

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

LEAVENWORTH NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. KS-2-A

Location: 150 Muncie Road, Leavenworth, Leavenworth County, Kansas
The Leavenworth National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 39.275931, longitude -94.888143 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the southwest corner of the retaining wall that surrounds the rostrum.

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

Construction date: 1936

Designer: W. Talbain

Description: The neoclassical-style rostrum at Leavenworth National Cemetery consists of a raised marble speaker's platform on concrete foundations supporting a trabeated limestone screen. The screen follows the sides and rear of the platform and is composed of four fluted piers at the sides and two fluted Doric columns along the rear. The screen supports a full Doric entablature and a low parapet and provides a backdrop and frame for a centered lectern on the front of the rostrum. The lectern features an inset panel carved with two crossed laurel branches below the inscribed motto "THE GLORY OF THEIR DEEDS LIVES ON." A centered staircase flanked by cheek walls leads onto the rostrum at the rear. Two circular limestone drums, added at the front corners of the rostrum sometime after it was completed, support eighteen flagpole sockets each. The sockets are fitted with metal sleeves and covered by hinged cast-metal lids with five-pointed stars on top. (Many of the lids are missing.) The southeast drum carries the inscription "ERECTED BY / THE GENEROUS BEQUEST / OF JOHN JOY / A.D. 1935."

The south-facing rostrum sits within a level rectangle of ground defined by a low stone retaining wall. The area between the wall and the rostrum is planted with shrubs and small trees. A grass assembly area is located in front of the rostrum. Photographs from the 1970s in the Veterans Administration records for this cemetery at the National Archives show that a flat metal ceiling was installed at architrave level sometime after World War II to shade the platform. It has since been removed.

Site context: The 164-acre cemetery occupies an irregularly shaped, rolling site in the southeast corner of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center grounds. The rostrum is located near the border of Sections 35 and 36, on a hilltop that provides panoramic views of the cemetery and of the 1921 rest house.

History: The cemetery was created in 1886 to provide a burial ground for residents of the Western Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers (now the Eisenhower Medical Center). The Home became part of the Veterans Administration (VA) in 1930.

The elegant rostrum provides a backdrop for speakers at Memorial Day observances and other ceremonial occasions. It was built in 1936 with funds bequeathed by John Joy, a veteran who spent his final days at the Home. Joy's bequest also funded an entrance monument located elsewhere on the hospital grounds. Both the rostrum and the entrance monument were designed by W. Talbain, the chief of the Technical Division of the Veterans Administration in Washington, D.C.

In 1973, most of the existing national cemeteries administered by the U.S. Army were transferred to the care of the Veterans Administration and combined with the VA's own cemeteries to form a new National Cemetery System. At this time, VA cemeteries such as the one at Leavenworth became national cemeteries. The cemetery is now part of the National Cemetery Administration within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The cemetery was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1999 as part of the Western Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. The combined Home and cemetery property were designated a National Historic Landmark in 2011.

Sources:

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

Julin, Suzanne. National Historic Landmarks Program nomination for "Western Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers." Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2008 (designated 2011).

Adams, Virginia H. National Historic Register nomination for "Western Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers." Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1999.

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.

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.