

## HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

### SANTA FE NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. NM-4-B

**Location:** 501 North Guadalupe Street, Santa Fe, Santa Fe County, New Mexico

The Santa Fe National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 35.698328, longitude -105.950237 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the structure's southwest corner.

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

**Construction date:** 1942

**Builder / Contractor:** built with WPA funds

**Description:** The Santa Fe rostrum is a symmetrical, covered pavilion in the Pueblo Revival style, 21'-0" high x 61'-4" wide x 21'-7/5" deep overall. It comprises a raised rectangular platform 4'-6" above grade approached by staircases along its short sides. Thick corner walls rise from this platform to a flat roof with surrounding parapet. The roof is carried on ten *vigas* or log timbers that span the rostrum from front to rear. The projecting tails of the *vigas* form a primary decorative element on the otherwise planer rostrum walls, typical of the Pueblo Revival style. The *vigas* themselves rest on exposed 12" x 14" wood lintels that span the openings on the front and rear sides of the rostrum. The lintels are carried by pairs of log posts and by cantilevered brackets where they meet the side walls.

The rostrum platform is built of reinforced concrete on concrete foundations. It is faced with sandstone and finished with stucco, except for a single projecting course of stone at grade. The corner walls, parapets, and the thick, stepped cheek walls that screen the stairways are built of adobe finished with stucco. The ceiling is formed of stuccoed arches sprung between the *vigas*. The roof is drained by two wood *canales*, or channeled conduits, that pass through the rear parapet. The stair treads and risers are sandstone; the floor is paved with irregular sandstone flags bordered by a coping of rectangular flags. A 3'-high iron railing screens the platform at front and rear. A battered, quarry-faced sandstone lectern occupies a centered projection along the front of the rostrum. It measures 8'-1.5" high overall and about 4' wide x 2' deep. A painted cast-iron plaque displaying the text of the Gettysburg Address is attached to the front of the lectern.

**Site context:** The rostrum is located at one end of a 200' x 65' grass assembly area a few hundred feet south of the cemetery's administration building on land added to the cemetery

in 1894. A drive leading from the vicinity of the superintendent's lodge, which visitors originally used to pass from the old cemetery entrance to the rostrum, provides a vista of the rostrum before dividing to pass to either side of the assembly area. The rostrum faces south-southeast along the line of the drive, toward the cemetery flagstaff which is positioned at the opposite end of the assembly area.

**History:** Santa Fe National Cemetery was created as an army post cemetery in 1868 to consolidate into a single place the remains of Union soldiers killed in the vicinity of Santa Fe during the Civil War. The ground was reclassified as a national cemetery in April 1875, only to be returned to the status of a post cemetery in October 1876 due to a lack of funding for national-cemetery superintendents. It was re-designated a national cemetery in 1892. A superintendent's lodge was built in 1895, but a rostrum or speaker's stand for use on ceremonial occasions—a typical feature at many of the more visited national cemeteries—was not erected until 1934, when funding became available under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933. This first rostrum, built along with new cemetery roads, walks, and other improvements using funds made available by the Federal Emergency Administration for Public Works, was a simple eight-sided concrete platform about 3' high x 15' across shaded by a metal roof. It was nearly identical to the rostrum built at Lebanon National Cemetery in Kentucky in 1932 and similar to those built at Alexandria, Louisiana; Chalmette, Louisiana; Port Hudson, Louisiana; Natchez, Mississippi; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Greeneville, Tennessee, in 1931. It was erected southwest of the superintendent's lodge in what is now Section S at a cost of \$1,373. It was demolished in August 1945.

A more substantial rostrum in a Southwestern Pueblo style was designed for the cemetery in 1939. Funding became available in 1942 through the Work Projects Administration to make a variety of improvements in the cemetery, and some of this funding, along with supplemental money from the U.S. Army Quartermaster Corps's cemeterial funds, was used to construct the rostrum. The cemetery flagstaff was moved from near the lodge to a spot in front of the new rostrum at the same time. The final cost of the rostrum is not known. It was completed in mid 1942.

The Gettysburg Address plaque, a standard feature of the national cemeteries, was removed from the front of the superintendent's lodge when that building's porch was rebuilt in 1942; it was reinstalled on the rostrum lectern in September 1945. The stucco finish on the rostrum was repaired in 1948 and 1949, and new roofing was installed in 1959. Some or all of the vigas were replaced in 1965, and three of the four upright wood posts were replaced in 1966.

The cemetery, originally covering just 0.39 of an acre in 1868, has been expanded over time to its current size of 78.6 acres. It 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.

**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. Santa Fe National Cemetery, Santa Fe, New Mexico, Rostrum, July 6, 1939. Drawings nos. 6800-111, -112, and -113. 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.