

Reprinted from *The Craftsman Magazine*, December, 1906

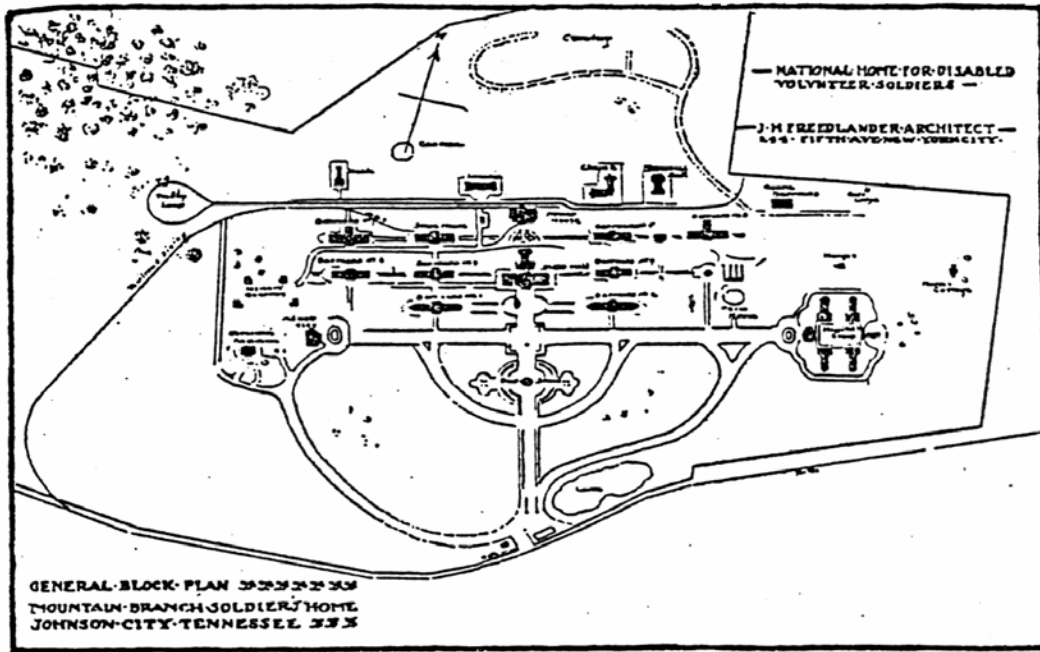
ONE OF THE BEST examples in this country of a group of buildings planned as a whole with special reference to climate, surroundings and the relation of the buildings to each other, to the grounds and to the landscape, is the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers, near Johnson City, Tennessee. True, this is a public institution, established at a cost of over a million dollars to serve a well-defined national purpose and governed as an institution, but the place itself is a well-nigh perfect illustration of a colony planned for co-operative living, and should be rich in suggestion to those who purpose to put into practice the idea that finding such wide expression in the various garden cities and industrial villages here and abroad, as well as in the restricted residence parks where co-operative living is being made the subject of more or less practical experiment.

AS IS WELL KNOWN, this Soldiers' Home is provided for veterans of both North and South, and accommodates about twenty-five hundred. It is a small city in itself, and the notable features of its plan and construction might well be adapted to a colony of individuals who wished to live among beautiful, uncrowded surroundings, and to carry on the business of home life with a minimum of friction and needless expenditure. With barracks, hospital and other buildings of a purely institutional character replaced by dwellings, almost the identical plan might be carried out to excellent advantage in a residential colony, for the increasing difficulties of the servant problem draw us nearer to what seems the only practical

solution – the central kitchen and mess-hall, co-operative storehouse supplied directly at wholesale rates, and the co-operative laundry.

WHEN IT WAS DECIDED TO BUILD A SOLDIERS HOME IN TENNESSEE, a plateau about twenty-three hundred feet above sea level and with an area about a mile and three-quarters in length and three-quarters of a mile in width was selected in the Cumberland Mountains, near Johnson City and about three hours' ride over the mountains from Asheville and Biltmore. The plateau was fallow farmland surrounded by thick forests of pine and maple, with a mountain stream running through a deep ravine across one end. The whole landscape around was broken by peaks, woods and ravines, and the Great Smoky range in the distance formed a background to all. It was a perfect site, entirely secluded from the rush and roar of the world, and yet within easy reach of town and market, especially as the Southern Railroad would skirt the front of the tract and a trolley line the rear.

SOLDIERS' HOME IN TENNESSEE



IT WOULD HAVE BEEN SO DANGEROUSLY EASY to have spoiled even this environment with commonplace, pretentious buildings, badly grouped and having not the slightest relationship to the general contour of the landscape, but the men in charge were wise enough to recognize the element of beauty and fitness as well as utility, and called for plans

treating the entire group of buildings and the surrounding grounds as parts of one homogeneous whole that should in its turn be a part of the landscape. The architect whose plans were chosen was Joseph H. Freedlander of New York, and the work as it stands is a little model city in perfect harmony with its environment and admirably fitted to serve its purpose.

THERE IS A FRONTAGE of a half a mile along the main boulevard, and in the center of this is the main entrance, a great arched gateway that spans a drive forty feet wide, bordered on each side with trees. Branch drives wind throughout the park that occupies all the front part of the tract, and that is dotted with summer-houses and pavilions among the trees and on the borders of the lake, but the main road goes straight across the parade ground, widening to encircle the band stand, and ends at the mess hall, which is the center of the whole group of thirty-six buildings. Nearest to the mess hall are the barracks, grouped in the form of a semi-ellipse, and to the rear are such buildings as the Memorial Hall, where all ceremonies and amusements take place, the double chapel, of which one wing is arranged for Protestant worship and one for Catholic, the Carnegie library, the guard barracks, the power house, store house, laundry, stable and canteen. To the west is the separate group of officers' quarters, with the Administration building and the Governor's residence. These are on slightly higher ground, commanding the whole tract, and each building has its own spacious grounds around it. On the east side is the hospital group, placed there because the prevailing winds of the region are westerly and tend to carry away the germs from the main settlement. The hospital includes six separate buildings, connected by Italian formal garden with a central fountain, that is in charming contrast with the natural park-like arrangement of the grounds. The nurses' cottage is near the group, and the morgue, at a little distance, is connected with the hospital by an underground passage. At the back of the tract is a small cemetery.

ALL THE BUILDINGS ARE MODELED on the style of the French Renaissance, and are admirably adapted to the requirements of the climate and to the contour of the surrounding country. They are built of the native timber, brick and limestone, and are very simply treated, with long, low forms, straight lines, and wide, overhanging roofs. There are plenty of wide verandas and sun-rooms for outdoor life, and provision is made for the greatest possible amount of sunshine and fresh air in all the buildings. The park, with its pleasant walks and inviting little summer-houses, offers a constant temptation to those who are able to spend a large part of their time out of doors, but those who are house-bound have also their share of ozone and sunlight.