

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

FLORENCE NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. SC-2-B

Location: 803 East National Cemetery Road, Florence, Florence County, South Carolina

The Florence National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 34.185089, longitude -79.754350 (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: 1938

Builder / Contractor: unknown

Description: The rostrum is a 15' wide x 11'-4" deep rectangular pavilion comprising a 30"-high raised red-brick podium with a concrete floor and four brick corner piers supporting pre-cast concrete lintels and a hipped roof.

Four pre-cast concrete steps supported by brick spandrels lead onto the podium from the rear of the rostrum. A concrete lectern stands in the center front of the podium. The foundations, pier bases, and pier capstones are also concrete. The rostrum has standing-seam metal roofing over a wood roof structure.

An iron railing supported by thin iron balusters surrounds the podium and stairs.

Site context: The rostrum is sited near the north (or rear) wall of the original portion of the cemetery, about 420' northwest of the entrance gates. It faces south.

History: The cemetery at Florence was one of two created in 1864 to receive burials from a nearby Confederate prisoner-of-war camp. In 1865, the larger of the two sites was formally established as a national cemetery and the remains from the smaller site were moved to it. Originally covering 3.76 acres, the cemetery was enlarged through land additions over time to its present size of just under 25 acres.

A temporary speaker's stand was built in the cemetery in May 1889 to accommodate the officials presiding over Decoration Day ceremonies attended by about 4,000 African American citizens of Florence and the surrounding area. No permanent rostrum was erected

on the grounds, however, until the completion of the present structure on November 15, 1938. It was built at a cost of \$2,319.49. Other 1930s national cemetery rostrums were designed by the Construction Division of the Office of the Quartermaster General, and it is likely this one was as well. The name of the builder who received the construction contract has not been determined.

Florence 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.

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 "Florence 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.