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Forts in the *New York Times*

The November 9, 2001, *New York Times* had a long article on Fort Tilden (p. E38). While the *Times* is to be commended for drawing attention to the history of this neglected fort, the reporters, authors of a nature guide, may have been out of their depth. As it was, they relied on a seasonal ranger for historical information. Most interesting was the mis-information that Battery Harris on Fort Tilden was casemated to prevent the guns from "being turned around and fired on New York in case the enemy overran the fort." Other details contain minor errors, but as a whole, the article was positive and hopefully will encourage a greater appreciation of Fort Tilden's history.

A better article in the December 16 *Times* (p. A29) explored the historic role of the military in New York. The author, who quotes such varied sources as Russell Gilmore and Jack Fein, was apparently unaware of the existence of Fort Lafayette, but the article was otherwise reasonably accurate for the general public. Fort Hamilton was mentioned as a remnant of the long military presence in the city.

Interestingly, both authors show considerable interest in the Nike missiles once based at Fort Tilden. Perhaps a greater popular appreciation for this program is at hand.

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Update on Battery Stotsenburg-McKinnon at the Presidio of San Francisco

From a letter from the Presidio Trust to Terry McGovern & the CDSG dated October 25, 2001:

"Thank you for your continued concern for the care and stewardship of the Battery Stotsenburg-McKinnon and the Presidio National Historic Landmark District. After receiving your letter, the Trust's Preservation Officer made an inspection of the batteries. She confirmed that the concrete surfaces of one mortar pit and the concrete parapet walls had been scored by a front-end loader and that a portion of the historic high earthworks had been gouged. The Trust's Museum Specialist also inspected the metal portions attached to the battery and artifacts still extant on site to determine their condition and treatment.

Frankly, we at the Trust were equally troubled that our heavy equipment operators had not taken the necessary care to avoid any damage to this historic structure. I can assure you that both the managers and subordinates involved have been instructed in the appropriate care necessary to remove the remaining wood chips.

Furthermore, to prevent any future incidents of this nature, we have enrolled the specific staff involved in the hands-on historic preservation sensitivity training that will be conducted for Trust Operations personnel by the College of the Redwoods beginning November 2001.

In addition, the Presidio Trust is committed to the following actions:

1. The remaining wood chips and debris will be removed no later than December 1, 2001; The last layer will be removed by hand in order to protect important details of the emplacements;
3. The area will be given a low-pressure water rinse to clean the surface and remove any residue deposited by the wood chips and debris;
4. The damage to the battery earthworks caused by the front loader will be restored;
5. Any and all work will proceed based on the NPS Seacoast Fortification Preservation Manual;
6. The 30 year old trees growing in Pit #2, which are causing substantial damage to the concrete, will be carefully removed no later than December 1, 2001."

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Special Forces and Coast Artillery

With the current attention focused on US Army Special Forces, Merle Cole discovered that Company A, 2nd Bn, 19th Special Forces Group, 1st Special Forces, Rhode Island Army National Guard, which was created in the Rhode Island Militia in 1774, eventually became a coast artillery company assigned to the Coast Defenses of Narragansett Bay. It went through the usual redesignations, ending up as AAA in 1946. The company was converted to Special Forces on May 1, 1962, as Company D, 16th Special Forces Group. It was realigned under 19th SFG in February 1966. Its home station is East Greenwich, RI.

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CDSG Annual Conference Harbor Defenses of Portsmouth, NH & Boston, MA (North), October 18-21, 2001

Norman Scarpulla

This report was prepared by the conference chairman, Norman Scarpulla, with substantial contributions from Joel Eastman, Nelson Lawry, and Tom Vaughan.

The 2001 Coast Defense Study Group conference was held Thursday through Sunday, October 18-21, 2001, covering the Harbor Defenses of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. The conference also included forts and fire control sites on the north side of Boston that were not covered during the 1988 conference. Approximately 70 members attended the conference at Yoken's Comfort Inn at Portsmouth.

Portsmouth, built close to the ocean on the tidal Piscataqua River, has been a commercial seaport since the 1600s. In the early years of the United States, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard was constructed on an island in the river, and fortifications protected the shipyard even as the commercial port became less important over the years.



St. Babs XIX Conference attendees (Alex Holder, 2001)

Thursday Evening Presentations

Conference chairman Norm Scarpulla welcomed the members, spoke about the conference arrangements and schedule, and gave a brief overview of the geography of the coast between Portsmouth and Boston. Although the US Army Coast Artillery never attempted to defend the entire American coastline, by WW2, geography in a few locations allowed overlapping coverage. At extreme traverse and maximum 25-mile range, the fire of the 16-inch battery at Portsmouth, Battery Seaman at Fort Dearborn, and the northernmost 16-inch battery at Boston, Battery Murphy at the East Point Military Reservation, could overlap in Ipswich Bay north of Cape Ann. Two fire control stations on the north side of Cape Ann, Castle Hill and Halibut Point, contained base-end stations for both Boston and Portsmouth. Norm pointed out that conference attendees would have the opportunity to visit both of these batteries and the Halibut Point site.

Norm was followed by Nelson Lawry, who presented an overview of the Harbor Defenses of Portsmouth, previewing what would be seen over the next two days. Nelson also covered sites and structures no longer intact or difficult to visit, and therefore not included in the conference tour.

The third talk of the evening was by John Weaver, who presented his recent research into forts that transitioned from the Second System to the Third System, using Fort Constitution at New Castle, NH, as a case study. John noted that in some cases forts were modified from Second to Third System, and at Forts Constitution and McClary, a Third System structure was started on the same site, keeping part of the Second System structure in operation, and then activating part of the Third System fort before the entire structure was completed. Dale Manuel's presentation on Fort McClary was the last one of the evening.

Friday Tours

The Friday tours covered the sites on the Maine side of the river in the morning, and Fort Constitution and Camp Langdon on the New Hampshire side in the afternoon.

Fort Foster

Although the army acquired the land for Fort Foster in 1873, the significant remains at the site date between 1898 and WW2. The fort is now a Kittery municipal park. The Endicott-era structures include Battery Bohlen, built for three 10-inch guns on disappearing carriages and in service from 1901 until 1942. Today the battery structure is buried up to the loading platform because of safety concerns. Battery Chapin, built for two 3-inch guns, was placed in service in 1904 and armed through 1946. The structure is intact, but its earth cover has been removed. In 1921, a concrete searchlight shelter was added near the west end of Battery Bohlen. This is intact, used for park equipment storage, with the rails still in the floor. Originally the searchlight on its cart was rolled out about 200 feet to its operating position at the water's edge.

No other major tactical structures were built until WW2, when several new structures were built. These included a standard WW2 two-gun 6-inch battery (No. 205), a six-story, rectangular tower used as Battery 205's command post, a mine casemate, and a mine control station. Also a four-gun 90 mm anti-motor torpedo boat (AMTB) battery was emplaced directly in front of Battery Bohlen after the latter was disarmed. None of the fort's support buildings survive.



Battery Chapin, Fort Foster (Norm Scarpulla, 2001)

Sewards Point

Across the harbor mouth from Fort Foster is Fort Stark, which we visited the next day. By WW1, realizing the need for an extended horizontal baseline for Battery Hunter at Fort Stark, the army added a fire control station about one-half mile east of Fort Foster at Sewards Point. We had permission to visit this station, now on private property in woods on a low hilltop. The structure is a three-sided, open-top concrete box, with an instrument pedestal.

Sisters Point

Also on private property, the Sisters Point WW2 fire control tower is the first base-end station north of the harbor mouth. A five-story, rectangular concrete tower containing three observation positions, it served the WW2 6-inch and 16-inch batteries at Portsmouth. The site also once had fire control radar, of which nothing remains.

Fort McClary

The next stop was Fort McClary, now a Maine state park. The site was fortified as early as 1720, but the earliest visible remains date from the 1808 Second System. The large hexagonal 1844 blockhouse is the most prominent feature of the fort, with a first story of cut granite blocks and two upper floors of heavy wood construction. From 1863 to 1868, the army partially completed a new multi-tiered, casemated granite fort on the site. If completed, it would have surrounded and replaced the old fort. It includes excellent examples of late Third System features such as casemates, embrasures, and caponier.



Fort McClary (Nelson Lawry, 2001)

Fort Constitution

After lunch, the tour continued at Fort Constitution in New Castle, NH. This site was first fortified in 1631. Today, there are visible remains from the Second, Third, and Endicott systems, as well as WW2. Most of the Second and Third System remains are controlled by New Hampshire State Parks, while the remaining Endicott Period tactical structures are controlled by the University of New Hampshire. In the 1960s, a modern building, now a US

Coast Guard harbor control facility, replaced Endicott-period Battery Pleasant Hackleman (two 3-inch M1903 guns on pedestal mounts).

The Second System work was a roughly rectangular brick fort with exterior walls approximately 30 feet high, completed in 1808. The east wall bulged out into a curve at the closest point to the shipping channel, and there was a small bastion on the southwest corner. Cannon were mounted *en barbette* on the north, east, and south walls. The north and west walls are essentially intact, while the firing platform of the south wall and the entire east end were removed for later construction. The restored main gate in the west wall includes the original 1808 keystone.



Fort Constitution (Norm Scarpulla, 2001)

In 1814, the brick, Martello-style "Walbach Tower" was built on a small hill approximately 700 feet west of the main gate. This structure is now overgrown and in ruins, although one east-facing casemate can be entered from the outside.

In the 1850s, the army approved the replacement of the brick fort with a five-sided Third System granite work to mount 149 cannon in three casemate tiers topped by a barbette tier. Construction started in 1861 and continued until 1867, by which time the east end of the 1808 fort had been removed and the first tier of the east end of the new fort had been completed and armed.



Mine storehouse at Fort Constitution (Nelson Lawry 2001)



Fort Constitution interior (Nelson Lawry 2001)



Fort Constitution exterior (Norm Scarpulla, 2001)

Approximately 500 feet west of the 1808 fort gate is Endicott-period Battery Elon Farnsworth, completed in 1898 for two 8-inch M1888 guns on M1894 disappearing carriages and disarmed in 1917. The structure was not extensively modified, and the shaft and some fittings from the early "dumb-waiter" style ammunition hoist can be seen. The 1898 mining casemate is in the left flank of the battery. Later, a replacement casemate was built west of Battery Farnsworth, to the rear of the Walbach Tower. During WW2, a mine control station was built on Battery Farnsworth's No. 1 gun emplacement.

Camp Langdon

Our final stop of the day was at Camp Langdon, also in New Castle less than a mile west of Fort Constitution, and now a town park. During WW1 and WW2, it was the primary barracks and support center for the Harbor Defenses of Portsmouth. Members viewed the two gunblocks for M1917 antiaircraft guns. Only one army building remains.

Friday Evening Presentations

After dinner, the members reassembled in the hotel meeting room, where Joel Eastman began with a short, illustrated presentation on the 10-inch dummy gun at the Portland, Maine, National Guard armory used for training Coast Artillery National Guard. The armory not only

had the dummy gun, but also training stations for all of the components of the fire control system. Glen Williford followed with a talk on private manufacturers of US ordnance material, with historic and contemporary illustrations of the manufacturing plants. Chris MacDonald offered a presentation on the history of the Fort at Clark's Point, New Bedford, MA, and current efforts at restoration there, utilizing historic and contemporary photographs and videotape.

Saturday Tours

Fort Stark

The first stop on Saturday morning was Fort Stark in New Castle, NH, now a New Hampshire State Park. The site had been fortified as early as 1746, but Endicott-period construction in 1900-1902 replaced or essentially covered all earlier remains. The Endicott-period batteries included:

Battery Hunter, two 12-inch M1895 guns on M1897 disappearing carriages, the only 12-inch DC battery at Portsmouth.

Battery Kirk, two 6-inch M1903 guns on M1903 disappearing carriages.

Batteries Hays and Lytle, each having two 3-inch M1902 rapid-fire guns on pedestal mounts.

Batteries Hays, Kirk, and Hunter were built in a line facing the channel, with Battery Lytle at a right angle at the seaward end. A mine casemate and observation posts were also built. The 6-inch guns of Battery Kirk were removed during WW1 and never replaced. In WW2, the massive concrete Portsmouth Harbor Entrance Control Post was built into and on top of Battery Kirk's magazine.

During WW2, the guns of Battery Lytle were relocated seaward on open gun blocks. After WW2, the navy took over Fort Stark and mounted two 3-inch saluting guns on the gun blocks. Later, after one was undermined by the sea and fell to the beach, both guns were removed. The one surviving building, once an ordnance machine shop and now a museum, was open, with one of the 3-inch Navy salute guns, a searchlight controller, a coincidence rangefinder, a portable submarine mine board, and the



Battery Hunter, Fort Stark (Norm Scarpulla, 1995)

arms from the plotting board of Battery Seaman at Fort Dearborn.

After taking a group picture on the steps of Battery Kirk, we continued on to Fort Dearborn.

Fort Dearborn

Frost and Odiorne Points in Rye, NH, had been ocean-front summer home communities prior to WW2. At the beginning of WW2, the army took the area for Fort Dearborn. It is now Odiorne Point State Park.

At first, four 155 mm mobile guns on Panama mounts were installed at the southern or seaward end of the fort, while the two permanent batteries were constructed:

Battery No. 204, two 6-inch T2M1 guns on M3 shielded barbette carriages, about 200 yards north of the Panama mounts.

Battery Seaman, two 16-inch MkII guns on M5 barbette carriages, about 700 yards farther north.

Battery No. 204, an otherwise standard 200-series battery, has the unusual feature of a battery commander's station reached by ladder from the interior of the battery.

Battery Seaman is a typical 100-series battery, and is relatively clean and empty, never having been adapted to other uses. Welded gates block its long passage. The battery commander's station on top of the battery is not connected to the interior. The battery PSR is about 200 yards behind the west end of the battery; its entrances buried. (100-series batteries had a separate "PSR" structure for their plotting, spotting, and radio rooms.) Other surviving structures include a cistern behind gun No. 1, and the gun group command and observation post about 100 yards west of the battery.

One unique structure at Fort Dearborn is a TNT magazine, across the highway in woods, about 500 yards west of Battery No. 204. This was built during WW2 to store the bulk of the explosives for the submarine mines away from Fort Constitution, which was surrounded by civilian housing. Fort Dearborn also had an SCR-268 radar and a searchlight; nothing remains of either.

During lunch near the 155 mm battery, members found a 16-inch powder canister near a park trail and moved it inside Battery 204 to protect it. The canister was relatively clean and rust-free, leading us to believe that it had only recently been left out.

Pulpit Rock

Less than a mile south of Fort Dearborn is Pulpit Rock, the site of a WW2 90 mm AMTB battery, two fire control towers, and a searchlight. One gunblock is visible in the parking lot beside the ocean. A steel-frame fire control tower that stood about 100 feet from the shore, with two steel and concrete observation levels on top, was a base-end station for Battery 205 at Fort Foster and an observation post for the harbor defense command. Nothing remains of this structure. The second tower, about 400 feet inland on a slight rise, is an intact eight-story circular concrete tower. Round fire control towers, unusual on the

north Atlantic coast, are more common farther south. Although the tower is intact, we were not able to go inside because of damage to the lock.

Saturday Evening Presentations

On Saturday evening, the CDSG held its annual banquet and meeting at Yoken's Restaurant. The members enjoyed the excellent buffet, and CDSG Chairman Tom Batha conducted the annual meeting as members finished their meals. Please see the separate report of the annual meeting.

After the banquet, we returned to our meeting room in the hotel to continue talks and presentations. Joel Eastman began the evening's presentations with a "Beginner's Guide to Fort Mills," following up to Glen Williford's announcement of another planned trip to Corregidor. Alex Holder gave an overview of the fortifications of New Orleans as a preview of the 2002 conference. Terry McGovern showed aerial views of the 2000 conference at Chesapeake Bay. Nelson Lawry ended the evening session with a brief talk about the fire control tower on Appledore Island, five miles off the Portsmouth Harbor mouth.

Sunday Tours

The Sunday tour covered the sites on the north side of Boston, beginning with a 55-mile drive to Rockport, MA.

Halibut Point

The fire control tower at Halibut Point, Rockport, is a five-story concrete tower with three observation levels and attached two-story barracks. Although part of the Harbor Defenses of Boston, it is faces north on the north side of Cape Ann, and provided fire control for Battery Murphy at East Point, Nahant, MA, and Battery Seaman at Odiorne's Point, Rye, NH. As explained above, the fire from these two batteries could overlap into the waters north of the tower, with Battery Murphy firing over Cape Ann. The view from the site, even at ground level is spectacular; the entire coast north to Portsmouth and beyond is visible. The structure is unusual in that the barracks were attached directly to the tower, with access at both the first and second floor levels. More commonly the barrack, whether nearby or attached, are without direct interior access. The site is now a Massachusetts state park, and has good interpretive displays that explain the functions not only of the tower, but even of each level. The barracks building is essentially intact, with original siding, and is used as a visitor center and museum. The tower was built at the edge of a large granite quarry, also part of the state park. Displays and interpretive materials include the quarry and present its history and technology.

Emerson Point

Next we made a brief visit to the Emerson Point fire control tower, also in Rockport. This tower is on high ground about 300 yards inland, facing east from the eastern tip of Cape Ann. It is the farthest east of the Boston

fire control towers, approximately 22 miles from, and in the field of fire of, one of the batteries that it served (Battery Murphy, Nahant). This is another of the few round towers on the north Atlantic coast, with six stories and three observation levels. We viewed the tower from the nearby street. It is on private property, abandoned, infested with pigeons, surrounded by poison ivy, and has an alarm system.

The primary objective of the Sunday tour was to view the surviving gun batteries at Nahant and Winthrop, MA. After the early stops at the two fire control sites, we drove directly southwest to Nahant. Gerry Butler of Nahant arranged access for us to the two battery sites, former Fort Ruckman, now a town park, and East Point, now partly town park and the Northeastern University Marine Science Laboratory. Nahant also has four surviving WW2 fire control towers, all on private property, but all visible from nearby streets or from East Point.

Fort Ruckman

The army acquired the site about 1900, originally for a mortar battery. However, the only tactical structures built before 1918 were fire control stations and a searchlight supporting the batteries at Winthrop. From 1918 to 1920, Battery Gardner, a long-range battery of two 12-inch guns on barbette carriages was built. Casemated in WW2, today Battery Gardner has been completely sealed, but the fronts of the casemates and their canopies can be seen. The foundations of the fire control stations and the searchlight shelter also can be seen. The fort had an antiaircraft battery from 1934 through WW2, but nothing remains of it, nor of the many barracks and support structures.

East Point

The East Point Military Reservation had been of the summer estate of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge in the early 1900s. During WW1, a searchlight supporting the batteries at Winthrop was placed here, but nothing of it remains. At the start of WW2, the army took the estate for a 16-inch (Battery Murphy) and a 6-inch battery. A two-gun



Battery Murphy, East Point MR
(Norm Scarpulla, 2001)

155 mm battery on Panama mounts was installed while the other batteries were constructed. One ring from this battery can be seen. The site is now the Northeastern University Marine Sciences Laboratory, and they allowed us access to the interiors of both gun batteries. Battery Murphy was sited so that it could cover not only the approaches to Boston, but also the coastline of Cape Ann. At extreme range, north of the cape, its fire overlapped with that of Battery Seaman at Portsmouth. Just after WW2, gun No. 1 of Battery Murphy was fitted with experimental "closure plates," huge armor slabs hung from the overhead of the casemate to close the gap between casemate wall and the shield mounted on the gun carriage. These were removed and scrapped a few years ago. Members were also able to see Battery Murphy's PSR. During the Cold War, a Nike antiaircraft missile launch structure was built directly in front of Battery Murphy. Sealed and covered for use as a town park, this provides a spectacular view of Massachusetts Bay and the Boston skyline.

Fort Banks

The next site was Fort Banks, Winthrop, MA. Because this site was scheduled late on Sunday of the conference, participation had dwindled to about 12 people.

Fort Banks was established in the 1890s for the Boston north-side mortar battery, and as the barracks and support center for nearby Fort Heath, which had the 12-inch disappearing carriage battery. Fort Heath was on the ocean and Fort Banks was about 3/4 mile inland. Later Fort Banks became the headquarters of the Harbor Defenses of Boston and served through the Nike antiaircraft missile era. The mortar battery at Fort Banks is all that remains of the army harbor defense installations in Winthrop. Joe Kelly and Don Simonini of the Fort Banks Preservation Association opened the doors and hosted our visit. (WW2 Fort Dawes, also in Winthrop, had 16-inch, 6-inch, and 90 mm batteries, the Boston harbor entrance control post, and a mine casemate. This fort, toured at the 1988 conference, was replaced by a giant sewage plant in the early 1990s.)

The mortar battery started as an "Abbot quad," with additional rooms at the intersection of the underground corridors. These were experimental loading rooms and fuze magazines intended to improve safety by fuzing shells just before firing. They were never used for this purpose but resulted in the most elaborate underground arrangement of any Abbot quad. Like most early mortar batteries, it was tactically split into two batteries: Benjamin Lincoln and Sanford Kellogg. This was the site of one of the major coast artillery accidents; in 1904, a mortar prematurely fired before a breechblock was fully closed, killing four and injuring nine.

The structure was rebuilt between 1910 and 1915. The original pits were partially demolished and two new modern (1898/1906 type) mortar pits were grafted onto the original magazines, creating a very elaborate structure. In

WW2, the center traverse of Battery Lincoln was converted to a harbor defense command post. It was lined with wood paneling, but this has been destroyed by fire.

These batteries were mostly buried at the time of the 1988 CDSG Boston conference. One pit was cleared in 1990 and the pit and magazines were used by the Town of Winthrop Emergency Management Services. The magazines have been used for a haunted house at Halloween and recently two of the magazines have been used as a recycling center. One pit is buried under housing, and two pits are partially filled, but the underground structures, both old and new, are largely intact.

Gales Point

Later on Sunday, about 15 members met at the Manchester, MA, commuter rail station to consolidate into fewer cars and drive to the Gales Point fire control tower. This WW2 10-story concrete tower, rectangular except for the top two levels that are octagonal, contained three base-end stations and an anti-aircraft information station (AAIS). The site also had an SCR-296 radar. The tower has been modified to resemble a lighthouse. No other army structures are on the site.

Coolidge Point

The last event of the conference was also in Manchester, a visit to the Coolidge Point fire control tower, home of CDSG member Craig Lentz. This five-story rectangular concrete tower contained three base-end stations and an AAIS. Craig has renovated the adjacent two-story barracks, and built a small addition that connects the barracks to the original door of the tower. The remaining conference attendees enjoyed Craig's hospitality until finally dispersing at dusk.

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Crimean and Ukrainian Fortification Tours 2002

The Fortress Study Group has organized a tour of "Fortress Crimea" May 12-18, 2002. The group will arrive in Simeropol on May 11, and tour Perecop, Dschankhoj, Vladislavovka, Parpach, Eltigen, Kerch, Fortresses Yenikale, Cape Takil, Feodosiya, Fortress Sudak, Yalta, Sevastapol, Chersonesus Peninsula, Maxim Gorki II, Cathcart Hill, Balaclava, Inkerman, Maxim Gorki I, and various German and Russian positions during WW II by coach.

Dr. Neumann has also organized a second tour to the "Stalin Line" fortification sites around L'viv, Ukraine, which will be held August 7-16, 2002. The group will visit Berechany, Buchach, Pidsamochok, Chotin, Zvanec, Okopi, Kamenez Podilsk, Serebrija, Bronnycji, HQ "Werwolf," Gulewtze, the "Stalin Line," Letychiv, Medzibisch, Univska Lavra, Svirz, Chernove, Zolociv, Pidgirtsi, and Olesk Castle, with some possible add on tours to Przemysl, the "Molotov Line," and others.

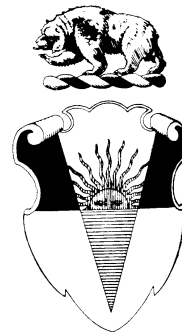
Information on both of these tours can be obtained from Hans-Rudolf and Valentina Neumann, D-14532 Kleinmachnow, Wolfswerder 9, Germany, Tel: 0049-33203/80 144. or their e-mail address at Neumann@iemb.de

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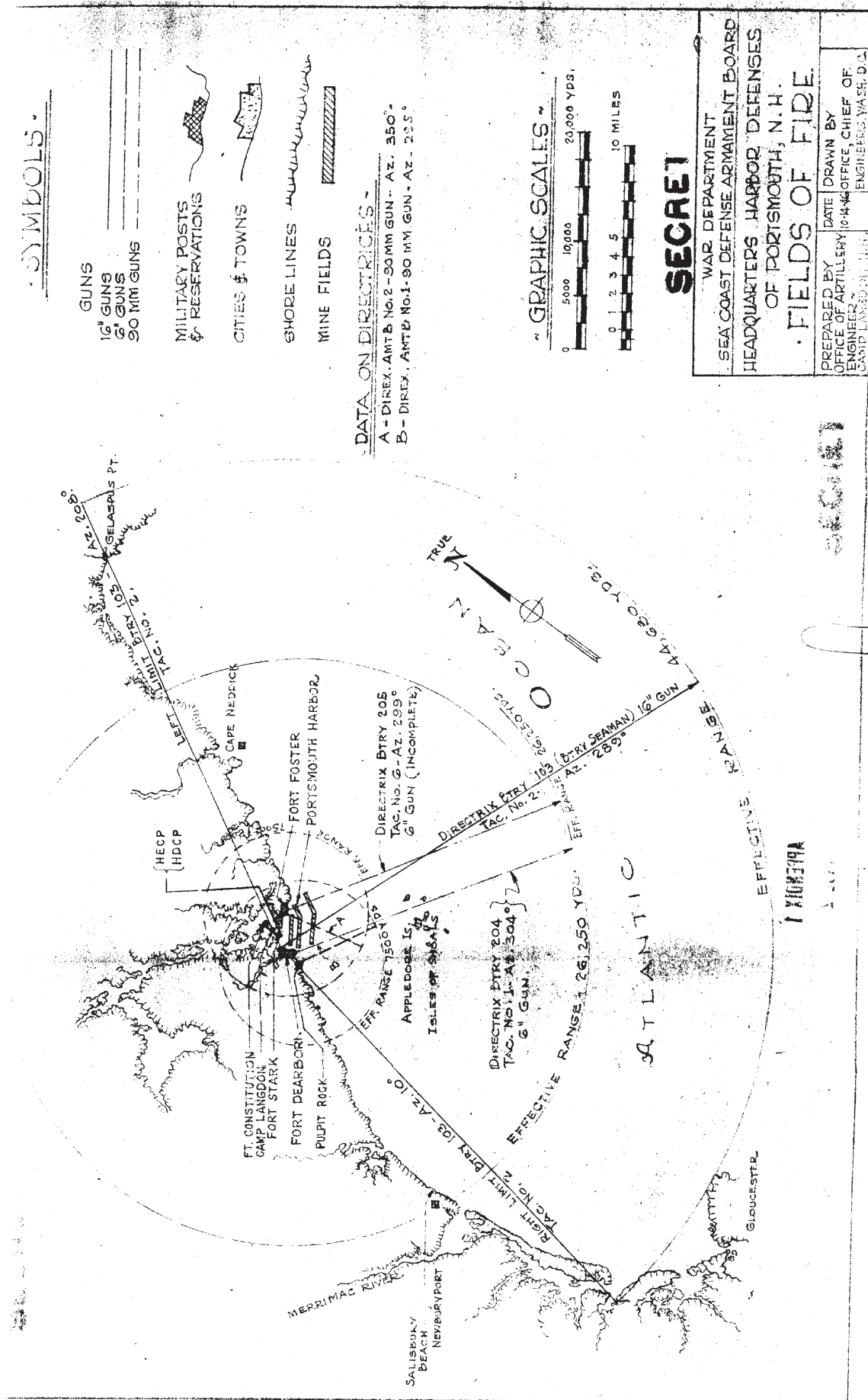
Photograph CD-ROM's For Sale: Harbor Defenses of Manila & Subic Bays

The first CD contains 77 photographs plus index from the *Report on War Damage to the Harbor Defenses of Manila and Subic Bays*, by Headquarters, 14th Anti-aircraft Command, October 1945. The second CD contains 104 photographs plus index from the *Quartermaster Corps Files* at the National Archives. These are photographs of barracks, hospitals, ordnance magazines, power plants, hangers, and buildings or structures under control of the post quartermaster. Forts Mills, Hughes, Frank, and Drum are covered. These CD-ROMs are \$15.00 each plus \$2.00 postage (check or money order, US currency please). Email Roger Davis for copy of index at ARMYJUNK@AOL.COM.

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Model of the 8 inch railway battery at Christopher Point, Vancouver Island, British Columbia, by member Jack Drysdale



Map of the fields of fire for the Harbor Defenses of Portsmouth, NH in 1946. (From the Tilton Report)

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Navy Proposes to Demolish Fort Story Fire Control Tower

As we are prepared to go to press, we have been informed that the U.S. Navy has proposed to demolish Fort Story fire control Tower A, at Parcel C on 67th St., Virginia Beach, VA. The tower has not been used for years and is no longer needed by the navy, who maintain that demolition will assist them to reduce “shore installation infrastructure.”

Originally designated Tower A, the army built the tower in 1941 for Battery Worcester and a 155 mm battery at Ft. Story. The tower is eligible for the National Register as a discontinuous resource that contributes to the Ft. Story historic district.

The navy has consulted with the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer concerning the adverse effect on historic properties arising from this proposed demolition. A tentative agreement has been reached between navy and the Virginia SHPO for to “mitigate” the adverse effect and fulfill the navy’s responsibilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 as amended. As outlined in the memorandum of agreement, this mitigation consists essentially of “documentation and recordation.” Even this is dependent on the appropriation of funds. The failure to appropriate funds will relieve the navy of any obligation to even document and record.

Comments on the proposed action are solicited. Please contact Mr. Michael Newbill, Regional Historic Preservation Officer, Navy Region Mid-Atlantic, at (757) 322-4884 if you have questions or require additional information. According to the memorandum, should an objection pertaining to this agreement be raised by a member of the public, the navy shall notify the SHPO and take the objection into account, consulting with the objector and, should the objector so request, with the SHPO to resolve the objection.

The navy has a long history of callous disregard for anything associated with the history of the army (Fort Wadsworth, Key West, Fort Rosecrans, etc.). The navy proposes to demolish this historic structure, offering only a non-binding promise to take photographs. Barring any evidence that this structure requires excessive maintenance, there is no justification for its destruction.

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2001 CDSG Annual Meeting: The Thursday Optional Tours

Nelson H. Lawry

A. The morning tour

Four vehicles carrying 19 members and spouses left the Comfort Inn at ca. 9 a.m., and drove via local roads in Portsmouth to I-95 North, Maine U.S. 1, and three back roads in Kittery and York, Maine, encountering light traffic, even when they transited that stretch of U.S. 1 running the gauntlet of the Kittery outlet malls.

- The first site visited, on state Route 91 in York, was the McIntire garrison house of the colonial Indian wars era, estimated construction time range between the late 1690s and 1705. The fortified house, with its characteristic second-story overhang, stands on a knoll overlooking the York River, for during the time it saw use, roads were few, far between, and poor, and thus the force relieving a beleaguered garrison house almost always arrived by water. Although the McIntire garrison house now enjoys a protective facade of shingles, a tiny door in the end of the building allows one to view and photograph the original construction of stout timbers. The structure is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



McIntire Garrison House, Sept. 2001.

Nelson H. Lawry

- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 151, Cape Neddick, on the Nubble Road, York Beach, Maine, once a fire control (hereafter FC) structure disguised as a headland cottage, has recently been rebuilt as an upscale hacienda. Little remains visible even of the short concrete tower once housing optical instrument stations for 16-inch gun Battery Seaman (azimuth instrument—hereafter AI—at 83.3 feet above mlw) and 6-inch gun Battery Construction No. 205 (depression position finder—hereafter DPF—at 91.3 feet above mlw). The only visible remnant, and obviously a temporary one, was a hole in the ceiling at the lower level, showing concrete and rebar of 1940s vintage. The single-car garage to the left rear of the cottage, once housing the secondary fire control telephone switchboard, was demolished more than a year ago.



Loc. 151 Cape Neddick, June 2001.
Nelson H. Lawry

- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 152, Bald Head Cliff, east of the Ogunquit Shore Road, York, was a disguised headland cottage, now long gone, built on the grounds of the famous Cliff House hotel. The FC cottage housed an AI for Battery Seaman, at 97.7 feet above mlw, and was located near the former outdoor swimming pool, now itself long gone, and in the vicinity of the clifftop, 1950s vintage motel building, still standing in 2001.
- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 153, Moody Point, is on the Moody Beach section of the Shore Road, Wells Beach, Maine. Once disguised as the cupola of a 2 1/2-story beachfront cottage, the concrete FC tower of rectangular x-section has long been part of a tastefully false lighthouse belonging to Garnsey Brothers Realty. Its AI for Battery Seaman was sited at 55.5 feet above mlw.
- [HD Portsmouth Loc Nos. 150 and 154, at Godfreys Cove (officially designated Seal Head Point) and Gelaspus Point (south of Kennebunk Beach), respectively, have had no FC remains for decades, and as their remote sites are reached by roundabout routes, they were not visited.]



Loc. 153 Moody Point, June 2001.
Nelson H. Lawry

B. The afternoon tour

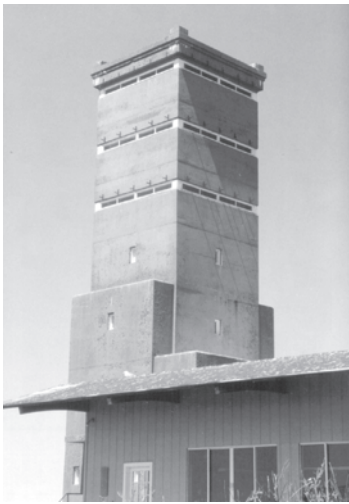
Five vehicles carrying 19 members left the Comfort Inn about 1:30 p.m., drove 1.5 miles east to pick up coastal Route 1A South and visited eight sites along the seacoast south of the mouth of the Piscataqua River.

- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 143 (no official site or sub-loc number), lies at the tip of Odiorne Point. From the first parking bay south of Fort Dearborn/Odiorne Point State Park, the party walked three minutes northeast along the beach to the site of the 155mm GPF battery, now a picnic area near the water. Three Panama mounts are clearly displayed, with No. 4 concealed under soil and thick vegetation, but visible if one makes the effort to unearth it.
- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 142, Pulpit Rock, is within sight of the Panama mount site at the state park. In the parking bay on the waterside, Site No. 1B for Anti-Motor Torpedo Boat Battery No. 1, remains a mostly buried gunblock for an M3 fixed carriage mounting a 90mm gun; in the rocks nearby is the rusting bolt circle for the other fixed gun. Across the road, at Site No. 2A, the cylindrical concrete tower housing the FC stations for 16-inch gun Battery Seaman (AI at 96 feet above mlw) and 6-inch gun Battery No. 204 (AI at 104 feet above mlw) remains in a locked state; at Site No. 1A, the open steel frame tower housing Harbor OP No. 1 (AI at 81 feet above mlw) and the FC station for 6-inch gun Battery Construction No. 205 (AI at 88 feet above mlw) was taken down just after the war ended.



Loc. 142 Pulpit Rock, Sept. 2001. Nelson H. Lawry

- [HD Portsmouth Loc Nos. 141 and 140, Appledore and Star Islands, respectively, of the Isles of Shoal group, could readily be seen offshore. Appledore Island received a large (and conspicuous) three-station FC tower, atop which was mounted the SCR-296 FC radar for Battery Seaman, whereas Star Island, although considered for a pair of mobile 60-inch searchlights, in the end was not equipped.]



Loc. 141 Appledore Island, May 1998.
Nelson H. Lawry

- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 139B, at the ocean end of Concord Point Road, was once the SCR-296 FC radar site for Battery No. 204, Fort Dearborn. The then-contemporary large seafront cottage was commandeered as the operations and troop housing facility; the war construction generator building and antenna mast were pulled down after war's end.
- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 139A, Ragged Neck, now Rye Harbor State Park, was a major searchlight site, provided with an SCR-268 SL radar and a pair of mobile 60-inch searchlights. No trace remains of this equipment.
- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 139, Rye Ledge, exhibits the remnant of a three-station FC structure disguised as a beachfront cottage, but years ago converted into an upscale hacienda, replete with an elevated sundeck. The AI's for Battery No. 204, Battery Seaman, and Battery Construction No. 205 stood respectively at 23, 31, and 39 feet above mlw, but much of the front of the tactical portion was replaced ca. 1970-75 by a large studio window. The FC instrument slits can best be seen from the north side.



Loc. 139 Rye Ledge, Oct. 2001. Nelson H. Lawry

- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 138, Great Boars Head, is a concrete tower of rectangular x-section at the north end of Hampton Beach. The AI for Battery Seaman stood at 86 feet, and the DPF for Battery No. 204 stood at 95 feet, above mlw. The barrack was a commandeered cottage on the property.



Loc. 138 Great Boars Island, Sept. 2001.
Nelson H. Lawry

- HD Portsmouth Loc No. 137B, Salisbury Beach, Mass., was a large on-the-beach disguised cottage, necessary because of the line of densely packed cottages already in existence. The military structure's false cupola was the FC station for Battery Seaman, its AI 48 feet above mlw. Although the cottage was constructed above mhw, it was only a matter of time before a severe storm damaged the structure. Postwar, the building was used as the summer barrack for the Massachusetts State Police troop assigned to this often hurly-burly beach community; in 1954, Hurricane Carol struck the beach, and what it did not wreck, Hurricane Diane finished off a year later.
- Although this second Salisbury Beach site was not originally on the southern tour, two carloads proceeded a little farther south to the Salisbury Beach State Reservation, and after a short look, the searchers found the hub of one Panama mount emerging from the sand. Shifting dune sand in this area covers and uncovers some parts of the four mounts built there in WWII and manned by coast artillerymen from the Harbor Defenses of Boston.
- In addition to their FC—and in one instance, battery—elements, Loc Nos. 138, 139, 142, 151, 152, and 153 each had one or two mobile 60-inch searchlights in place.

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Additional CDSG Special Tours

10 members interested in Vladivostok and we are planning on a tour for September 2002. 10 members interested in Norway tour for August 2003. Please contact Terry McGovern to be put on the list if you are interested in going on either of these tours.