

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

SAINT AUGUSTINE NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. FL-3-B

- Location:** 104 Marine Street, Saint Augustine, Saint Johns County, Florida
The Saint Augustine National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 29.886461, longitude -81.309718 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the structure's lectern.
- Present owner:** National Cemetery Administration,
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- Construction date:** 1940
- Builder / Contractor:** uncertain

Description: The rostrum at Saint Augustine comprises a raised speaker's podium with lectern, screened along its rear edge by a high wall. The wall is pierced by a round-headed opening and buttressed at the sides by tall brackets that rise from shorter wing walls flanking each side of the podium. The wing walls terminate in square end posts. The podium is approximately 14' wide x 9' deep x 3' high; including the wing walls, the rostrum is just over 33' wide.

The curving form of the brackets and the shallow, bell-shaped curve at the top of the wall place this otherwise unadorned structure within the vocabulary of the Spanish Revival, popular among architects, builders, and clients in Saint Augustine at the time the rostrum was built. The Spanish Revival feel is enhanced by the choice of building materials. Although the foundations and inner structure of the podium are concrete, the podium facing and the walls are built of blocks of local coquina stone laid in broken courses, while the lectern, the coping blocks that border the podium floor, and the stairs at either end of the rostrum are Florida keystone. The original iron balustrade abuts the lectern and edges the podium and flanking stairs.

Site context: Saint Augustine National Cemetery is rectangular in plan and covers 1.36 acres. A traverse drive separates the northern quarter of the grounds—containing the superintendent's lodge, utility building, rostrum, and flagpole—from the main burial sections. The rostrum is located along the northernmost edge of the cemetery, facing south across a grassy assembly area toward the flagpole, the traverse drive, and the rows of graves and monuments beyond.

History: The post cemetery at the Saint Augustine Military Reservation, dating from the 1820s, was officially established as a national cemetery in 1881 to better ensure its care and upkeep. Originally covering about a half acre, it was expanded to 1.36 acres through land

acquisitions in 1912 and 1913. Originally maintained by the U.S. Army Quartermaster's Department, it was transferred with most other national cemeteries to the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs) in 1973.

The rostrum was constructed to provide a speaker's platform for use during Memorial Day observances and other ceremonial occasions. A notice in the *Atlanta Constitution* states that bids for its construction would be opened in September 1939. It was completed in March 1940 at a cost of \$2,625. Its style harmonizes with that of the cemetery's Spanish Revival lodge built in 1938, which was built by the Peter Kendrick Engineering Company of Saint Augustine. The contractor for the rostrum has not been determined.

Sources:

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Office of the Quartermaster General. Construction Division. *St. Augustine National Cemetery, St. Augustine, Florida, Rostrum, July 6, 1939*. Drawing number 6828-137. National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, D.C.

Records of the Veterans Administration, Department of Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Historical File (Record Group 15/ A-1, Entry 25), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

Records of the Office of the Quartermaster General, General Correspondence and Reports Relating to National and Post Cemeteries (Record Group 92, Entry 576), National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps. *Outline Description of Military Posts and Reservations in the United States and Alaska and of National Cemeteries*. Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1904.

Historian: Michael R. Harrison, 2012

Project Information: The documentation of lodges and rostrums in the national cemeteries was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), one of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief. The project was sponsored by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Sara Amy Leach, Senior Historian. Project planning was coordinated by Catherine Lavoie, Chief of HABS. Historical research was undertaken by HABS Historians Michael R. Harrison and Virginia B. Price. NCA Historian Jennifer M. Perunko provided research and editorial support. Field work for selected sites was carried

out and measured drawings produced by HABS Architects Paul Davidson, Ryan Pierce, and Mark Schara.