



the CDSG Newsletter

The Coast Defense Study Group, Inc. — November 1998

1999 CDSG Conference Update

Preparations are well underway for the 1999 meeting which will be held at the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia River around Astoria, OR. The dates of the meeting have been set from Thursday night September 30 to Sunday morning October 3, 1999. The Shilo Inn in Warrenton, OR, is tentatively scheduled for our meeting headquarters located just west of Astoria. Greg Hagge is preparing the handout material. Jack Buckmeir has been instrumental in keeping contact with all the folks involved with the meeting and making sure the lines of communication remain open between the CDSG and the park personnel and volunteer organizations.

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2000 CDSG Conference set

The CDSG Conference for the year 2000 has been set to visit the harbor defenses of Chesapeake Bay. This includes the defenses at Hampton Roads (Forts Monroe and Wool), and the defenses at the entrance to the bay (forts Story and John Custis). Terry McGovern and Dale Floyd have volunteered to be co-chairs for this meeting. They have tentatively set the date for October 2000.

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CDSG Special Tour of Halifax

The CDSG special tour in Halifax, Nova Scotia will occur in August 1999. We will visit all the important sites in the area, provided we get permission, including Louisbourg. All those interested in going, please inform Dale Floyd, 8107 Greeley Blvd., Springfield, VA 22152; Phone: 703-569-9566; Fax: 703-569-2406; E-mail: dfloyd@cais.com, so that he can send you updates on the dates, cost, etc. of the meeting. Also, if you have any suggestions for the trip, please let Dale know now!

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CDSG Press Update

The CDSG Press has reprinted *Permanent Fortifications and Sea-Coast Defense*, the 1862 harbor defense review prepared for the US Congress. The printers have finished the book and the Press will be shipping the presale orders by the end of November.

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The Board of Directors has approved the publication of *American Seacoast Defenses, a Reference Guide* by the CDSG Press. The Press will be placing the order for its first original work with the printer in November and hopefully there will be little trouble in transmitting the author's electronic files for the manuscript to the printers for publication. Most likely the book will be ready to mail by March of 1999.

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St. Babs XVI:

The George-Abbreviated Tour of the Harbor Defenses of Tampa Bay and ?

Mark Berhow

As the old adage goes, "the best laid plans of mice and men," all the work to put together a visit to Key West for St. Babs XVI came to naught. Hurricane George hit Key West with pretty much its full fury just a week before our scheduled visit. Hundred-mile-an-hour winds and lots of water pounded the island, leaving it in many places with out electricity or water. The clean-up on the island had only begun as our intrepid conference participants headed to Tampa on September 30th for the first half of the scheduled itinerary. We found that all commercial flights to Key West had been cancelled. They were only allowing residents and emergency workers into the area. The hotel we were to stay at had electricity but no water. Both Fort Taylor State Park and Fort Jefferson National Monument were closed to visitors indefinitely. Actually, there was little option but to cancel the Key West part of the conference.

Still, of some 30 plus registered members, 26 came on in to Tampa and gathered at the Days Inn on the causeway between Tampa Airport and Clearwater at 7 PM for a few presentations and an outline of options for the next few days. We would still be visiting the defenses of Tampa the following day, and after that, folks were pretty much on their own. Some would head back home, and others would venture east to visit some of the defenses of Georgia and Northeastern Florida. While the conference tours would be short on sites in comparison to our last two meetings, it would provide first hand views of a number of actual rare seacoast artillery pieces.

Thursday October 1: Our car pool headed east in the morning for a quick visit to Plant Park at the University of Tampa. Located next to the old Tampa Bay Hotel, the HQ for the invasion of Cuba in 1898 during the

Spanish American War and now part of the university campus, the park contains a monument to George Dewey that has a coast artillery weapon on it. The gun is a M1888 8-inch rifle on an M1918 barbette mount that was designed to sit on a railway car. This weapon replaced the 8-inch disappearing carriage and gun that originally sat atop the monument. After a few quick pictures, we headed southwest for the first official tour stop of the day.

Fort De Soto is located on Mullet Key, south of St. Petersburg, and north of the entrance to Tampa Bay. Fort De Soto is now a Pinellas county park and features a large area for recreation: fishing, biking, swimming, camping, picnicking, boating, natural history, and more. The key is now connected to the mainland by a series of bridges, and two sets of tolls are collected to get out to Fort De Soto. Entrance to the park, however, is free. Construction began at Mullett Key in 1898 at the close of the Spanish-American War. It was named in 1900 after the Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto, an early visitor to the Florida area. Two batteries were completed by 1903 at the post: Battery Laidley (8 x 12 in M) and Battery Bigelow (2 x 3 in MP). Construction of the post buildings followed soon after.

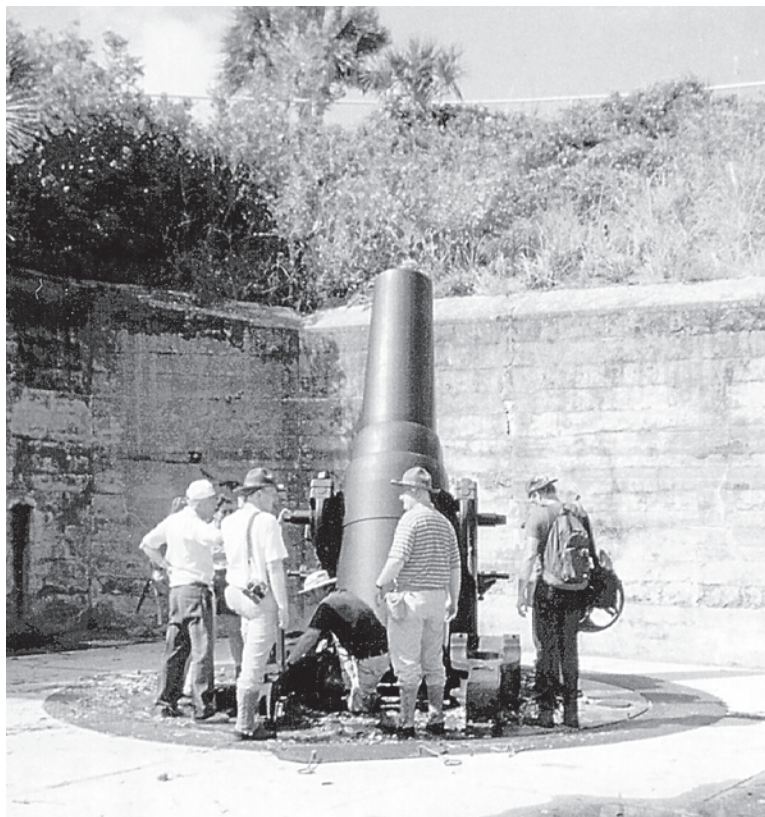
The post was certainly not considered a favorite duty station. Isolated, exposed, heavily invested with mosquitoes, and pounded by hurricanes, the post must have been difficult duty. By 1917, the garrison had been

stripped, and in 1922 Fort De Soto was ordered closed by the army. Four of Battery Laidley's mortars had been removed in 1918. Battery Bigelow, sans guns, was essentially destroyed by hurricanes and encroachment by the sea in the 1930s. Nearly all the buildings at the two posts were destroyed or razed as well. The lands at the two posts saw various governmental uses during the 1920s and 30s before returning to the army for use as a bombing range in 1940. Following the war, Mullet Key was sold to Pinellas County, which created the park in 1963.

Pretty much all that remains of Fort De Soto is Battery Laidley and a few brick roads. However, Battery Laidley is a real jewel. For some unknown reason, the Army did not remove the remaining four M1890MI mortars on M1896MI carriages, and they remain to this day. Missing only their recoil cylinders (which are in one of the magazines) and their breechblocks, the guns are in excellent shape and have been well cared for by the park. Ranger Alicia Addeo has worked long and hard to build a historical program at the park. She has researched the history of the fort, dug up historic photographs, and prepared an interpretive historical walk through out the old post area. We should acknowledge her fine efforts in both the preservation and interpretation of Fort De Soto's military history. CDSGers swarmed all over the mortars and the battery taking pictures from all angles.

An added bonus is the presence of two 6-inch Armstrong rifles and carriages at Fort De Soto. Eight of these weapons, along with thirty-four 4.7-inch weapons, were purchased from Great Britain in 1898. Abandoned by the Army at Battery Burchsted over at Fort Dade, these guns were in danger of being swallowed by the sea when they were rescued in 1980. Extensive preservation work was done before they were mounted on display concrete pads behind Battery Laidley. Both guns have their shields, though the top section of one is missing. After a lunch break at the park concession stand, we gathered for our traditional group photo, then we headed for the bayside pier to meet our transportation out to Egmont Key.

Egmont Key is the home of one of the oldest lighthouses in continual operation in the US. The original lighthouse was erected in 1848 and damaged by hurricanes in 1848 and 1852. It was reconstructed in 1859, and that structure remains in operation to this day. In 1898, the army hurriedly began construction of emergency harbor defense batteries on the island. Permanent defenses followed and the post was named Fort Dade, after Major Francis



CDSGers get to look at some actual artillery: the 12-inch mortars at Battery Laidley.

L. Dade, 3rd US Artillery, who with nearly all his command was killed by the Seminoles near modern day Bushnell, FL on Dec. 28, 1838. The bulk of the post buildings and the mine facilities were located on the north end of the island along with three batteries: Battery McIntosh (2 x 8 in DC), Battery Guy Howard (2 x 6 in DC), and Battery Mellon (3 x 3 in MP). Two batteries and a second mine casemate were located at the south end of the island: Battery Burchsted (2 x 6 in Armstrong & 1 x 3 in MP) and Battery John Page (2 x 3 in P). The remarks made

about garrison life at Fort De Soto hold true for Fort Dade and it was also abandoned as a military post in 1922. All guns (except Burchsted's 6-inchers) were removed by 1923. The island was used by various governmental agencies over the next decades including a harbor pilot station, which is still active today. In 1989, the management of the island was turned over to the Florida State Parks Department, which cooperates with the Department of the Interior, which has listed the island as a national wildlife refuge.

We gathered at the Bay Pier at Fort De Soto Park around 12:30 PM to wait for our chartered boat. There was a steady wind from the southwest and the water had a nice chop to it. This, and a closed bridge, slowed the arrival of our boat. The winds and chop also made it tough for the boat to approach the pier. In any event, the group was able to climb on board and after a 45 minute delay we were on our way to Egmont Key. On our arrival at the beach just east of the lighthouse we were introduced to Egmont Key National Wildlife Refuge and Florida State Park by Richard Johnson, president of the Egmont Key Alliance, a non-profit organization which is assisting the park. A brief overview of the history of Fort Dade was given by Bruce McCall, CDSG member and Alliance historian, who provided a guided tour to the remaining military structures on the island. Bruce also had a number of his files on hand, as well as copies of the blueprint-size plans for some of the structures on the island. The northern half of the island is open to the public and primitive camping is allowed to registered groups. There are no facilities of any kind on the island, all water, food and medical supplies must be brought by the visitors.

Naturally, the group scattered in several directions, but most of us headed for the remaining three battery structures on dry land on the key. Battery McIntosh is



Erosion damage at Fort Dade:
the fallen parapet of Battery Guy Howard.

in fairly good shape, but the gulf waters have started to expose the rear of the battery to the inevitable erosion. It won't be long before this structure begins to fall into the gulf. Next in line is Battery Guy Howard, which is already partially in the surf. Undermining of this battery began in 1995 and now the parapet has fallen away from the gun blocks and the back of the magazine area has started to collapse. The battery area has been formally closed to the public. A short walk down a concrete side walk leads to Battery Mellon, the least threatened battery (for now) at Fort Dade. The initial construction in 1898 was for two 8-inch guns on modified smoothbore carriages; the structure was rebuilt for three 3-inch guns. The extra magazine rooms and the remaining fire control sites are in nice shape, though the CRF station for Battery Mellon is in the process of being swallowed by the beach.

Behind Battery Mellon are the remains of the mine facilities of Fort Dade. Part of the walls and the foundations for the cable storage tank and the mine storage building remain, as do the foundations for the loading room, the dynamite room and the concrete mine wharf. The mine casemate and the cable terminal hut are intact.

Heading south from Battery McIntosh, a short walk along the beach brings one to the central power plant for Fort Dade. This is also in the process of being undermined by the gulf waters. The area south of the power plant is generally off-limits as it is the heart of the wildlife preserve. Having obtained permission to head down to view the ruins at the south end of the island, Alan Hardy & I walked the mile or so along the gulf shore to the second mine casemate. The casemate is also in the

process of being swallowed by the Gulf, the walls and roof around the main room have collapsed and are just at the surf line. Here we could see the tops of Batteries Page and Burchsted, now some 200 yards offshore in the Gulf. The gun blocks are still visible above the water, but the batteries resemble a pile of concrete blocks. We headed back north to the power plant and from there headed inland to walk on the brick-lined roads of the garrison area of Fort Dade. Of all the buildings that comprised Fort Dade, only the shell of the concrete-walled guardhouse remains.

Returning to the lighthouse area, we waited for the rest of our group to gather to re-board our charter for the trip back. After a well-appreciated soda break, our pilot graciously braved the rough seas to make a run down the western side of the island for a close view of the wreckage of Batteries Burchsted and Page, before heading back to the Fort De Soto pier. We headed back north to our hotel and a group dinner at a nearby restaurant, before the final official gathering in the meeting room later that evening.

"St. Babs XVI and a Half," the defenses of Georgia and Northern Florida

Saturday Oct. 2: A confab on the previous evening showed the attendees were pretty much scattering to the winds and St. Babs XVI officially ended that night. Alan Hardy & I decided we would make the best of the situation and drive up to Savannah, GA, and visit the defenses of Georgia and Northern Florida. In retrospect, a number of other CDSGers were headed that way and we should have proposed an impromptu "alternative tour" in that area. A 6-hour jaunt brought us to Savannah by 2 PM and we headed out to Fort Jackson, a Second System work that was half completed by the beginning of the War of 1812. The park is operated by the Coastal Heritage Society, a non-profit organization. The site features a small museum, which charges an admission fee to visit the site. The fort is in nice shape and you can pretty much go all over the structure. The staff member on duty told me that some money was coming in this year to deal with the erosion caused by the wave action on the front face of the fort.

Next, we headed down the road to Cockspur Island and

Fort Pulaski National Monument. The fort was taken over by the Confederacy early on in the Civil War and was forced to surrender in 1862 after 30 hours of siege by rifled artillery breached its walls. This event showed the vulnerability of masonry walls to rifled artillery and is often touted as the "death knell of masonry fortifications." Nevertheless, the Union repaired the fort and manned it throughout the rest of the war. The fort has been immaculately restored by the park service and contains a number of authentic artillery pieces. The famous breached salient was repaired, but the rest of the face of the fort contains ample evidence of the effect of cannon fire on brick walls. The park service charges an admission to the site.

Our final stop of the day was on Tybee Island not far from Fort Pulaski—the site of Fort Screven, the Endicott-era fort built to defend the mouth of the Savannah River. The post was active from the turn of the century until the 1920s, when it was inactivated by the US Army as a harbor defense fort. Eventually the post area was turned over to the town of Tybee Island and sold to private buyers. Over the past 50 years, the post area has been built up with vacation homes mixed in with post buildings and batteries. The fort had 6 major concrete gun batteries: Habersham (8 x 12 in M), Garland (1 x 12 in DC), Fenwick (1 x 12 in DC), Brumby (4 x 8 in DC), Backus (1 x 6 in and 2 x 4.7 in Armstrongs), and Gantt (2 x 3 in MP). One additional battery, Battery Hambright (2 x 3 in P), is located near Fort Pulaski on Cockspur Island.

The Fort Screven area now presents a fairly bizarre sight—old concrete batteries surrounded by (and in some cases under) vacation and residential homes. Habersham



Battle damage: The scarred face of Fort Pulaski.



Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine, Florida

was used as a storage facility for a cable TV company, and Fenwick is completely coved by a house. Both Backus and Gantt sit abandoned next to a nearby road, surrounded by homes. There is small historical museum located in Battery Garland run by the Tybee Island Historical Society, but we arrived too late to go in. The organization is in the midst of restoring the second emplacement of Battery Brumby, which is fairly clean and has both its balance platform ammunition hoist shafts and the shaft for the Taylor-Raymond ammunition hoist. The first emplacement of Brumby is the basement of a rather bizarre home, the third and fourth emplacements are part of the Tybee Island Shriner's meeting hall. Several buildings, including some of the officer's quarters are also interspersed between the vacation homes. We called it a day after that and found a local motel.

Saturday October 3: We headed south this day to visit a number of coastal defense sites from the earlier eras. First stop was Fort McAllister, a Confederate earthwork fort guarding the Ogeechee River approach to Savannah. The fort was taken by storm by Sherman's US troops on December 13, 1864. Restored by Henry Ford, it is now a Georgia State Historic Park with a small museum and large camping and picnicking facilities. It is located west of Richmond Hill off of State Hwy 144. An entrance fee is charged to park your car in the park. The fort has been well-cared for by the state with a number of gun reproductions located in the earthen traverses. One or two underground magazines have been reconstructed with timber and concrete. This is an excellent example of the Civil-War era earthwork forts that were ubiquitous through out the campaigns.

We bypassed Fort Frederica National Monument, home of an English colonial effort in the 1700s, heading to Fort Clinch, a Third System work built at the mouth

of the St. Mary's River in Florida. This grand work, which is an almost exact copy of Fort Gaines at Mobile Bay, AL, is now a Florida State Park. One has to pay both a parking fee and an admission fee to see the fort itself. Fort Clinch appears to be in excellent shape. The interior buildings are in use and the park hosts an active Civil War re-enactment program. During the 1960s, the state had a number of fine looking concrete and steel replica cannon and carriages built, which line the parapet atop the fort. Again most of the interior areas of the fort are open for inspection and

the re-enactors were enthusiastic.

After a brief stop at Fort Caroline National Memorial in Jacksonville, an unsuccessful French colonial post of the mid-1600s, we headed south to our final tour stop of the trip—Castillo de San Marcos in St. Augustine, Florida. Located in the old town district of the oldest permanent settlement in the United States, this National Monument is a real gem. The city was established in 1565. The Castillo was begun in 1672 after the French attempt to colonize at Fort Caroline was destroyed in 1665. Built of coral stone, the fort withstood two sieges by the British and has been manned by Spanish, British, then Spanish again, and finally American troops over its long history. Renamed Fort Marion by the US, it was used as a coast defense installation up to the turn of the last century. Declared a National Monument in 1924, the work was gradually restored and is a grand place to visit today. Most of the areas of the old fort are open to the public and a number of authentic Spanish cannon are located around the parapet. The Castillo is suffering from its age and a number of major repairs are needed.

Despite the loss of our Key West leg, I consider our St. Babs XVI meeting to be a success. We were able to see the fine interpretive work going on at Fort De Soto Park and Egmont Key Park, and we saw seven rare sea-coast artillery weapons. With the additional private tour of some of the older defenses of Georgia and Northern Florida, it made for a fine trip.

We must thank Bob Burt for heading up the Organizing Committee along with the efforts of Alex Holder and Tom Vaughan to get this put together.

In addition, we need to acknowledge the fine efforts of Ranger Alicia Addeo at Fort De Soto County Park and the work and contribution of the Friends of Fort De Soto Park for their support of the interpretive and preservation efforts at the park.

The work of the Egmont Key Alliance at Egmont Key must also be acknowledged. Many thanks to both president Richard Johnson and historian Bruce McCall for accompanying us on our trip out to Egmont. Both of these organizations need active members and donations. For further information, please contact these organizations:

Friends of Fort De Soto, Inc.
Fort De Soto County Park
3500 Pinellas Bayway South
Tierra Verde, FL 33715
membership start at \$10.00

The Egmont Key Alliance, Inc.
4905 34th St. South
Box 5000
St. Petersburg, FL 33711-4511
Memberships start at \$25.00

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Information Wanted/Provided

Please respond directly to the author of the query/statement. If you get an interesting response to your query, please consider writing it up as a note for the newsletter. Email addresses are provided, post mailing addresses are in the membership directory.

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1898 Coast Artillery Drill Regulations Sought

I'm looking for someone who has a copy of the 1898 printing (there was more than one printing) of the 1898 Coast Artillery Drill Regs. I'd like to get a photocopy of one page out of the plates section in Section VI on Target Practice.

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Question from Elliot Deutsch—In the U.S., other than plotting boards, are there any remaining plotting room instruments such as—range correctors, percentage correctors, deflection boards, spotting boards, etc. and if so, where?

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Boston Forts in Newspaper Article

From: Bolling Smith

In la lengthy story in the August 31, 1998, the *Boston Globe* reported possible environmental problems at sev-

eral forts in Boston Harbor. There are reports that Fort Standish, on Lovells Island, was used as a transfer station for radioactive waste. Although there is some dispute that the island was ever actually used, some radioactivity readings are unusually high, although not high enough to be hazardous. Questions remain as to whether the sealed magazines at Batteries Burbeck and Morris contain hazardous wastes. MDC authorities, although unenthusiastic, are considering reopening the batteries to put the issue to rest. This has been repeatedly recommended by the Department of Environmental Protection.

In addition, three dozen asbestos-laced buildings at Fort Andrews, on Peddocks Island, may cost millions to repair or raze.

* * *

"Colonel" Tom Parker

From: Alanna Nash <talkshak@iglou.com>

I am a journalist in Louisville, and got your name from David Ogden at Ft. Pickens. I'm wondering if you can help me, please. I am under contract to write a biography of Colonel Tom Parker, the late manager of Elvis Presley. Mr. Parker (the title of "colonel" was an honorary one) served in the U.S. Army in the late '20s and early '30s, first as part of the 64th C.A. at Ft. Shafter (1929-1931), and then at Ft. Barrancas (1931-1933). For awhile, he was a private 1st class at Ft. Barrancas, then bumped down to private. I'm looking for any testimonies to his having been there—unit photos, any leads on anyone who served with him and might remember him, etc. He was plain ol' Thomas Parker then, no middle initial.

If any of your membership can be of assistance in this matter it would be much appreciated. The "Colonel" belonged to the 13th CA while at Ft. Barrancas.

* * *

Craig Smith

Long time CDSG member Craig Smith of Sacramento, CA, passed away on September 16, 1998. He died of complications from lymph cancer and memorials should be sent to the American Cancer Society. Craig was an enthusiastic member and he will be missed by us all.

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Battery Paint Schemes

From: John A. Martini <martini@slip.net>

Golden Gate National Recreation Area is currently researching color schemes used on Endicott-era batteries. Specifically, we are trying to find primary documentation on colors used on exterior concrete surfaces at Battery Chamberlin at Fort Winfield Scott prior to 1918.

We've checked the standard references by Winslow, E.R. Lewis, Erwin Thompson, Ed Bearss et al., but cannot find any definitive documentation on San Francisco