

OHIO SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME,
COTTAGE L
(Ohio Veterans' Home, Cottage L)
U. S. Route 250 at DeWitt Avenue
Sandusky
Erie County
Ohio

HABS No. OH-2360-C

HABS
OHIO
22-SAND,
1C-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

OHIO SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME, HABS NO. OH-2360-C
COTTAGE L

~~(Ohio Veterans' Home, Cottage L)~~

Location: U.S. Route 250 at DeWitt Avenue, Sandusky, Erie Co.,
Ohio 44870

USGS Sandusky Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.359420.4586540

Present Owner: State of Ohio, Department of Administrative Services

Present Occupant: Ohio Veterans' Home

Present Use: Residential and nursing/medical facility for Ohio
military veterans

Significance: The Ohio Veterans' Home was established in 1886 as the
Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, the result of
efforts by the Grand Army of the Republic to ensure
state care for sick and destitute Ohio Civil War
veterans. The Home opened in November, 1888 with 17
residents. During its peak years it had over 2,000
residents, and since its opening it has served over
55,000 Ohio veterans from all major U.S. conflicts.
The name was changed to Ohio Veterans' Home in 1979.
Current population is about 550.

The Home is the legacy of Ohio's movement in the 19th
century to establish state-supported institutions to
aid the handicapped, the ill and the destitute.

For an overview of the Home, see HABS No. OH-2360.

Cottage L is one of 16 cottages eventually built at the
Home. The cottages housed residents in dormitory rooms
with a capacity of seven to a room, seven rooms to a
cottage. The Home's eastern portion is dominated by
the cottages, most of which were arranged in a ring
around the dining hall. Cottage L is currently vacant.

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PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection:

Board of trustee meeting minutes are not precise as to which cottages were built at which times. It is known that cottage F was completed for the opening of the Home in November of 1888, and that all the cottages were completed by 1894.

2. Architect:

Construction of the entire Home was under the supervision of Henry C. Lindsay, architect, of Zanesville, Ohio. Landscaping and design of the grounds was by Herman Haerline of Cincinnati.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

The Home has always been owned by the State of Ohio and was created by an act of the state legislature in 1886.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Board minutes do not indicate who built Cottage L. The firm of Douzbach & Decker bid on all cottages and did construct several, but board minutes indicate that A. Feick & Bros. and John H. Murphy also built cottages. There is no way of being sure which firm built which cottages.

5. Original plans and construction:

The Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home resulted from an act of the legislature in 1886 which created a board of trustees empowered to select a site and arrange for construction of the Home. The board was further required to oversee operation of the Home after its completion.

The act resulted from efforts by the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Ohio, to provide care for honorably discharged Ohio Civil War veterans who were disabled or required other assistance in living. The G.A.R., formed by Union Army veterans immediately after the Civil War, became a formidable lobbying force at both the state and the national levels, and it aggressively looked after veterans' interests for many years.

Starting July 1, 1886, the new board reviewed sites in 14 Ohio communities. On July 30, after eight ballots, Sandusky received three of five board member votes and was chosen as the Home's location. 100 acres three miles southeast of the downtown area

were acquired, and the City of Sandusky agreed to lay water, sewer and gas lines and to ensure extension of a street railway to the site.

Seven architects submitted sketches of proposed designs for the Home, and on September 1, 1886 Henry C. Lindsay was selected as architect for the project. On the same day, Herman Haerline was chosen as Landscape Engineer.

Haerline's plans for the grounds were approved by the board on March 1, 1887. On March 17, the board approved Lindsay's designs for the administration building, dining hall, laundry, bath house, boiler house, chapel, hospital, and three styles of residential cottages. There were to be twelve cottages, four in each of the three styles (eventually sixteen were built).

Contracts for the first buildings, some of the cottages, were awarded on April 20, 1888. A cornerstone laying took place on July 20, 1888. The Home opened on November 19, 1888, with 17 residents. The mess hall, boiler house, laundry and cottage F were then complete.

In May of 1889, the board authorized construction of the stable, surgeon's cottage, quartermaster's cottage, and workshops. In September of 1890, Lindsay was instructed to prepare plans for a library and an assembly hall.

All the principal buildings were constructed of local Sandusky blue limestone, quarried on the site. The quarries, in the western portion of the grounds, today are three large duck ponds. Construction continued until 1908, though most of the major buildings were completed by 1894.

6. Alterations and additions:

Cottage L has not had any additions, but it has undergone several alterations. The original slate roof was replaced with asphalt shingles at some time in the past. Also, some time prior to 1961 a central cupola, with a peaked roof and multiple-paned windows on all four sides, was removed. In addition, fire escapes were added in two locations, and the wood front porch was removed and replaced with a porch having a concrete base and floor and a flat roof supported by metal pipe columns. Glass blocks replaced the wooden window in the gabled projection above the porch.

The interior was altered in 1957-58, when a complete rehabilitation was undertaken (the exterior alterations may date from this period as well). This work resulted in new partitions and doorways, complete replacement and enclosing of the stairs, new wiring, and changes to details such as the fireplaces. The

existing linoleum tile flooring may also date from 1957-58.

B. Historical Context:

Ohio was a leader in establishing state institutions for the handicapped and disabled. As early as the 1820s, the state had established a facility for the care and education of the deaf, and other similar institutions followed during the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1870s there were facilities for the deaf, the blind, the mentally retarded and the insane. These were generally headquartered in Columbus, the capital, but branch institutions were established in other parts of Ohio as well.

The Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home was an extension of this government-supported "helping hand" attitude, an attitude strongly urged along, in this case, by the lobbying efforts of the Grand Army of the Republic. The G.A.R., formed by Union Army veterans shortly after the end of the Civil War, disavowed any political ambitions or purpose, but in fact the organization vociferously fought for and protected Union veterans' interests. In such areas as unpaid enlistment bounties, care of deceased veterans' orphans, establishment of memorials, construction of county memorial buildings, and veterans' pensions, the G.A.R. was a potent force throughout the late 19th century and into the 20th. Spurred by a sense of obligation to the former soldiers and sailors who had preserved the Union in the 1860s (something which G.A.R. members were happy to remind people), both the national and state governments responded generously. They established veterans' and orphans' homes, war memorials, and memorial meeting halls, and they appropriated aid for indigent soldiers and their families, provided for burial of deceased veterans, and passed laws giving state employment preference to honorably discharged veterans.

The G.A.R. was organized along military lines, with commanders and quartermasters and the like, and with statewide organizations known as departments. Each state department was composed of various local organizations known as posts, membership in which might range from just a few men in small towns to several thousand in the large cities. Histories of the G.A.R. indicate that recruitment of members and then getting members to attend meetings and support the organization were a continuing source of trouble. However, even in periods of low membership and seemingly little potential political influence, the G.A.R. was able to accomplish a remarkable amount and achieve many of its goals. This was perhaps aided by the fact that many public figures and politicians were G.A.R. men and were thus a ready audience for the appeals of the "old soldiers."

The G.A.R.'s Department of Ohio came into being with the organiza-

tion of the first posts in mid-1866. Records apparently are incomplete as to which was the first post, but organization proceeded rapidly and the first Annual Encampment (meeting) was held in Columbus in January of 1867, with 135 posts reported as having been created. Membership increased rapidly at first, then declined, probably as a result of gradual cooling of war passions as time went on. At the end of 1868, 303 posts were reported in Ohio, but by 1873 there were only 19 posts, with 800 members. This fell to eight posts and 368 members by 1875.

Remarkably, membership increased dramatically in the 1880s. By the end of 1881, 200 posts with 8,647 members were reported, and by late 1884 there were nearly 28,000 Ohio members of the G.A.R. This rapid increase matched what was occurring in the organization nationally. Membership hovered between 27,000 and 30,000 nationally until the late 1870s, then shot up to 365,000 by 1887. This appears to have been due to the aging of the Civil War veteran population and the realization that G.A.R. membership could enhance one's social and economic situation late in life.

The Department of Ohio could claim a number of accomplishments, even during its lean years of low membership. Those who were members in the late 1860s and early 1870s appear to have been energetic and astute politically. Their greatest accomplishment of the period was establishment of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Orphans' Home at Xenia, Ohio in the early 1870s. Other lobbying efforts directed at the Ohio legislature during the 1870s resulted in relief from taxation for real estate used by G.A.R. posts; provision of state support for indigent soldiers and sailors and their families; state payment of burial costs for veterans; construction of numerous war memorials and memorial meeting halls; and preference in state employment.

The Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Sandusky was a direct result of G.A.R. lobbying. At Ohio's 1886 Annual Encampment, Department Commander R.B. Brown reported that as a result of visits during the preceding year to posts throughout the state, he had acquired the "unspeakably painful intelligence that many old Soldiers had been compelled to accept homes in the County Infirmaryes." The total was 382 soldiers.

Brown found this unacceptable, feeling that Ohio's Civil War veterans deserved better and indeed were entitled to some reward by the state for their loyal service. To him the answer was a state soldiers' and sailors' home.

Brown's fellow G.A.R. member, Ohio Governor Foraker, assisted in calling a large meeting of G.A.R. members in mid-February, 1886, and by early March a bill had been introduced in the General Assembly. All G.A.R. posts were provided with a copy and were

urged to write in support, which occurred and which resulted in passage of a \$50,000 appropriation by late April. Later bills provided additional funding.

The Home was intended as a residential facility where veterans could live out their lives for free, but it also had hospital and nursing-care facilities for those needing such care. The breathtaking speed with which the idea of a state home was conceived and made into law was equaled by the rapidity with which the Home itself was built. It took only a little more than two years from the appointment of the first board of trustees in 1886 to the opening of the first buildings in Sandusky in November of 1888.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character:

Cottage L is built of local Sandusky blue limestone, as are all the major buildings at the Home. Like the other buildings, its walls are of blue limestone and trim elements are of red sandstone.

The Home's buildings generally are constructed in a simple Romanesque Revival style, the hallmarks of which are the extensive use of masonry; a generally massive, heavy feeling; use of round-arched window and door openings (though not exclusively); and a relatively small window-to-wall ratio in comparison with other styles.

Cottage L fits right into this overall character. It has substantial stone walls trimmed with wide red sandstone sill band, beltcourses, window lintels and arches, copings, friezes and decorative panels. It differs from most other buildings because it has rectangular rather than round-arched window openings, except in the gables.

Like many buildings at the Home, Cottage L has had relatively few alterations to its walls below the eaves, but the roof area has been altered a good deal. The original slate roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles, and a central cupola and one of two original chimneys have been removed.

These alterations, in addition to others, have affected the building's character, but it still has a substantial level of integrity.

2. Condition of fabric:

The building is in good condition. It has not been used in some time, but it has not been allowed to deteriorate significantly. It shows signs of wear and use, but no major deterioration has occurred.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:

Cottage L is in a cross shape. Four 20-by-25-foot arms project from a central block. North-south and east-west dimensions each are about 70 feet.

2. Foundations:

The building is set on a stone foundation, the foundation material being the same as that in the walls. The bedrock in this area is just a few inches below the surface of the ground, so foundations are not very deep.

3. Walls:

The building is of bearing-wall construction, the material being the local Sandusky blue limestone quarried on the site. The stone is coursed ashlar, with sills, beltcourses, lintels, frieze and other decorative elements of red sandstone.

4. Structural system, framing:

The building has a wooden structural system supporting the interior and the roof. None of this structure is exposed, and some of it -- such as in the stairwell -- has been replaced by new steel structure.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:

The building has a porch on the front (northwest) elevation. It is not original, but consists of a concrete base and floor with a pipe-supported flat roof and metal pipe handrails. There is a small flat canopy roof, apparently built at the same time as the front porch, on the southwest elevation at an exit door.

6. Chimneys:

The building has one stone chimney, which appears to be original. It rises from the fireplace in the first floor dayroom, which is in the north block of the building.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

The building has two doorways, the main one on the northwest elevation and a secondary one on the southwest elevation. The main doorway has double doors, the secondary a single door. All doors, which are metal and have windows in their upper halves, appear to date from the 1957-58 rehabilitation.

Second floor doors have been added for access to the fire escapes.

b. Windows and shutters:

All windows are replacements, possibly dating from the 1957-58 rehabilitation. Original windows were one-over-one double-hung rectangular sash, with no transoms except in the dayroom. The existing windows are two-sash casement windows with fixed transoms. Heavy mullions of wood separate the casements and the transoms. Louvered ventilation windows, which are arched and are very narrow, are in the four main gables. The building has no shutters.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

The roof consists of two long gabled roofs intersecting at their midpoints. A gabled wall dormer fills in the northwest intersection above the main entrance. The roof is covered with black asphalt shingles.

b. Cornice, eaves:

The cornice is of red sandstone and consists of a rock-faced frieze surmounted by carved dentils and an ogee-curved molding. The eaves end at the cornice and are concealed by suspended half-round metal gutters.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers:

The building has none of these features. A central cupola was removed some time prior to 1961, possibly during the 1957-58 rehabilitation.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement:

The building has a partial basement.

b. First floor:

The first floor has three dormitory rooms and a dayroom or television room. The entry doors lead into the central hallway. To the left, the first room is the dayroom, and a dormitory is on the right. Next, a closet and the enclosed stairway force the hallway to turn to the left, then right. Closets and a clerical room are next on the left, then two more dormitories, which are reached by short branch hallways. At the end of the hallway is the common bathroom.

c. Second floor:

The second floor is identical in plan to the first, except that there is a dormitory in place of the dayroom, and there is no clerical room extension on the northeast.

2. Stairways:

There is one stairway in the building, dating from the 1957-58 rehabilitation. It is of steel and concrete construction and is fully enclosed in order to meet fire codes.

3. Flooring:

Flooring throughout is linoleum tile, which appears to date from the 1957-58 rehabilitation.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Walls and ceilings are of plain, smooth plaster with no decorative moldings or other trim. They are painted in a variety of light institutional colors such as white, blue and beige.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

The dayroom and dormitories have no doors. They are reached by plainly-finished arched openings. Interior doors, which are found on closets, the clerical room and the bathrooms, are varnished hollow-core wood doors which appear to date from the 1957-58 rehabilitation.

b. Windows:

Window openings are their original sizes. The sash are wood casement-type, vertical in proportion, and single-paned. No

original trim appears to have survived. Glass blocks have replaced the original window in the stairwell.

6. Decorative features and trim:

Almost nothing in the way of decoration remains. The dayroom has an original wood fireplace mantel, which is fairly simple in design and has been painted white.

7. Hardware:

All hardware dates from the 1957-58 rehabilitation or later. It is residential in character and includes door handles and latches, locks, hinges and window latches and locks.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

Heating is by steam, provided by the central powerhouse. It is distributed through baseboard units which probably date from the 1957-58 rehabilitation. There is no air conditioning or ventilating equipment.

b. Lighting:

The building has simple, utilitarian lighting. Both fluorescent tubes and ceiling-mounted incandescent fixtures are in use. Much of the wiring is surface-mounted.

c. Plumbing:

Plumbing is confined to the two bathrooms and consists of contemporary lines and fixtures of recent date.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation:

The 100-acre site of the Ohio Veterans' Home is in a southwest-northeast orientation. The entire site is flat, except for the lakes near the west end, where the water surface is several feet below adjacent ground level.

Cottage L is on the north side of the oval-shaped ring of residential cottages. It looks north over the west end of the parade ground, the large open space occupying the northeast quarter of the Home's site.

Several large trees are near cottage L, and a tree-lined roadway

passes just to the north. Concrete sidewalks connect the building to other cottages and buildings.

2. Historic landscape design:

When the Home opened in 1888, the entire site had very few trees and was quite flat and featureless. Site design appears to have been focused mainly on building placement and roadway location, with a recognition that, in time, trees would grow and fill in some of the open spaces. This has in fact happened, and the site today has numerous large trees.

As originally planned, most of the Home's buildings were concentrated in the eastern half of the site. Thirteen of the cottages formed a ring around the dining hall, and three others were located to the east along an entry road. Utility and support buildings were concentrated along the south edge of the site, and west of the cottages were the library, assembly hall, and nursing and hospital facilities. The lakes formed by quarrying were next to the west, and a cemetery occupied the west end of the site. The entire northern half of the site was always open space. This historic plan remains largely intact today.

3. Outbuildings:

There are no outbuildings associated with cottage L.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

These are not available.

B. Early Views:

Miller, John C. Souvenir Book of Views, Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home (Sandusky, Ohio: Alvord & Peters Co.), n.d.

Spies, August. Spies' Gallery of Photo-Engravings - Soldiers' and Sailors' Home Sandusky, Ohio, (Sandusky, Ohio: Privately published), 1896.

Witteman, A. Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home Near Sandusky, (New York: The Albertype Co.), 1894.

C. Interviews:

None was conducted.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Board of Trustees minutes, Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home,
1886-1911.

Proceedings of 20th, 21st and 22nd Annual Encampments, Department
of Ohio, G.A.R., Ohio Historical Society
archives.

"Ohio's Pride. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Home," Sandusky
Register, November 19, 1888.

State of Ohio real estate inventory, 1961.

"History of Ohio Veterans' Home," unpublished typescript, n.d.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Beath, Robert B. History of the Grand Army of the Republic
(New York: Bryan, Taylor & Co.), 1889.

Dearing, Mary R. Veterans in Politics (Baton Rouge: Louisiana
State University Press), 1952.

Hiss, James E. "Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home," National
Register of Historic Places nomination form,
1974-75.

Miller, John C. Insights to Life at the Ohio Soldiers' and
Sailors' Home (Sandusky, Ohio: Alvord & Peters
Co.), 1917.

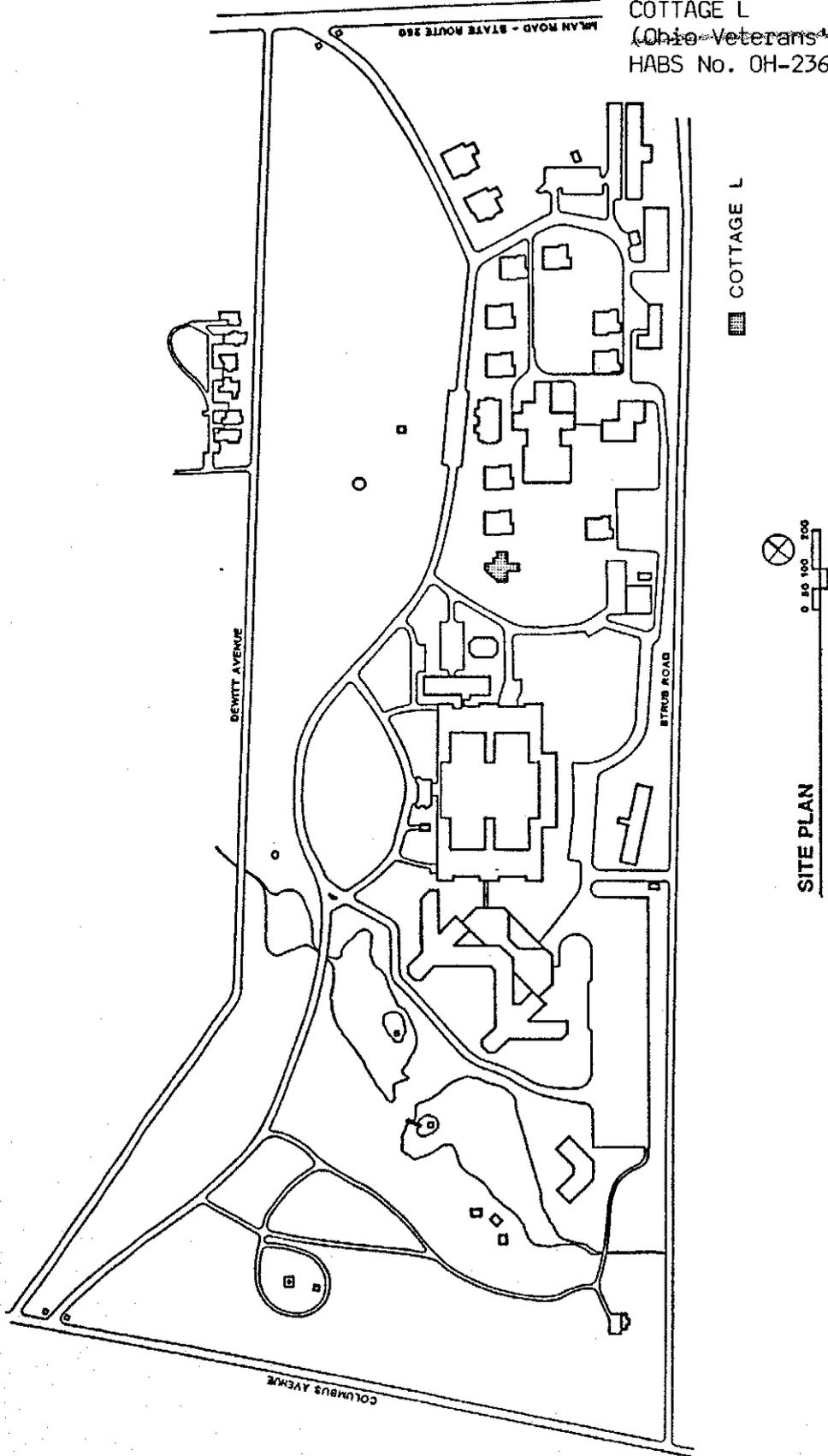
_____ . Souvenir Program of the 50th Anniversary,
Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, 1938.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Cottage L is within the footprint of a new 300-bed domiciliary/nursing
facility to be built at the Home with assistance from the Veterans'
Administration. Because of requirements for location of this facility
in relation to existing nursing facilities and supply and services areas,
and also because of the design requirements of the new facility, cottages
H, L and M must be demolished.

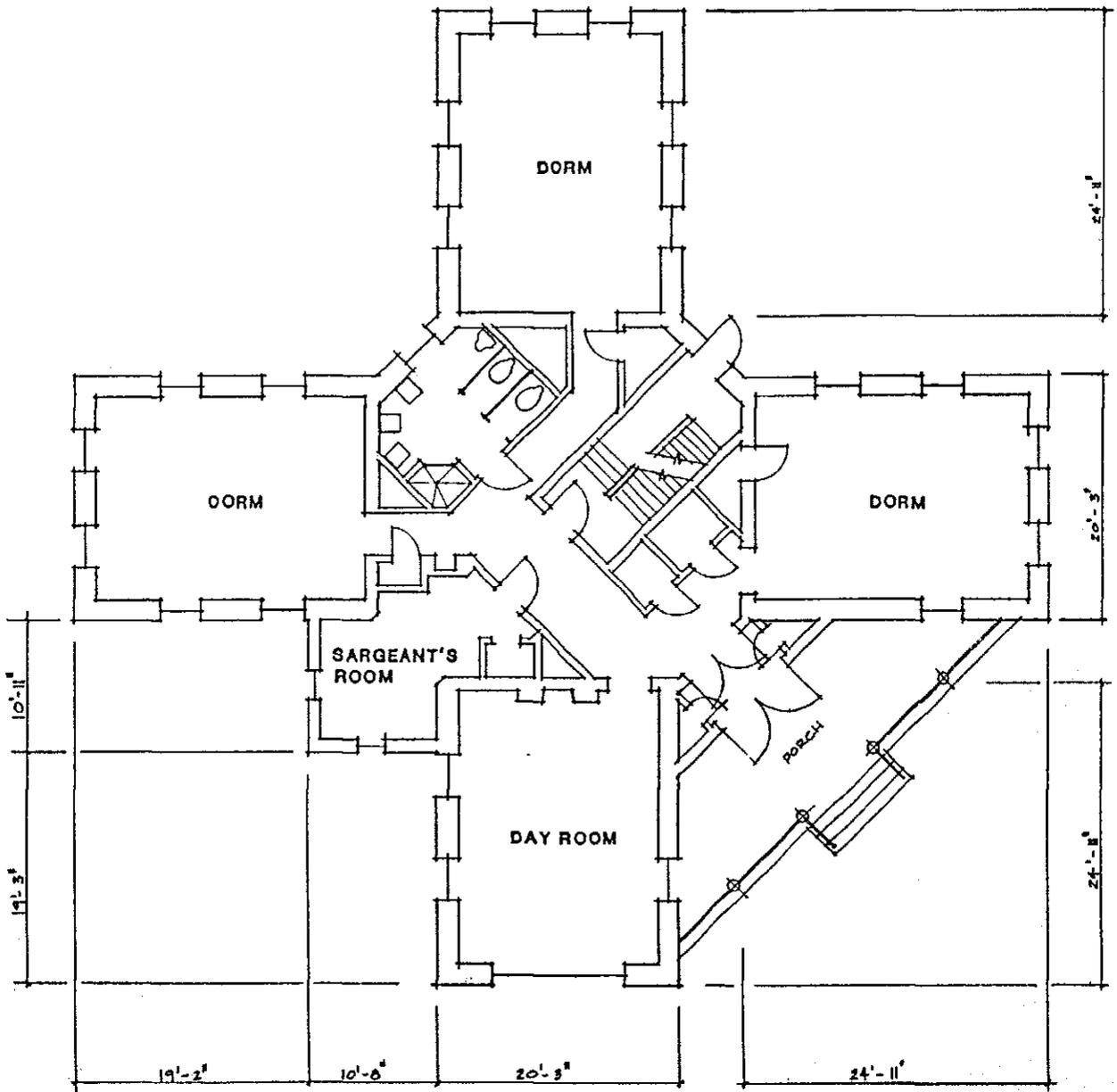
Prepared by: Jeffrey T. Darbee
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Date: November, 1989

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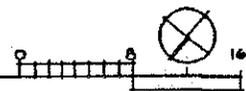


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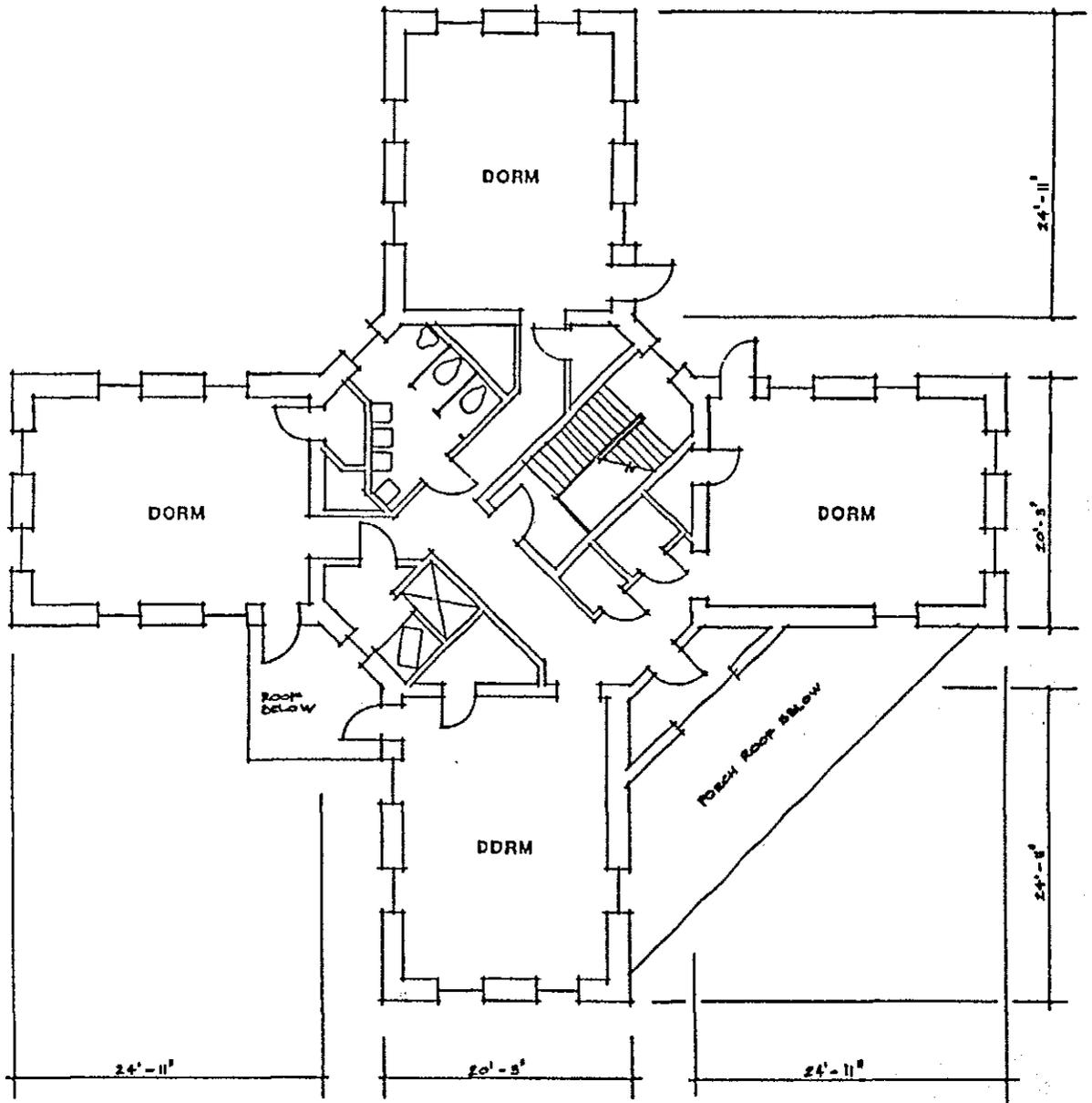
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COTTAGE 'L' FIRST FLOOR



OHIO SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME,
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COTTAGE 'L' SECOND FLOOR

