

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

JEFFERSON CITY NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. MO-3-B

Location: 1024 East McCarty Street, Jefferson City, Cole County, Missouri

The Jefferson City National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 38.565986, longitude -92.162279 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the structure's northwest corner.

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

Construction date: 1942

Builder / Contractor: unknown

Description: The rostrum at Jefferson City is an open-air pavilion designed in a monumental neoclassical style. Six Tuscan Doric columns and two pilasters ranged along the front and sides of a raised podium support an entablature with overhanging cornice and a parapet that screens a flat roof. The rear of the podium is screened by a full-height wall pierced by three round-headed arches. Staircases lead onto the podium at each side of the rostrum. These stairs are flanked at the rear by low wing walls that extend beyond the sides of the rostrum to form portions of the cemetery's boundary wall. Pairs of gate posts to either side of the rostrum provide access through the wall, although the original double iron gates have been removed to storage.

The reinforced-concrete structure of the rostrum sits on reinforced-concrete foundations. Its vertical surfaces are faced in roughly coursed rock-faced, buff-colored stone blocks. Matching blocks make up the rear wall of the rostrum and the staircase spandrels. The impost blocks, voussoirs, and keystones of the arches, as well as the stair steps, floor coping, columns, pilasters, entablature, and parapet, are constructed of smooth finished stone. The floor is concrete. The roof structure is wood protected by built-up roofing. The stucco ceiling has wood cornices. A centered projection along the front of the rostrum supports a smooth-finished stone lectern. An iron railing lines the perimeter of the rostrum floor and along the staircases.

The rostrum measures 23'-7" wide (47'-7" including the flanking wing walls) x 14'-5" deep x about 19' high.

Site context: Jefferson City National Cemetery is a small 2-acre rectangle of ground bisected

by an axial drive. The drive connects the main entrance gate on the northeastern side of the cemetery to the rostrum, which is located at the center of the southwestern, or rear, wall.

History: The military cemetery at Jefferson City was created in 1861 as a burial ground for Union soldiers killed during the Civil War. It was formally designated as a national cemetery by the U.S. Army Quartermaster's Department in 1867. Although it was developed with a superintendent's lodge and service outbuildings at an early date, it was not among the more prominent national cemeteries provided with a permanent rostrum, or a speaker's stand, for use during Decoration Day (later Memorial Day) ceremonies.

Only in the late 1930s, when the Office of the Quartermaster General had access to supplemental funding provided through the public works programs of the New Deal, was a rostrum designed for this cemetery. The rostrum, designed by the Quartermaster Corps's construction division in 1939, was conceived to form part of a new entrance sequence through the rear or southwestern wall of the cemetery. Construction of the rostrum was completed in June 1942, and the new semicircular drive around it followed the next year. The builder and the cost of the rostrum have not been determined.

Jefferson City 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 1998 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.

Office of the Quartermaster General. Construction Division. Rostrum at Jefferson City National Cemetery, July 6, 1939. Drawings nos. 6837-112 to -115 [5 sheets]. 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.

Sammartino, Therese T. National Register of Historic Places nomination for "Jefferson City National Cemetery." Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1998.

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.