

**HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY**  
**BATON ROUGE NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM**

**HALS No. LA-5-B**

**Location:** 220 North 19th Street, Baton Rouge, East Baton Rouge Parish,  
Louisiana

The Baton Rouge National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 30.449339, longitude -91.167439 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the approximate center of the rostrum.

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

**Construction date:** 1896 or 1897

**Builder / Contractor:** unknown

**Description:** The rostrum is an octagonal, open-air platform about 4'-6" high x 16' across surmounted by eight octagonal cast-iron posts and a wrought-iron railing. The rostrum base is articulated by eight shallow pilasters that wrap each corner, plus inset panels on the flat wall surfaces between the pilasters. The vertical surfaces of the base are rendered with concrete. It is unclear if the structure underneath the render is brick or concrete. The rostrum has a concrete floor.

Eight cast-iron steps lead from the ground onto the rostrum floor. They have pierced lattice treads and risers, the pattern of the risers being modeled to look like rope netting. The bottom step is encased in a concrete pad that has been poured at ground level. The platform corner posts are the surviving lower portions of tall cast-iron posts that once supported a tent-form roof, which was decorated by an iron open-fretwork decorative frieze and scrollwork spandrels. The roof was removed sometime after 1953 and the posts cut down to their current height. The surviving post fragments are capped with concrete.

**Site context:** Baton Rouge National Cemetery covers 7.5 acres and is laid out as a simple rectangle. A single drive bisects it from east to west. The rostrum is located near the middle of the cemetery just south of the drive. The stairs of the rostrum face west.

**History:** The military cemetery at Baton Rouge was created to bury soldiers who died in battle during the Civil War or who died of wounds or illness while serving in the Union army. It was officially designated as a national cemetery in 1867 and used to consolidate the graves of Union soldiers buried in the vicinity of Baton Rouge. The rostrum, a speaker's stand for use during Decoration Day ceremonies, was built in 1896 or 1897. It was one of four nearly identical rostrums built under contract for the U.S. Army

Quartermaster's Department in the fiscal year that ended June 30, 1897. The others were built in the national cemeteries at Camp Butler, Illinois; Poplar Grove, Virginia; and Salisbury, North Carolina. These four rostrums were built to a standard design the Quartermaster's Department had been using since 1886; they were the last examples of the type built, with the exception of one rostrum built to the design in 1905. The contractor for the Baton Rouge rostrum has not been determined, and the precise dates of its construction and its cost are also unknown.

Baton Rouge 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 added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1997 as part of the Civil War Era National Cemeteries Multiple Property Submission.

**Sources:**

Call, Lewis W. *United States Military Reservations, National Cemeteries, and Military Parks. Title, Jurisdiction, etc.* Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1907.

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 "Baton Rouge 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 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.