

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

ALEXANDRIA NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. LA-4-B

Location: 209 East Shamrock Street, Pineville, Rapides Parish, Louisiana

The Alexandria National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 31.322206, longitude -92.432181 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the structure's approximate center.

Present owner: National Cemetery Administration,
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Construction date: 1931

Builder / Contractor: unknown

Description: The Alexandria rostrum is an octagonal, 15'-4"-diameter x 1'-thick concrete platform raised about 2' above the ground on eight concrete corner piers. The base is surrounded by an iron-picket railing supported by eight iron-pipe corner posts. The rostrum rests on concrete foundations and has a concrete staircase on one side leading from the ground onto the platform.

The corner posts are the remnants of tall pipe columns that once supported a lightweight steel eight-sided pyramidal roof. The roof was covered in standing-seam sheet-metal roofing, and there was a spike finial or lightning rod at the apex. A metal grill of similar construction to the platform railing formed a decorative screen below the eaves.

Site context: The rectangular cemetery encompasses just over 8 acres that are bisected by an axial drive leading from the entrance gates to a circle around the cemetery's flagstaff. The rostrum stands about 65' southeast of the flagstaff.

History: The national cemetery at Pineville, Louisiana, was named for the river-port city of Alexandria, located nearby across Red River. The U.S. Army Quartermaster's Department established it in 1867 to consolidate Union war dead from sites in Louisiana and Texas after the Civil War.

The rostrum at the cemetery was intended to provide a speaker's stand for Memorial Day observances. It was completed June 3, 1931, at a cost of \$883. Nearly identical rostrums were built the same year in the national cemeteries at Natchez, Mississippi;

Port Hudson, Louisiana; Raleigh, North Carolina; Chalmette, Louisiana; and Greeneville, Tennessee (Andrew Johnson National Cemetery).

The rostrum's roof was removed in January 1955, presumably to reduce maintenance on the structure.

Alexandria National Cemetery was transferred from the jurisdiction of the U.S. Army Memorial Affairs Agency to the Veterans Administration (now the Department of Veterans Affairs) in 1973. It was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 as part of the Civil War Era National Cemeteries Multiple Property Submission.

Sources:

Holt, Dean W. *American Military Cemeteries*. 2nd ed. Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland & Co., Inc., 2010.

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.

Sammartino, Therese T. National Register of Historic Places nomination for "Alexandria National Cemetery." Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1997.

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 the lodges and rostrums in the national cemeteries was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), one of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief. The project was sponsored by the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) of the U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Sara Amy Leach, Senior Historian. Project planning was coordinated by Catherine 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.