LOS ANGELES NATIONAL CEMETERY, ROSTRUM
950 South Sepulveda Boulevard
Los Angeles
Los Angeles County
California

HABS CA-2709-C
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

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Location: 950 South Sepulveda Boulevard, Los Angeles,
Los Angeles County, California

The Los Angeles National Cemetery rostrum is located at latitude 34.062019, longitude -118.454066 (North American Datum of 1983). The coordinate represents the structure's lectern.

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

Construction date: ca. 1940

Builder / Contractor: built with WPA funding

Description: The rostrum at Los Angeles National Cemetery consists of a raised, open-air, elliptical platform with a central speaker's lectern along its stepped front edge; a wall borders its rear edge. The platform is built of concrete paved with red brick. The lectern and rear wall are brick finished with white-painted concrete stucco. The wall is built out along its interior surface to form benches and terminates in substantial end posts at either end of the rostrum. The brick along the exterior of the rear wall is left exposed and features weeping mortar joints. A central opening through the rear wall is framed by tall rectangular piers which are capped by a wood lattice. The rostrum's Mission Revival style harmonizes with other buildings in the cemetery.

Three bronze plaques adorn the front of the rostrum. A cast-iron replica (2009) Gettysburg Address plaque, a design standard to the national cemeteries, is affixed to the front of the lectern. The memorial plaque on the western end post reads,

> Veterans of Foreign Wars / of the United States. / Ladies Auxiliary Department / of California. / Humbly honor the memory / of the brave men and women / of the / United States Armed Forces / Who offered their lives / In the service of our country. / 1946

The plaque on the eastern post reads,

> 1898 1902 / United Spanish War Veterans / In tribute to our / Boys who left their / Homes in defense of / Their country / Presented by the / Department of California / Auxiliary United Spanish / War Veterans / 1949 1950

Site context: The rostrum is located in a grassy precinct at the southern end of Gettysburg Avenue, the cemetery's axial road, where it forks at the U.S. flagpole. It is one of several structures built near the center of the 114.5-acre cemetery, an area containing two cloisters with memorial plaques, a columbarium, and a restroom pavilion. The rostrum faces south, away from the flagpole, but the opening in the rostrum's rear wall is on axis with the flagpole and avenue and provides an entrance to the speaker's platform from the north.

History: The cemetery was created in 1889 to provide a burial space for residents of the Pacific Branch of the National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers. The home became part of the Veterans Administration (VA) in 1930. In 1937, the VA received Work Projects Administration (WPA) funding in the amount of $50,416 to make a variety of landscaping and architectural improvements in the cemetery.[1] This work included the construction of a rostrum—that is, a permanent speaker's stand for us on ceremonial occasions—and two nearby memorial cloisters, all laid out to form a symmetrical composition around the cemetery flagstaff. A first design for the rostrum was completed in February 1937; it imagined a pentagonal open-air platform with a speaker's lectern positioned at one of the corners of the pentagon and low-profile flag-holding urns mounted atop square posts at the other corners. Flower boxes were to be built into the tops of the rostrum's brick walls. This design was superseded in September 1938 by an entirely different, elliptical design in the Mission Revival style.

The rostrum's final cost and its exact dates of construction have not been determined. Construction probably began in late 1938 or in 1939, and the work was completed in 1939 or 1940. A plaque on one of the cloisters, constructed at the same time, bears a completion date of 1940, so this may also be the completion date for the rostrum. The cemetery's combined administration building and chapel, also built in the Mission Revival style with WPA funds and labor, was completed in 1941.

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 Los Angeles became national cemeteries. The cemetery is now part of the National Cemetery Administration within the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Sources:

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[1] WPA project O.P. 565-3-2-2 (California, 1937).

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———. [Combined site plan and elevations for cloisters and rostrum, Veterans Administration Facility, Los Angeles, California], Sept. 12, 1938. Drawing no. W215-56. National Cemetery Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Washington, D.C.

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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.