

HISTORIC AMERICAN LANDSCAPES SURVEY

MARIETTA NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM

HALS No. GA-1-B

Location: 500 Washington Avenue, Marietta, Cobb County, Georgia

The Marietta National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 33.951169, longitude -84.541737 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the structure's northeast corner.

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

Construction date: 1940

Contractor: Columbus Marble Works, Columbus, Mississippi

Description: The rostrum at Marietta National Cemetery takes the form of a symmetrical, rectangular-plan open-air pavilion. Designed in a monumental neoclassical style, it comprises a smooth-faced raised podium supporting front and rear quadristyle screens of Tuscan Doric columns set between rusticated end walls. Round-headed arches framed by Tuscan pilasters pierce the end walls to provide portals for access onto the floor from stairs at either end of the rostrum. The end walls and column screens support a plain entablature and a parapet that partly hides a hipped roof. A centered projection on the front of the rostrum supports a lectern, the front of which is decorated by a carved, blind memorial tablet. Three benches line the rear edge of the rostrum floor.

The rostrum measures about 62' wide x 21' deep x 27' high overall and is built of Alabama marble on a reinforced-concrete foundation. The internal structure and floor of the podium are concrete; the cores of the end walls are brick. The roof structure is wood covered in batten-seam metal roofing. The ceiling is wood covered in stucco with wood moldings. Iron railings border the stairs and connect the columns along the perimeter of the podium. The benches and lectern are also carved of Alabama marble.

Site context: A network of serpentine drives subdivides the rolling landscape of the cemetery into a picturesque sequence of ovoid and curving burial sections. The rostrum occupies the cemetery's highest point and commands panoramic views of Marietta and the surrounding countryside. The rostrum faces northwest, providing a view downhill to the cemetery's monumental entrance gate and beyond toward Kennesaw Mountain—the scene of heavy fighting during the Civil War. The rostrum is approached by a straight flagstone

path that passes under an arbor (built with bricks from the previous rostrum) and around the U.S. flagstaff on its way from one of the cemetery's main drives to the rostrum.

History: The national cemetery at Marietta, Georgia, was established in 1866 to provide for the consolidation of Union soldiers' graves in Georgia after the Civil War. The cemetery was maintained and improved by the U.S. Army Quartermaster's Department, which paid \$1,500 to the Stone Mountain Granite and Railway Company in 1882 to construct a rostrum at cemetery's highest point. This rostrum, a rectangular-plan brick structure with a trellis roof, was built to provide a permanent speaker's stand for use during the Decoration Day (later Memorial Day) ceremonies held in the cemetery each year. It was used regularly before being taken down in 1940. Work Projects Administration funding provided for both its demolition and for the reuse of some of its bricks to create twelve piers to support the wisteria arbor that stands in the cemetery today.

The Construction Division of the Office of the Quartermaster General designed a new rostrum for the cemetery in 1938. It was built in 1939-40 by the Columbus Marble Works of Columbus, Mississippi. The Construction Division intended to use granite for the new rostrum, but this was changed to marble in the event. The rostrum was completed in April 1940 at a cost of \$20,846.35, although the three built-in marble benches on the podium were installed two months later. The flagstone walk leading from the rostrum to the flagpole was first laid in May 1947.

Marietta 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.

Columbus Marble Works. Construction drawings for Rostrum at Marietta, Ga., May 19, 1939. 3 sheets. National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, D.C.

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

Office of the Quartermaster General. Construction Division. Marietta National Cemetery, Marietta, Ga., Rostrum, Nov. 1, 1938. Drawing no. 6844-101. 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 "Marietta 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.