visitation for of the recently departed. Even Decoration Day at Poplar Grove apparently received little attention after the 1880s—as a Union burial place, the cemetery did not share the same attraction for local residents as the Confederate burials at Blanford Cemetery in Petersburg (the Southern states did not recognize the federal Decoration Day until after World War I).⁷⁸

Perhaps due to the relatively low number of new burials, the cemetery also received relatively little attention from veterans’ groups. As the twenty-fifth anniversary of the end of the war approached in 1890, veterans groups and northern states erected often elaborate monuments at several national cemeteries, some of which were smaller than Poplar Grove but which were either associated with notable events of the war, or were still active burial grounds. Culpeper (Virginia) National Cemetery, for example, received three large monuments during this time: the 2nd Massachusetts Infantry erected a monument in 1893, the State of New York erected a monument in 1902 in honor of the 28th New York Volunteer Infantry, and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania erected a monument in 1910 in honor of its fallen soldiers buried at the cemetery. [Figure 1.54] Other Civil War-era national cemeteries that received similar monuments during this time included Cold Harbor, Winchester, Fredericksburg, and Gettysburg. Poplar Grove probably did not receive such monuments partly because several states, including Massachusetts, Maine, and Pennsylvania, erected large monuments nearby on the battlefields of Petersburg. Poplar Grove was also not alone in lacking such attention from veterans. Fort Harrison, Glendale, Richmond, Seven Pines, and Yorktown National Cemeteries also did not receive substantial commemorative monuments during this time.⁷⁹

Staffing at Poplar Grove remained largely unchanged from the early years of the cemetery, with one superintendent (required to be a disabled veteran) and one regular assistant, but became less stable after 1890. That year, Superintendent Lacy, who in 1876 had replaced the original superintendent, August Miller, retired. After Lacy, most superintendents remained at Poplar Grove for less than three years, with the exception of John Laun, who served from 1895 through 1903.⁸⁰ The remote location of the cemetery, and lack of activity with few new burials and low visitation, apparently made it a less than choice appointment for cemetery superintendents.

Upkeep and Improvements

Despite its relative lack of attention, Poplar Grove remained well tended and received standard improvements under the Office of the Quartermaster General. Quartermaster inspection reports from the 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century remarked on the generally good condition of the cemetery.

The most notable standard Quartermaster improvement to Poplar Grove during this time was the addition of a bandstand, known in national cemeteries as a rostrum. Rostrums were added to the national cemeteries in a systematic way beginning in the 1890s, reflecting the importance of commemorative uses and Decoration Day ceremonies in particular. From the rostrum, honors would be rendered and speakers would give their memorial addresses.⁸¹ In 1891, around the time interest in commemorating the Battle of Petersburg was emerging, Superintendent E. L. Grant began planning for a rostrum at Poplar Grove, but it was not until the summer of 1896 that the Quartermaster General's office approved the project. The Poplar Grove rostrum, completed on January 2, 1897, was a standard design, matching the rostrums at Richmond and Yorktown National Cemeteries. It was sited in the open area between the graves in Division F and the circular turn-around. [Figure 1.55, see also Drawing 3] From here, orators could address people gathered in the turn-around. The structure was an octagonal pavilion with cast-iron posts and wrought-iron ornamentation, set on a raised brick foundation, measuring fourteen feet in diameter with a ceiling height of ten and one-half feet.⁸² [Figure 1.56]

Aside from the rostrum, other changes to the landscape during the later 1880s through the first decade of the twentieth century were modest and mostly to do with maintenance, such as filling sunken graves, painting buildings, replacing vegetation, and caring for the grave markers. Because they were set directly in the ground, the grave markers were subject to settling, and several inspection reports from this time called for straightening, raising, and aligning. In addition, the white

marble became dirty and moldy in the humid climate, and required periodic cleaning. The Quartermaster General regulations stipulated that the headstones should be cleaned at least once in five years, or more frequently in shady conditions, with palmetto-fiber scrubbing brushes and Sapolio (a brand of mild soap).⁸³

Quartermaster inspectors found that the trees and shrubs were doing very well, such as reported in 1885: “The deciduous trees are numerous, thrifty & doing well. There is a large plantation of fine young elms [sylvan hall], some large native Norway pinus [loblolly pine], numerous cedars & many thrifty fruit trees [near the circular turn-around]...The osage hedge [perimeter hedge] is very fine, has evidently been judiciously trimmed from an early day & is thick close to the ground & cut, wedge shape, very nicely...”⁸⁴ Notable additions and changes to the cemetery plantings included the replacement of the boxwood hedge around the service yard with an arborvitae hedge in 1888, and planting of English ivy along the inside of the perimeter wall the same year, probably in replacement of the Osage orange hedge. The hedge, which had been planted in 1871, was taken out by the time of the 1892 Quartermaster plan, perhaps because the thorny shrub was growing into the walks and grave sections (its original purpose had been in part to keep away livestock, a function that had become unnecessary with the completion of the brick wall in 1877).

Aside from removal of the hedge, the most notable change to the cemetery plantings was removal of most of the original 101 American elms in the sylvan hall by 1892. In his 1888 report, Quartermaster inspector W. Owen hinted at a problem with the elms: “The Elms of the ‘sylvan grove’ are planted on the graves & some of them are much in the way of the lawn mower but that cannot well be helped. To take out any trees would destroy the cross.”⁸⁵ Despite Owen’s observation, the maintenance problems with the elms’ characteristic surface and shallow root system took precedent. The roots were probably not only interfering with mowing (sylvan hall was planted prior to the introduction of the horse-drawn mower in 1878), but may have also been heaving the gravestones. The removal of the elms probably occurred under the new superintendent H. C. Lacy, who replaced long-time superintendent E. L. Grant in 1890. Only scattered trees were retained along the central east-west drive by the time the Quartermaster General’s office prepared its plan of Poplar Grove in 1892.⁸⁶

Lawn mowing and lawn care were the biggest continual maintenance issues for the superintendent and his one assistant, despite the improvement provided by the horse-drawn mower. It probably took several days to mow the lawn, and during the spring, may have been a continual task. Despite the effort, the lawn often looked poor. A Quartermaster inspection report from 1885, for example,

found that the “...grass is backward, with much wild onion, sorrel & other small weeds...grass does not seem to do as well in this country or that at City Point as in and about Richmond. The soil is clayey & cold.” The next inspection in 1888 found that the lawn was “...Poor and surface looks rough. Needs fertilizing & more frequent mowing.”⁸⁷ The superintendent also had to maintain the grass on the walks and drives. The grass on the main drive, the most heavily used in the cemetery, often became rutted from use by carriages, an appearance that inspector Owen found “...looks like a country woods road.” Owen recommended that the ruts should be sodded and that carriages should be kept out of the cemetery.⁸⁸ At some point between 1892 and 1904, the grass on the main drive was replaced with gravel (the brick gutters were not uncovered), matching the material on the approach road. The resurfacing included the drive into the service yard and the circle around the flagstaff, but not the circular turn-around adjacent to the lodge. Here, the drive was widened for a small parking space.

Soon after the turn of the century, each of the national cemeteries was photographed, probably under the direction of the Quartermaster General. In 1904, a photograph of Poplar Grove was taken looking into the cemetery from just outside the entrance gate. [Figure 1.57] The next year, this photograph was reprinted as a colored postcard. The photograph, taken in late fall or winter, captured the main drive with its recent gravel surface, the 1876 entrance gates and brick inclosure wall, the 1871 lodge with its stone walls, slate roof, and darkly painted trim, and the grass-covered circular turn-around, ringed by clipped boxwoods. The photograph also shows tall loblolly pines in the background (remnants from the landscape of the engineers’ camp), an arborvitae hedge surrounding the service yard, and two magnolias at the entrance to the service yard. Also barely visible along the drive are a tablet and a settee.

During the following decade, there were a number of improvements to the buildings at Poplar Grove. Within the service yard, a frame privy, with a footprint of approximately four feet by five feet and two holes, was built in c.1905 on the west side of the forage shed, apparently to supplement the pre-existing privy within the toolshed-stable [see Drawing 3]. The forage shed, which was erected by the superintendent in c.1879 and was still being used to store forage (for the horse) as well as fuel, was reported as being in “bad condition” in 1901.⁸⁹ Calls for replacement were again made in c.1910, but in 1912, an inspector found that the forage shed could last another year or two if it were patched and repaired. Finally, in c.1915, the forage shed was torn down and a new frame addition, housing a “feed room,” was built at the rear of the brick toolshed-stable. [Figure 1.58] In c.1925, the gap between the rear of the feed room and the brick enclosing wall was covered by a tin-roof for use as a shed.⁹⁰ Across the main drive, a new

kitchen wing, built of brick and sheathed in stucco, was built at the rear of the lodge and completed in November 1914 [see Drawing 3]. First recommended by inspectors in 1910, the new wing was built as a modern replacement for the kitchen outbuilding, built in c.1879. To the rear of the old kitchen outbuilding against the brick inclosure wall was a small brick building, partially below grade, known as “the cave.” This building, measuring five feet by six feet and four feet deep, was constructed in c.1900, perhaps as a root cellar..⁹¹

Other improvements during the first two decades of the twentieth century occurred at the center of the cemetery. The fifty-six foot tall wooden flagstaff had been identified as being insufficiently tall for the size of Poplar Grove since the time it was installed in 1873, and as far back as 1888, an inspector had reported that it “...seems sound but is badly warped & ugly.”⁹² In 1910, the Quartermaster inspector raised the height issue again, recommending the installation of a taller pole. In the following inspection report for 1912, W. C. Brown noted that the new flagstaff had not yet been replaced, but reported that Superintendent Dye had suggested he put one up himself for \$30.00. Brown concurred with this idea, but it may have not gone any further. In 1913, a new white-painted iron flagstaff was erected—details of its height and whether it was erected by the Superintendent or a contractor are not known.⁹³ The flagstaff mound was probably removed or reduced to a foot or less in height as part of the project. Flagstaff mounds had apparently fallen out of favor at national cemeteries: the new edition of the Quartermaster General regulations for National Cemeteries issued in 1911 forbid building of mounds around flagstaffs.⁹⁴

A photograph of Poplar Grove taken in c.1914 shortly after the new flagstaff was installed captured the cemetery at what was most likely the height of its development, although the cemetery lacked some features and ornamental plantings it once had during Superintendent Miller’s tenure in the 1870s. [Figure 1.59] The photo illustrated the main drive neatly edged in gravel, dense canopy of mature trees, sheared boxwoods and other scattered shrubs, iron tablets, and the tall, white flagstaff in the distance. The lawn had been recently mown, although trimming had not been completed around the headstones. On August 2, 1915, one year after this photograph was taken, a tornado swept across the cemetery, ripping down 110 trees—approximately half of the trees in the cemetery—breaking forty-seven headstones, and damaging the roof on the forage room addition on the toolshed-stable outbuilding.⁹⁵ Plans were soon underway to correct the broken headstones, and during the summer of the following year new replacement stones were installed, using the Civil War-era tablet design. One of the private headstones broken in the storm, for the grave of Scotland native Adam Cowan Murray, was proposed for repair rather than replacement with a standard government headstone.⁹⁶ While the grave markers were fixed, no plans

for replacing the trees or repairing the damaged building were developed for more than a decade following the storm. Despite this, Quartermaster inspectors found the cemetery during this time to be in “excellent condition.”⁹⁷

FINAL WAR DEPARTMENT IMPROVEMENTS AT POPLAR GROVE, 1925-1933

With the legislative establishment of Petersburg National Military Park in 1926, the War Department gained a new presence in Petersburg, building on its long-time involvement in Poplar Grove National Cemetery and its more recent but short-lived presence at Camp Lee (between Petersburg and Hopewell), established as a base for 90,000 troops during World War I.⁹⁸ The legislation for the new park, developed out of a feasibility study begun in February 1925 and building on other efforts dating back to the 1890s, called for the acquisition of battlefields and earthen fortifications surrounding Petersburg. The proposed park formed a series of aggregate parcels along the Federal and Confederate lines stretching for more than twenty miles, to be linked by park roads. [Figure 1.60] Acquisition of property and initial improvement work, carried out through a local park commission, began in earnest in 1928. By 1932, the park encompassed nearly five hundred acres and work was begun on the park roads. On June 20, 1932, Petersburg National Military Park was officially dedicated.⁹⁹ In the vicinity of Poplar Grove, plans for the new park called for the acquisition of lands along the Federal Left Flank, which ran in an east-west direction north of the cemetery. Most of these lands along the Federal Left Flank were acquired by 1932, but work on the planned park road paralleling the earthworks, known as Flank Road, was not begun until later. Plans called for Flank Road to cross Vaughan Road approximately a half mile north of Poplar Grove [see Figure 1.60].

Administration & Use

In response to the apparent lack of public interest in Poplar Grove National Cemetery going back several decades, the Office of the Inspector General recommended in its 1928 report on Poplar Grove that the “...War Department initiate correspondence with American Legion Posts or town officials with a view toward having appropriate ceremonies take place...on Decoration Day of each year and that all cemetery superintendents be instructed to offer the fullest cooperation.”¹⁰⁰ New burials continued during this time at the slow rate characteristic of decades past, with a total of five between 1925 and 1933, not counting reinterment of Civil War remains.¹⁰¹ [Chronological tally of new burials in Appendix D]

Although burials did not increase, at the time of 1928 report public interest in visiting Poplar Grove was beginning to reemerge due in part to the establishment

of Petersburg National Military Park and easier access made possible by automobiles. The park, created through legislation signed by President Calvin Coolidge on July 3, 1926, was created to mark and preserve lands related to the campaign, siege, and defense of Petersburg. The park was part of a system of military parks administered by the War Department, but park management and planning was largely delegated to the Petersburg National Military Park Commission, a local civilian entity. While Poplar Grove National Cemetery was intimately related to the park theme, it remained administratively separate from the new park. While interest in the cemetery probably rose during the late 1920s over previous years, the numbers still remained small. Between August and December of 1928, Poplar Grove received seventy-eight visitors; and from January through June of 1929, sixty-six (fourteen on Memorial Day).¹⁰² Probably the heaviest day of visitation at Poplar Grove during the early years of the military park occurred in April 1931 with a ceremony marking the reinterment of the remains of twenty-nine unknown Union soldiers recovered from the Crater battlefield on March 28-30, 1931. The remains were unearthed as part of the park's acquisition and restoration of the Crater battlefield. According to the Petersburg city manager, a "tremendous crowd" attended the reinterment ceremony at Poplar Grove.¹⁰³

In February 1925, the same month that Congress approved a feasibility study for establishing a national military park at Petersburg, the Office of the Quartermaster General issued a report of repairs required at Poplar Grove, mapping out a five-year improvement program. With the potential establishment of the neighboring national military park, the Quartermaster General undoubtedly saw the need to spruce up the sleepy cemetery. Initial plans called for modernization of the lodge, removal of the frame building at the rear of the toolshed-stable, construction of a new public toilet and a new well-house (to replace the c.1871 well-house in the service yard), repairs to the rostrum, replacement of brick pavement around the lodge with concrete, paving of the main drive, and planting 250 trees to replace those lost in the 1915 tornado.¹⁰⁴ Planning for these improvements progressed over the following few years. A new well was proposed in 1926 (it is not known if it was built), and in 1927, H. L. Ward, of the Quartermaster Corps, revised plans to include construction of a new service building to replace the entire toolshed-stable and its additions, and construction of a "standard brick toilet building" with separate facilities for men and women. To justify the need for the new toilet building, Ward wrote that it was "...necessary for the reason that this cemetery is a considerable distance from any public building or hotel and is visited by a great many parties traveling in motor cars."¹⁰⁵ In 1928, word was circulating that Vaughan Road would be paved, probably also in response to plans for the new park and rising use of

automobiles. H. L. Ward recommended that if Vaughan Road were paved, the cemetery approach road and main drive should also be paved at the same time.¹⁰⁶

Implementation of the Improvement Plans

In the summer of 1929, plans for the new buildings and building improvements were finalized through the Quartermaster Supply Officer, Washington General Depot. For the new stable-garage (officially called the “Outbuilding”) and public restroom (“Utility Building”), plans called for a simple, Colonial Revival style with stucco exteriors (unpainted, probably to match the stone on the lodge), gable roofs with eaves returns, metal roof sheathing, and multi-paned windows. The contract for the construction of both buildings was awarded to the firm of H. Herfurth Jr., of Washington D. C. The public restroom building, built at a cost of \$3,127, was the first to be completed on August 10, 1929. Built of hollow tile, the one-story building housed separate restrooms for men and women, a fuel storage room, and an electric generating motor and water storage room. It was built on the site of the brick kitchen built in c.1879, which was last used as woodshed prior to its demolition in 1929. [Figure 1.61, see also Drawing 3]. The new building was accessed by a concrete walk that extended from the rear of the lodge, replacing an earlier brick walk. The septic tank for the new restrooms was built in the open area between the lodge and rostrum; two years later in spring 1931, the tank was apparently retrofitted with a septic field, which included 360 feet of drain pipes and tiles.¹⁰⁷ Construction of this septic field most likely required removal of the circular turn-around that had been built in c.1872 but which was probably no longer being used by vehicles.

In the service yard, the 1879 toolshed-stable and adjoining forage shed and tin-roofed shed were demolished for the new stable-garage, which was constructed in the same general footprint. Completed at a cost of \$3,950 on October 10, 1929, the one and one-half story building was constructed of brick with a workroom and stall, and a loft for storage. [Figure 1.62] Following the completion of the two new buildings, the lodge was modernized through several projects completed between 1930 and 1932 that included new utilities, removal of the slate roof and replacement with tin (probably to match the two new buildings), reconstruction of the front porch floor in concrete, and replacement of brick walks with concrete.¹⁰⁸ It was probably also at this time that the trim was changed from a dark color to white, matching the trim on the garage and public restroom building.

In addition to the building work, a number of landscape improvement projects were carried out. In the fall of 1930, plans were developed for the replacement of the iron flagstaff erected in 1913. Although a new flagstaff had not been identified

as part of the five-year improvement plan outlined in 1925, there must have been some flaw to the existing iron flagstaff, which in 1930 was just seventeen years old. Perhaps it had a structural defect, or more likely, it was not sufficiently tall for the size of the cemetery. In October 1930, a new flagstaff—towering above the trees at upwards of eighty feet tall—was installed. [Figure 1.63] It was built of iron sections fitted by bolted flanges, and set on a concrete pad. The height of the flagstaff required support by guy wires fastened to the midsection of the flagstaff, and anchored on the ground by turnbuckles. The flagstaff and guy wires were painted white, and the iron base and turnbuckles were painted black.¹⁰⁹

The spring following the installation of the flagstaff, around the time the Civil War remains from the Crater battlefield were being reinterred at Poplar Grove, plans were finalized for a tree planting program, the first since the tornado of 1915 resulted in the loss of 110 trees. The plan, developed by the Office of the Quartermaster Third Corps in Baltimore, was completed on March 31, 1931. [Figure 1.64] This plan documented that since the illustrated plan of Poplar Grove was made in 1892 [see Figure 1.53], a large percentage of the cemetery's vegetation had been lost. Except those trees in the approach road allee, the 1931 plan documented only eighty surviving mature trees in the cemetery, plus thirty-four boxwood shrubs, the Maltese cross boxwood hedge in front of the lodge, and an arborvitae hedge screening the service yard. The plan called for planting 101 trees that together with existing trees generally created an even spacing of specimens across the cemetery landscape. Trees were specified for planting between the rows of headstones, using eight species: European mountain ash (10), pin oak (20), Norway spruce (6), Austrian pine (4), American holly (6), American elm (20), American linden (12), and Norway maple (23). The tree stock was specified at height ranging from three to twelve feet, and from one to one and one-half inches caliper. The contract for the trees was awarded to the nursery of Henkels & McCoy, "Landscape Contractors - Tree Surgeons - Road Builders," of Germantown, Pennsylvania. Henkels & McCoy completed the planting at Poplar Grove on May 18, 1931. While the specifications allowed changes based on field conditions, the plan was apparently executed without substantial modification.¹¹⁰

As planning was underway on the tree planting project, plans were also being finalized for paving the approach road and main drive. In the spring of 1931, the Quartermaster Third Corps finalized specifications for the project, following up on discussions about appropriate surface treatment going back several years. In response to an initial proposal for paving made in 1928, the Inspector General's Office had recommended the main drive within the cemetery be instead returned to turf and that all public motorized vehicles be banned from entering the cemetery. The Quartermaster's Office responded that it wished to retain the main drive in gravel to allow wagon access for interments, but alternatively would

consider turfing the portion of the main drive beyond the service area. Ultimately the option for paving the entire main drive in asphalt prevailed, most likely based on arguments for durability and ease of maintenance.¹¹¹ On May 22, 1931, a contract for the paving was awarded to Vernon J. Cowing of Ashland, Virginia, a field engineer for The Bituminous Roads Company. The project, totaling 1,760 lineal feet from Vaughan Road to the flagstaff, included removal of the existing gravel, installation of a four-inch stone base, and application of a two inches of emulsified asphalt penetrating wear surface on a road width of twelve feet. It did not include paving the circular turn-around near the lodge, which had probably fallen out of use by this time. The project also added earthen shoulders on the approach road, and changed the circular drive around the flagstaff to accommodate a wider turning radius. The paving changed the circle into a tear-drop shape and require the addition of thirty feet of concrete curbing to avoid grading over the adjoining grave markers in Division A, Section A [see Drawing 3]. The paving project was completed on June 26, 1931.¹¹²

While paving of the main drive and approach road reduced the maintenance work at the cemetery, the improvement probably proved insignificant compared with the effort still needed to mow the lawn with the horse-drawn mower and three manual push mowers, and to trim around the grave markers by scythe. Although the new outbuilding (stable-garage) built in 1929 was designed to house the cemetery horse used to pull the lawn mower, two years later in the fall of 1931, the Office of the Quartermaster General dismissed the need for a horse at the cemetery by securing in its place a gasoline-powered push lawn mower. In November 1931, steps were being taken to dispose of the cemetery horse.¹¹³ Although the motorized mower eased the job, mowing eight acres and trimming around the nearly 5,600 grave markers still would have remained an onerous task.

In February 1932, a forester with the Office of the Inspector General visited Poplar Grove in its last year under last year of War Department administration. The report focused on plans for improving vegetation and caring for the eighty of the 101 trees planted the previous year that had survived. The report also noted general conditions, including a photograph looking east from near the rostrum illustrating “characteristic pines and hollies.”¹¹⁴ [Figure 1.65]. The photograph showed widely spaced trees, including several tall loblolly pines—probably remnants from the engineers’ camp—mown lawn, ivy growing on the brick perimeter wall, and the tablet- and block-type grave markers. Although generally well maintained, upon closer inspection the photograph reveals that the tablets and blocks were stained, some were leaning or sunken, and the surrounding grass was not closely trimmed.

As a final improvement to the cemetery landscape, work began in the spring of 1932 on improving the condition of the headstones. At this time, the newly-appointed cemetery superintendent, Walter Pearce, reported: "...Headstones, Is in poor alinement, Many of them was never aligned, and to line them now will be a job, Those that need lowering, raising and striating up will be attended to soon." [sic]¹⁵ Over the course of the next year, cemetery laborers worked on aligning and cleaning the stones, although the work remained incomplete. To improve the work, in the fall of 1932 the Office of the Quartermaster General provided hypochlorite of lime (a bleaching agent) for cleaning the stones, to replace the traditional method that employed brushing with sapolia (a soap).¹⁶

As the War Department entered its final days of administering Poplar Grove National Cemetery in the winter of 1932-1933, the long-standing issue of maintenance—notably the labor-intensive tasks of lawn mowing and care of the headstones—would lead under new administration to a radical change in the cemetery landscape, a change apparently spurred by the new technology of the motorized lawn mower and availability of free labor through federal work-relief programs.

ENDNOTES

¹ Herbert Olsen, "Poplar Grove National Cemetery History" (Unpublished report prepared for the National Park Service, 31 May 1954), 66.

² Richard L. Jones, *Dinwiddie County: Carrefour of the Commonwealth* (Dinwiddie, Virginia: Dinwiddie County Board of Supervisors, 1976), 295.

³ August Miller, "History of Poplar Grove National Cemetery," 24 April 1871, Highlights of Superintendent Miller letters, transcription of Poplar Grove archives at Petersburg National Battlefield by park ranger Betsy Dinger-Glisan [hereafter, "POGR database"].

⁴ MacCloskey, 37, 44; Edward Steele, "Shrines of the Honored Dead" (Washington, D. C.: Department of the Army, Office of the Quartermaster General, c.1954), 26.

⁵ War Department, Office of the Quartermaster General, *Regulations for the Government of National Cemeteries* (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1911), 4; project correspondence, 1929-1933, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, RG 79, Entry 5, Records of the War Department Relating to National Parks, 1892-1937, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter, "Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II"], box 51.

⁶ Highlights of Superintendent Miller letters, 9 July 1870, POGR database.

⁷ Olsen, 87; Lieutenant Colonel O. A. Mack, Report of Inspection of the Poplar Grove & City Point National Cemeteries,” 14 January 1876, RG 92, Entry 576, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, National Archives I, Washington, D.C. [hereafter, “Poplar Grove Records, NARA I”], box 57.

⁸ W. T. Wood, Inspector General, “Report of an Inspection of the National Cemetery Poplar Grove, Va.,” 6 May 1904, RG 159, Records of the Inspector General, Entry 9, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter, “Records of the Inspector General, NARA I”], box 77. This garden existed by 1902, and was probably established much earlier.

⁹ August Miller to Major General Lorenzo Thomas, 31 March 1869, POGR database.

¹⁰ Sammartino, National Register documentation, Section E, pages 13-14.

¹¹ “Memorial Celebration To-Day at Poplar Grove,” Petersburg *Daily Courier*, 30 May 1871, page 3, column 4; “Federal Decoration Day,” Petersburg *Daily Courier*, 31 May 1871, page 3, column 1. Of this ceremony, Superintendent Miller wrote “...yesterday has been the first day on which the graves were generally decorated with Flowers, since I have charge of this Cemetery. The people of Petersburg and vicinity, both white and black, turned out en mass for the occasion. It was gratifying to see the people taking at last a interest in showing due respects to the graves of the fallen Soldiers...” Superintendent August Miller to General Meigs, 31 May 1871, POGR database.

¹² “Decoration of Federal Graves,” Petersburg *Index and Appeal*, 31 May 1875, page 3, column 2.

¹³ August Miller to Quartermaster General U.S.A., 31 July 1869, POGR database.

¹⁴ August Miller, letter to unidentified person, 30 November 1869, Highlights of Superintendent Miller’s Letters, POGR database.

¹⁵ This same style was being employed in plans for the what might be considered the parent building to the national cemetery lodges—the State, War, and Navy Building in Washington, D. C. Construction began in 1871, but plans for the building, designed by Alfred B. Mullet, may have been developed earlier.

¹⁶ Sammartino, National Register documentation, Section E, page 10

¹⁷ Henry Hodges, Quartermaster, Philadelphia, to General M. C. Meigs, 8 March 1871, citing earlier correspondence, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57; Bids for lodge at Poplar Grove and advertisement dated May 30, 1870 filed in Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57; Articles of Agreement, Henry C. Hodges, James R. Dobbyn, 16 August 1870; August Miller to Quartermaster General, 31 August 1870, POGR database.

¹⁸ Henry Hodges to General J. Meigs, 8 April 1871; “Case of Lodge, Poplar Grove Cemetery, Bids for,” 26 April 1871 (various bids enclosed), Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

¹⁹ Superintendent August Miller, monthly report, October 1871, January 1872, POGR database.

²⁰ Superintendent August Miller, June 1872 monthly report, POGR database.

²¹ August Miller to Quartermaster General, 30 September 1869, POGR database; Major O. A. Mack, “Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries,” 7 August 1874, Oliver Cox, “Report

on Poplar Grove,” 6 November 1876, and W. H. Owen, “Report of Inspection of Poplar Grove,” 18 April 1885, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

²² Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, “Enclosing Walls for National Cemeteries,” dated August 12, 1870, RG 92, Entry 689, “Sketches of Iron Railings, Gates, and Headstones, and Proposals and Specifications Relating to National Cemeteries,” Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 1.

²³ *The Standard Cyclopaedia of Horticulture* (1950), s.v. “Maclura.”

²⁴ Office of the Chief Quartermaster, Third District, Department of the East, advertisement for solicitation of bids for Osage Orange Plants, 29 August 1870, Records of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, Entry 689, box 1.

²⁵ August Miller to Quartermaster General, 30 September 1869; August Miller to Quartermaster General, 31 August 1870; August Miller to Henry Hodges, 7 March 1871; Miller, “History of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, 24 April 1871, POGR database.

²⁶ Mr. Chenoweth to B. G. Bingham, 16 December 1873; A. Whitehead to Assistant Quartermaster McGoningle, 30 June 1874, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

²⁷ Oliver Cox to A. F. Rockwell, 11 August 1875, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

²⁸ Advertisement from unidentified newspaper, Office of the Quartermaster General, “Proposals for Work at National Military Cemeteries,” 1 February 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

²⁹ Oliver Cox, “Reports survey of the Poplar Grove Cemetery & encloses plat,” 9 March 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

³⁰ Articles of Agreement, 22 May 187, A. F. Rockwell, Assistant Quartermaster Washington District, and John Brennon and Archibald L. Hutton of Washington, 22 May 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57; Olsen, 60.

³¹ James Gall to A. F. Rockwell, Assistant Quartermaster General, 20 September 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

³² J. Welsey Friend to United States (Farley), 30 April 1877, book 14, page 428; J. Welsey Friend to United States (Flower), 30 April 1877, book 14, page 429, Dinwiddie County Land Records, reproduced in Olsen, 92-96; Quartermaster Attorney General [name illegible], “Endorsement of Addition of Land to Poplar Grove,” 14 May 1877, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

³³ C. M. Clarke to Quartermaster General, Inspection report for Poplar Grove, 29 March 1879; W. H. Owen, “Report of Inspection of Poplar Grove,” 18 April 1885, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

³⁴ “An Act to Establish and to Protect National Cemeteries,” approved February 22, 1867, section 1.

³⁵ Steele, 17; Olsen, 53; drawing of Meigs’ design in RG 92, Entry 689, Sketches of Iron Railings, Gates, and Headstones, and Proposals and Specifications Relating to National Cemeteries,” NARA I.

³⁶ Olsen, 55.

³⁷ Petersburg *Index and Appeal*, 6 July 1877, page 4, column 2; Olsen, 56; H. Y. Smith and W. S. Rann, editors, *History of Rutland County, Vermont with Illustrations & Biographical Sketches of Some of Its prominent Men & Pioneers* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1886), "Sheldon & Sons," 180-191. No background information was found on Bridges.

³⁸ James Gall, Jr., to Assistant Quartermaster Rockwell, 7 June 1877, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

³⁹ "River Items," Petersburg *Daily Post*, 28 June 1877, page 1, column 2.

⁴⁰ "The Poplar Grove Cemetery—A Large Contract Completed." Petersburg *Index and Appeal*, 6 July 1877, page 4, column 2; Olsen, 56.

⁴¹ "Poplar Grove National Cemetery—Interesting Ceremonies Next Monday," Petersburg *Daily Post*, 7 July 1877, page 1, column 3.

⁴² "Poplar Grove Cemeter," Petersburg *Index and Appeal*, 10 July 1877, page 4, column 2.

⁴³ Gall to Rockwell, 7 June 1877.

⁴⁴ August Miller to Quartermaster General, 31 July 1869.

⁴⁵ August Miller to Captain Carline, Fort Monroe, 28 August 1871, Highlights of Superintendent Miller's Letters, POGR database.

⁴⁶ Miller, monthly report for August 1872; "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 7 August 1874.

⁴⁷ Oliver Cox, "Report on Poplar Grove," 31 May 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁴⁸ This border hedge along the edge of the circular drive and walk is documented on the 1892 Quartermaster General plan of Poplar Grove.

⁴⁹ O. A. Mack, "Report of Inspection of the Poplar Grove & City Point National Cemeteries," 14 January 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁵⁰ James Gall to Assistant Quartermaster Rockwell, inspection report, 2 May 1878 and 24 October 1878, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁵¹ James Gall to Assistant Quartermaster Rockwell, 24 October 1878, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁵² Major Eckerson to Montgomery Meigs, 6 June 1876, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁵³ Mack, "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 7 August 1874; Mr. Chenoweth to General Meigs, 2 April 1874 and 19 May 1874; Quartermaster General's Office, National Cemetery inspection forms, 8 January 1889 and 1 March 1909, filled out for Poplar Grove, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57. The 1889 form indicates the flagstaff is forty feet high; the 1909, fifty-six; the 1909 form contains more detailed measurements for other features, and is assumed to be the more accurate figure. No information has been found on the finial of the flagstaff.

⁵⁴ Mack, "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 7 August 1874; James Gall, Inspection Report of Poplar Grove, 24 October 1878, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57. No photographs of the flowerbeds surrounding the flagstaff and gun monuments has been found.

⁵⁵ A. F. Rockwell, Captain and Assistant Quartermaster, bids for "1,100 Park Settees," June 1878, RG 92, Entry 689, Sketches of Iron Railings, Gates, and Headstones, and Proposals and Specifications Related to National Cemeteries," NARA I, box 1; Fred Bell, photograph of Poplar Grove, 1968, showing remaining settees around the central circle, park administration files for Poplar Grove, Petersburg National Battlefield; reference to twenty settees at Poplar Grove, W. Owen, Chief Engineer, Quartermasters Office, "Report upon Natl. Cemetery Poplar Grove VA," 2 May 1888, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57. The same settees are shown in a c.1902 photograph of Cold Harbor National Cemetery, online at www.alexandria.lib.va.us/.../images/011.jpg.

⁵⁶ Office of the Quartermaster General, *Regulations for the Government of National Cemeteries* (1911), 17.

⁵⁷ No photographs have been found of the flowerbeds at Poplar Grove.

⁵⁸ August Miller, unidentified letter, 31 May 1870, Highlights of Superintendent Miller's Letters, POGR database.

⁵⁹ Mack, "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 7 August 1874.

⁶⁰ Mack, "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 14 January 1876.

⁶¹ The boxwood Maltese cross is first documented the 1892 Quartermaster General plan of Poplar Grove, and is shown on the 1931 Quartermaster General "Tree Planting Layout" plan. It was most likely planted after the exterior of the lodge was completed in 1871, the same time that other boxwoods were planted in the cemetery. The fruit trees along the walk near the turn-around were documented in W. H Owen, "Report of Inspection of Poplar Grove," 18 April 1885. Owen reported that some of the fruit trees were "...planted by the soldiers in 1864," but given the alignment of the trees along the c.1872 walk and lack of any earlier documentation, this seems unlikely.

⁶² Miller, "History of Poplar Grove National Cemetery," 24 April 1871.

⁶³ Olsen, 57; Listing of trees and shrubs received from Major Henry G. Hodges, 4 January 1871, Highlights of Superintendent Miller's Letters, POGR database; August Miller, Monthly reports for April 1871 and August 1872, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57. No known plan exists for the 1871 tree planting program.

⁶⁴ Olsen, 57-58; comparison of 1892 Quartermaster and 1937 National Park Service plans of Poplar Grove showing remaining elms and boxwood shrubs along the east-west walk. No plans of the sylvan hall have been found; most of the elms were apparently removed by the time the 1892 plan was drawn.

⁶⁵ "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 7 August 1874.

⁶⁶ Hodges, 4 January 1871, Highlights of Superintendent Miller's Letters, POGR database; 1892 Quartermaster General plan.

⁶⁷ Mack, "Inspection Report for Poplar Grove and City Point National Cemeteries," 14 January 1876.

⁶⁸ James Gall to Assistant Quartermaster Rockwell, inspection report for Poplar Grove, 2 May 1878, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁶⁹ James Gall, Inspection Report for Poplar Grove, 22 May 1881, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁷⁰ James Gall, Inspection Report for Poplar Grove, 16 March 1882, Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57.

⁷¹ Two surviving tablets were examined at Culpeper National Cemetery in Culpeper, Virginia. These tablets have a foundry mark on the back by the Rock Island Arsenal dated 1881. The Rock Island (Illinois) National Cemetery today retains nine tablets (see <http://www.cem.va.gov/pdf/rockilnd.pdf>) and the Grafton (West Virginia) National Cemetery, five (see <http://www.cem.va.gov/cem/pdf/grafon.pdf>). These both contain the General Orders No. 80 and the Act of February 22, 1867; Rock Island has seven tablets and Graft has three tablets, each with a four-line verse of Theodore O'Hara's "Bivouac of the Dead."

⁷² The tablets were documented in a Quartermaster General questionnaire dated March 1, 1909 that was filled out by Superintendent George Hess, and on the 1892 Quartermaster General survey of Poplar Grove National Cemetery (blueprint) annotated in 1909 with red ink, located in Poplar Grove Records, NARA I, box 57. The Bivouac of the Dead has a total of twenty-four four-line verses; it is not known which verses were used on the Poplar Grove tablets. The Bivouac of the Dead tablets remain today at Gettysburg National Cemetery.

⁷³ 1892-93 quartermaster book of plans [need ref] The plans did not document the location of smaller features such as flowerbeds, tablets, and settees. Although well detailed, this plan may lack accuracy. For example, the main gate is shown having two sets of piers instead of four.

⁷⁴ Dr. Steven E. Anders, "With All Due Honors: A History of the Quartermaster Graves Registration Mission," *Quartermaster Professional Bulletin* (September 1988), transcript, Petersburg National Battlefield; Correspondence, 1929-1933, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, RG 79, Entry 5, Records of the War Department Relating to National Parks, 1892-1937, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland [hereafter, "Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II"], box 51.

⁷⁵ Poplar Grove burial register, Microsoft Access version by Betsy Dinger-Glisan.

⁷⁶ Olsen, 62.

⁷⁷ W. Owen, Quartermaster General's Office, "Report Upon Natl. Cemetery Poplar Grove VA," 2 May 1888. Owned reported: "There is considerable driving in this Cemetery & ruts are worn in the main drive from gate to flagstaff..."

⁷⁸ David Merchant, "Memorial Day" website, "History" page, <http://www.usmemorialday.org/>, accessed 1 August 2006.

⁷⁹ Department of Veterans Affairs, webpages for individual national cemeteries, <http://www.cem.va.gov/CEM/cems>.

⁸⁰ Olsen, 87; Lieutenant Colonel O. A. Mack, Report of Inspection of the Poplar Grove & City Point National Cemeteries," 14 January 1876, RG 92, Entry 576, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, National Archives I, Washington, D.C. [hereafter, "Poplar Grove Records, NARA I"], box 57.

⁸¹ Sammartino, National Register documentation, Section E, pages 10-11.

⁸² Olsen, 62. No information has been found on the manufacturer or builder of the rostrum. The rostrum at Yorktown no longer stands, and only the base of the one at Richmond National Cemetery remains today.

⁸³ Office of the Quartermaster General, *Regulations for the Government of National Cemeteries* (1911), 4.

⁸⁴ Owen, inspection report, 18 April 1885.

⁸⁵ Owen, inspection report, 2 May 1888.

⁸⁶ The 1892 Quartermaster plan of Poplar Grove, together with the 1931 Quartermaster and 1937 NPS planting plans show scattered American elms along the east-west walk. No additional documentation was found on the reason for the removal of the American elms. While the 1892 plan does not indicate tree species, it does not show the presence of an allee in the shape of a cross.

⁸⁷ Owen, inspection reports, 18 April 1885 and 2 May 1888.

⁸⁸ Owen, inspection reports, 18 April 1885 and 2 May 1888.

⁸⁹ Major P. W. West, "Report of an Inspection of the National Cemetery Poplar Grove, Va.," 21 June 1901, Records of the Inspector General, NARA I, no box # (1901 inspection reports); Major W. T. Wood, "Report of an Inspection of the National Cemetery Poplar Grove, Va.," 6 May 1904, Records of the Inspector General, NARA I, box 77; Superintendent George Hess, completion of inspection form prepared by E. H. Humphrey, Captain and Quartermaster, 1 March 1909, Records of the Inspector General, NARA I, box 576.

⁹⁰ Lieutenant Colonel W. C. Brown, Poplar Grove inspection report, 11 December 1912, Records of the Inspector General, NARA I, box 155; Set of Poplar Grove building record sheets (plans), 1923, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

⁹¹ Poplar Grove building records, 1923; Brown, inspection report, 11 December 1912; 1892 Quartermaster plan of Poplar Grove, annotated to 1909; Superintendent Hess, Quartermaster questionnaire form, 1 March 1909. The cave is shown as an annotation on the original plan.

⁹² Owen, "Report upon Natl Cemetery Poplar Grove VA," 2 May 1888.

⁹³ Olsen, 63; RG 92, J. McClintock, Major, Quartermaster Corps, Inspection of Poplar Grove and Richmond National Cemeteries, 16 July 1928, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

⁹⁴ Office of the Quartermaster General, *Regulations for the Government of National Cemeteries* (1911), 17; McClintock, Inspection of Poplar Grove and Richmond National Cemeteries, 1928. McClintock called for the removal of the flagstaff mound at Richmond, but did not mention a mound at Poplar Grove, suggesting it may no longer have existed.

⁹⁵ Date of tornado cited in Charles E. Shevline, National Park Service Forester to Chief Forester, Office of National Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, 13 February 1934, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 2704; James Bodley, Superintendent Poplar Grove to Depot Quartermaster, 25 August 1915, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

⁹⁶ Unattributed memorandum to Depot Quartermaster, 21 August 1916, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773. The Murray marker was a tall slab stone with the inscription: "Green be the turf above thee/Friend of my early days/None knew thee but to love thee/None named these but to praise."

⁹⁷ Major Allen Kimberly, Poplar Grove inspection report, Records of the Inspector General, NARA II, box 294.

⁹⁸ Camp Lee was decommissioned in 1920 and turned over to the Commonwealth of Virginia as a wildlife preserve. "This Week in Quartermaster History, 25 November-1 December," online article at www.qmmuseum.lee.arm.mil/historyweek/Nov25-1Dec.htm, accessed 9 February 2006.

⁹⁹ Lee A. Wallace, "A History of Petersburg National Battlefield to 1956" (Unpublished report, National Park Service, 1957), 66-67, 76, 85.

¹⁰⁰ Major Robert Goetz, Inspector General's Office, Survey of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, 18 May 1928, RG 92, Entry 1891, Office of the Quartermaster General, Correspondence, Geographic File, 1922-1935, [hereafter, "Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935"], NARA II, box 1773.

¹⁰¹ Poplar Grove Burial register, Access table.

¹⁰² Poplar Grove Quarterly Report for the period ending June 30, 1929, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50. Visitation was apparently noted inconsistently on the quarterly report forms (beginning in 1920s).

¹⁰³ Memorandum, Colonel J. T. Conrad, Adjutant General, Quartermaster General's Office, 27 April 1931, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

¹⁰⁴ Office of the Quartermaster General, "Report of Repairs Required at Poplar Grove National Cemetery" (unattributed report), February 1925, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

¹⁰⁵ H. L. Ward to Quartermaster General, 27 April 1927, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

¹⁰⁶ H. L. Ward, Quartermaster Corps, to Quartermaster General, 28 May 1928, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

¹⁰⁷ Quarterly Report for Poplar Grove National Cemetery, period ending June 30, 1931, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

¹⁰⁸ Poplar Grove building records, 1923 updated to 1933; Gwynne Conrad, Quartermaster Corps, to Quartermaster General, 3 October 1929, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

¹⁰⁹ A. B. Kaempfer, Corps Area Inspector General, to Commanding General, 28 October 1931, referencing inspection of Poplar Grove made on 1 September 1931, Records of the Inspector General, NARA II, box 1773. Any portions of the flagstaff mound that may have remained following its reduction in 1913 were removed and the circle around the flagstaff was made level.

¹¹⁰ John T. Harris, Quartermaster Corps Assistant, to Quartermaster General, 14 May 1931; Headquarters Third Corps Area, "Specifications for Materials and Labor for Planting Trees at Poplar Grove National Cemetery, April 3, 1931;" miscellaneous notes and contracts in bound letters, "Poplar Grove Care of Trees, Etc.," Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

¹¹¹ Robert Goetz, Survey of Poplar Grove National Cemetery, 18 May 1928, Memorandum from Quartermaster Office, 17 September 1928, and Gwynne Conrad, Quartermaster Corps, to Quartermaster Supply Officer, 7 September 1928, Records of the Inspector General, NARA II, box 1773.

¹¹² Certification of Vernon J. Cowing by W. H. Shaw, Civil Engineer, Headquarters Third Corps Area, 9 July 1931, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 51, binder "Walks, Roads, Etc;" "Specifications for the Reconstruction of the Drives in Poplar Grove National Cemetery," 10 April 1931, Quartermaster Correspondence 1922-1935, NARA II, box 1773.

¹¹³ E. J. Heller, Captain, Quartermaster Corps, to Commanding General Third Corps Area, 6 November 1931, Inspector General Records, NARA II, box 1773. No information was found on the size or type of mower.

¹¹⁴ Unattributed report by Inspector General (?) forester, "Poplar Grove (P. O. Petersburg) VA," 25 February 1932, Inspector General Records, NARA II, box 1773.

¹¹⁵ Superintendent Walter Pearce, quarterly report ending March 31, 1932, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

¹¹⁶ Poplar Grove, Quarterly Report for period ending March 31, 1933, Poplar Grove NPS War Department Records, NARA II, box 50.

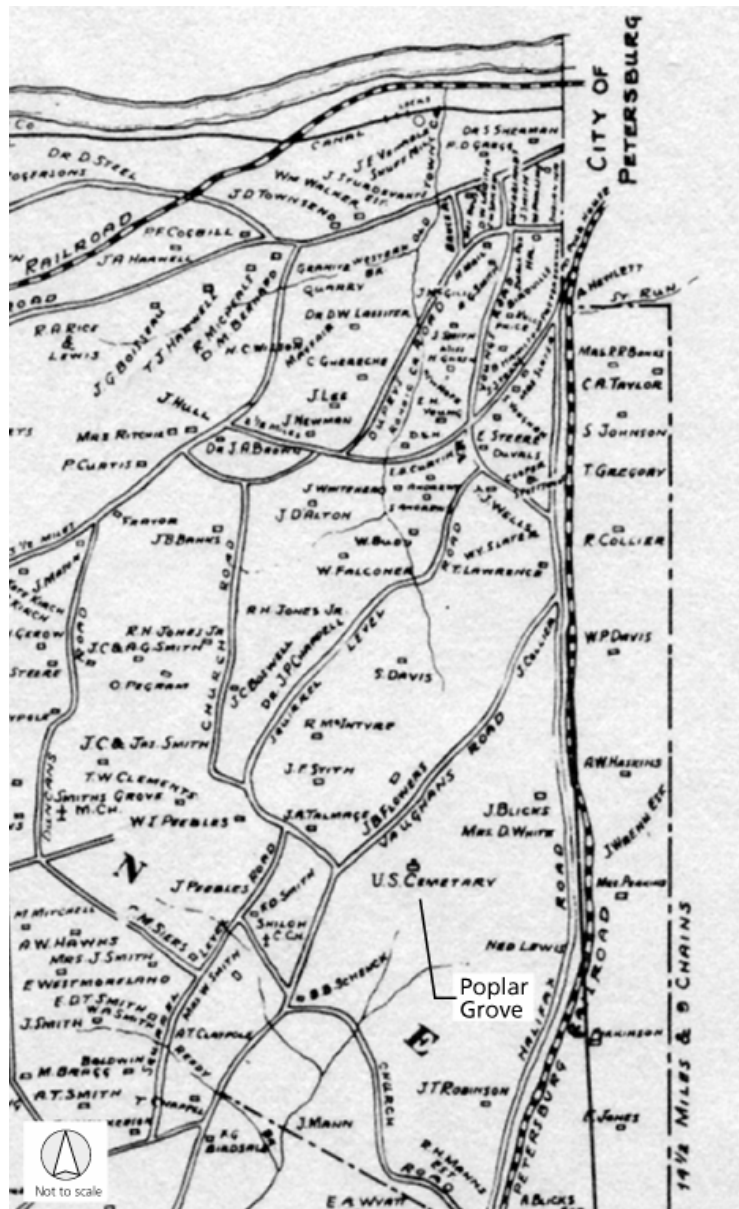


Figure 1.39: Detail, Map of Dinwiddie County (1876) showing relationship of Poplar Grove National Cemetery to Petersburg, roads, and surrounding farms (indicated by names). Map redrawn in Richard L. Jones, *Dinwiddie County: Carrefour of the Commonwealth* (Dinwiddie, Virginia: Dinwiddie County Board of Supervisors, 1976), annotated by SUNY ESF.

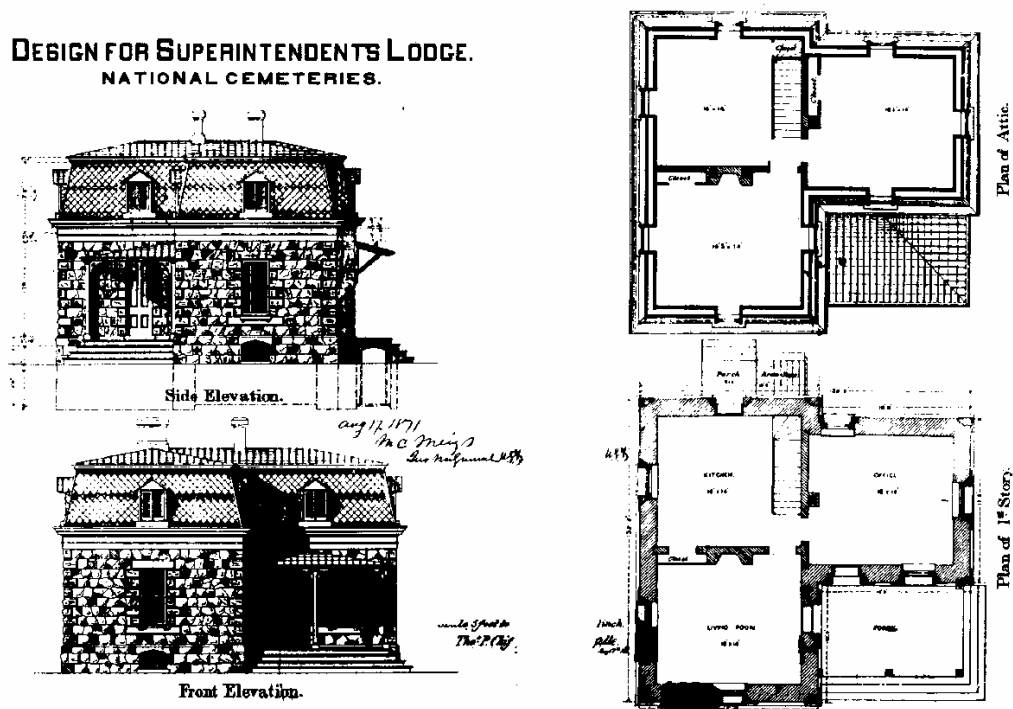


Figure 1.40: Prototype of a national cemetery lodge designed by Quartermaster General Montgomery Meigs, from a version dated August 17, 1871. National Archives, from U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities Management website, <http://www.va.gov/facmgt/historic/Meigs.asp#Lodge%20Design>.



Figure 1.41: The main entrance to City Point National Cemetery, a second-class cemetery (6.7 acres), showing Meigs-type lodge (1871), photographed 1902. Also note enclosing stone wall and iron gates (c.1875), gun (cannon) monuments (c.1869), and iron tablets (plaques) (c.1882). Records of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, Still Pictures Division, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

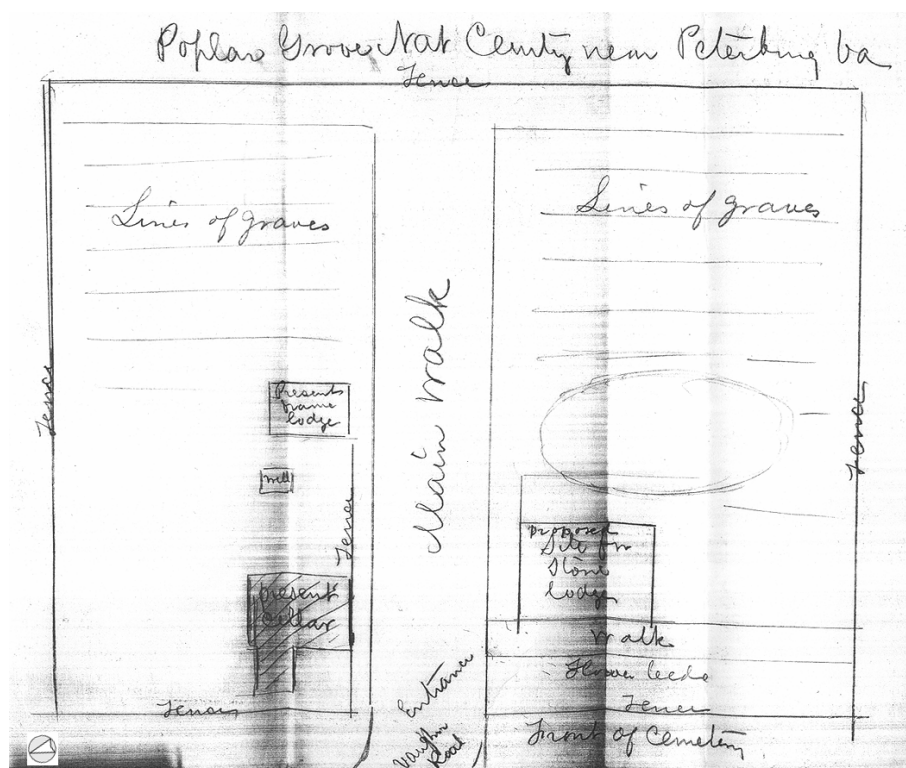


Figure 1.42: Sketch made in August 1871, probably by Quartermaster Agent Stark Frank, for the site of the new stone lodge, showing "present cellar" on opposite side of the entrance drive (main walk) that was begun the year before. Also shown is the "Present frame lodge" above (east of) the cellar hole. The location of the fence and drive at the top of the drawing are not accurate. Records of the Quartermaster General, Entry 576, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, box 57, National Archives, Washington, D. C.



Figure 1.43: The Poplar Grove lodge, built in 1871, view of the front façade looking southeast from an existing photograph [replace with historic photograph?]. The building historically had dark trim and a monochrome slate roof with diamond-shaped slates. The tablet affixed to the building, installed prior to 1933 and a standard feature at Civil War-era national cemeteries, is Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. SUNY ESF.

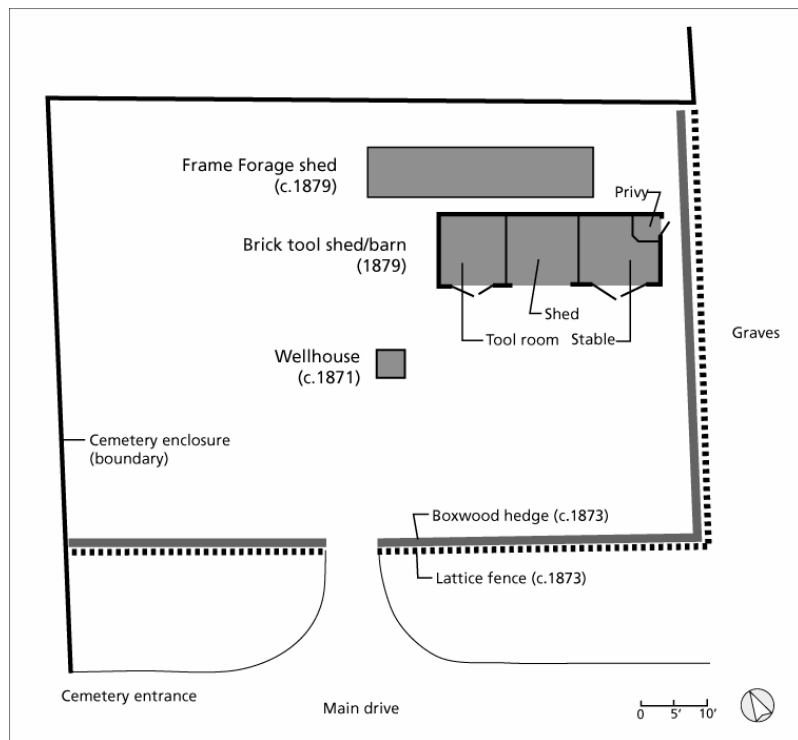


Figure 1.44: Diagram showing the layout of the service area by 1880. The location of the earlier (pre-1879) frame sheds is not known. SUNY ESF.



Figure 1.45: Cold Harbor National Cemetery, a typical third-class cemetery (1.4 acres), photographed 1902. This shows the lodge (1870), brick enclosing wall with single gate (1871), central entrance drive (c.1866), and in the distance, the flagstaff and flagstaff mound (c.1866). Records of the Quartermaster General, RG 92, Still Pictures Division, National Archives II, College Park, Maryland.

**PROPOSALS FOR INCLOSURE WALLS AT
NATIONAL MILITARY CEMETERIES.**
WAR DEPARTMENT,
QUARTERMASTER GENERAL'S OFFICE,
WASHINGTON, D. C., July 18, 1873.
Sealed proposals, in triplicate, with a copy of this advertisement attached to each, will be received at this office until SATURDAY, August 16, at noon, for the following work at the National Military Cemeteries named, viz:
Inclosure walls of brick or stone at Poplar Grove, Petersburg, and Yorktown, Va.
Copies of plans and specifications may be seen at this office, and at the Assistant Quartermaster's office at Fort Monroe, Va.
The work will be inspected by competent engineers, and a strict compliance with the terms of the contract will be required.
Envelopes containing proposals will be indorsed "Proposals for permanent inclosures for National Cemeteries," and addressed to the Quartermaster General.
By order of the Quartermaster General.
A. J. MCGONNIGLE,
Captain and A. Q. M., U. S. A.

Figure 1.46: Quartermaster General advertisement in an unidentified newspaper soliciting bids on the construction of inclosure walls, including the one at Poplar Grove, dated July 16, 1873. Records of the Quartermaster General, Entry 576, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, box 57, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

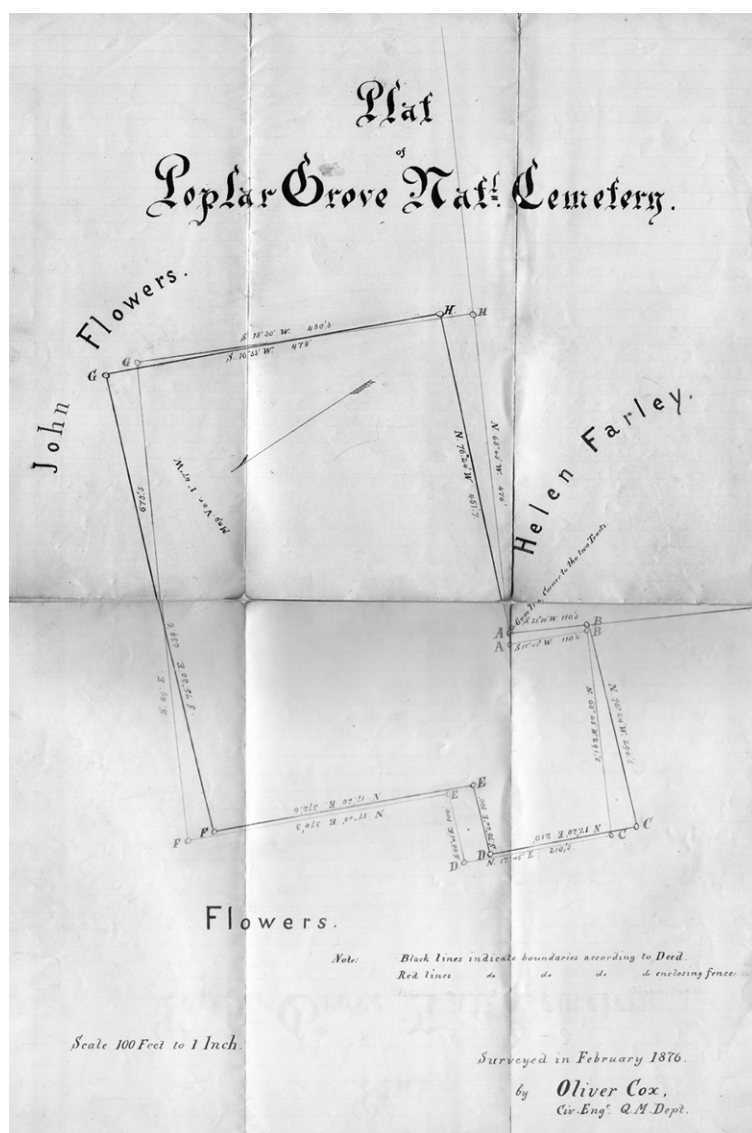


Figure 1.47: Survey of Poplar Grove National Cemetery made in February 1876 showing discrepancy between boundaries plotted in the deed (dark line), and the actual boundary represented by the enclosing fence (lighter line). Records of the Quartermaster General, Entry 576, Poplar Grove National Cemetery Records, box 57, National Archives, Washington, D. C.