



the CDSG Newsletter

The Coast Defense Study Group, Inc. — August 2002

Chairman's Message

Thomas D. Batha

The CDSG Board of Directors held its quarterly meeting on August 4. Our membership renewals are on track with previous years but not really exceeding them. I firmly believe that there are many more individuals out there that would be very interested in our organization if they knew about it. I would encourage all members to reach out to anyone they know that might be interested in joining. For that reason membership applications were enclosed with the recent mailing you received. Our advertising trade-off with other related organizations is meeting with some success. You will note the ad for *The Artilleryman* in this issue. I have subscribed for years and enjoy it.

Attached to this newsletter is the annual financial report conducted by member Charlie Robbins. The report speaks for itself but it also reflects well on the efforts of Treasurer Terry McGovern.

Alan Hardey has been selected by the board to succeed me as Chairman. John Weaver has been elected to a three-year term to fill my spot on the board, joining Alan and Joel Eastman. His three-year term begins October 1, 2002. I wish the best to all three of these very capable men. Thanks also go to Jonathan Prostack for running in the election.

In closing, I would like to thank all the volunteers who have contributed so much to the success of the CDSG. This is a volunteer run organization with no paid staff. That it is as fine as it is speaks well of caliber of the membership.

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We regret to hear of the passing of two of our members—Mark Henkiel of Sacramento, CA, and Glen Deruiter of Asbury, NJ. Our condolences go to their family and friends. We will miss their company.

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ST BABS XX 2002 CDSG Annual Meeting New Orleans

Coordinator's Report
By Alex Holder

The Coast Defense Study Group (CDSG) held its 2002 conference (St Babs XX) at New Orleans February 27 through March 3. The Hampton Inn, New Orleans East, provided both lodging and conference room. Thirty-nine members and guests attended.



St Babs XX Conference attendees at Proctor's Landing

CDSG Calendar

Sept. 14-24, 2002

—CDSG Special Tour to Vladovostock Fortress,
Russia

October 1, 2002

—last day to submit articles for *CD Journal* 16.4

November 15, 2002

—*CD Journal* 16.4 goes to press

Mid-December, 2002

—Approximate delivery date for *CD Journal* 16.4

January 1, 2003

—Membership renewals for 2003 due

April 29-May 4, 2003

—CDSG Annual Conference, HD Long Island Sound

Spring 2004

—CDSG Annual Conference, HD Charleston, SC
& Savannah, GA

2005

—CDSG Annual Conference, HD Portland, ME

2006

—CDSG Annual Conference, HD San Francisco, CA

The need to protect New Orleans was clear to all during the early part of the Nineteenth Century. The city's enormous commercial value, coupled with the fresh memory of Great Britain's attempt to seize the city during the War of 1812, placed New Orleans high in the minds of those planning the Third System of seacoast defenses. Several major avenues of approach from the sea led to New Orleans, and it was intended that all be plugged. Efforts to fortify New Orleans resulted in nine seacoast defense works well worth visiting today. Indeed, for many "stone and brick" fort enthusiasts, New Orleans rivals New York City. If, as the old saw goes, "getting there is half the fun," New Orleans beats New York City, hands down. However, getting there means boats for six of the nine works, and boats are time consuming, expensive, and, because their use is subject to sea conditions, uncertain.

The weather forecast on Tuesday evening February 26 was grim. It promised a cold front from the northwest with record low temperatures, high winds, and heavy rains arriving Friday afternoon and continuing into Saturday. A scramble began Wednesday morning to shift visits needing boats away from Friday afternoon and Saturday. This was done. Essentially, Thursday's visits, no boats needed, were moved to Saturday, and Friday's and Saturday's schedules were shifted to Thursday and Friday, respectively.

After the itinerary shuffle was completed, the company that was to provide boat transportation for Thursday's visits to the three Lake Borgne works backed out because Lake Borgne had become too shallow for their boat, a crew boat normally used to service offshore oil rigs. It had been intended to use dinghies from the crew boat to visit each of the Lake Borgne sites; however, the weather front had pushed water out of the lake causing tides to be at least four feet lower than normal, especially along the lake's western shore. This caused the second scramble on Wednesday centered on finding a boat operator willing to travel shallower than usual Lake Borgne. William Hyland, Saint Bernard Parish historian and fine friend, had earlier agreed to handle visits to the Lake Borgne sites. He said he would have a boat, or boats, by 11:00 AM on Thursday. With that, the first item on the original itinerary, Fort Macomb, was reinstated to fill Thursday morning. Finally, the stage was set to commence St Babs XX—laissez les bons temps rouler!

Day 1 (Wednesday, February 27). Check in began at 4:00 PM in the hotel conference room. Administrative announcements were made and various handouts were issued. This was completed by 6:00 PM. Jim Bournazos, Roger Davis, and Leo Polaski did the work and made the whole go smoothly. The conference officially began at 8:00 PM with introductions and presentations. Bill Hyland called at 9:30 PM saying he had a boat for only one of Lake Borgne's sites, the Tower at Proctors Landing. He had been unable to get boats for Tower Dupre and Battery Bienvenue.

Day 2 (Thursday, February 28). All met at the gate to Fort Macomb, originally named Fort Wood. The escort officer from the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Department showed promptly, and the tour began. Fort Macomb was intended to close Chef Menteur Pass between Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain, thus protecting New Orleans' back. It is a three sided brick work with two tiers and a curved sea face. Cannon were mounted on both the casemated first tier and the barbette tier. Elaborate outworks protected the land faces. Fort Macomb is a near twin of nearby earlier Fort Pike, differing mainly in refinement of details. Of considerable interest, the fort has one of two existing citadels in the United States, though only the first story remains.

Fort Macomb actually belongs to the Louisiana Office of State Parks, which leases it to the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Department. The fort is suffering from subsidence, cracking walls, and a sea front exposed to storm erosion. One land face is subject to wake action by boats in the wet ditch that has been enlarged into a marina. Only bits of the outworks remain.



Fort Macomb

From Fort Macomb the group traveled about 34 miles to Yscloskey, a small fishing village on Lake Borgne. From there a shallow draft fishing boat, a Lafitte Skiff, was used to travel Bayou Yscloskey about a mile and a half near the Tower at Proctors Landing. A quarter mile walk finished the trip. The boat made two additional trips to deliver everyone.

The Tower at Proctors Landing was intended to be a square brick work with three tiers. Its purpose was to prevent enemy use of Bayou Yscloskey and the roadbed of the Mexican Gulf Railroad as routes to New Orleans. The tower, begun 1856, was never completed. Work stopped at the second, casemated, tier. Rolled iron beams were used to support the floor of the second tier in an effort to keep overall weight down. It is a most interesting work.



Bill Hyland at the Tower at Proctor's Landing

The tower is almost in Lake Borgne. A thin strip of soil connects the work to the shore. A rip-rap seawall provides storm protection. The tower is owned by Saint Bernard Parish and is on the National Register because of the early use of iron beams in its construction.

Upon return to Yscloskey, negotiation with the boat captain got his agreement to attempt to get all, one small group at a time, to both Tower Dupre and Battery Bienvenue. Unfortunately, it was almost mid-afternoon before getting this next phase underway. The first group would use the boat to travel about 13 miles to Tower Dupre. After visiting the tower, they would travel another five miles to Battery Bienvenue and, from there, rejoin the remainder of the group at a new location about six miles further. Meanwhile, everyone else would travel by road about 24 miles to meet the boat at the new location.



Tower Dupre

The first boatload, about a third of the group, traveled to Tower Dupre, grounded nearby, but did not attempt to land at the tower. The tower, now about a quarter mile from the nearest land, was intended to prevent Bayou Dupre's use by an enemy. The tower has six sides and two tiers. The first tier has the entrance and musket loopholes.

The second tier has eight embrasures for cannon and is fully covered by a roof. The tower originally had a third tier which was built the same as the second tier, but storm damage, and probably subsidence, caused it to be removed in 1843.

Tower Dupre is privately owned. The owner has placed some rip-rap around its base and built a concrete boat landing; however, the tower is suffering cracks caused by settling and remains at risk to storms.

After Tower Dupre, the first boatload went to Battery Bienvenue, grounding again along the way. Upon landing, considerable difficulty was experienced walking across the 50 yards, or less, of marsh to the battery. At least three members sank into mud to somewhere between knees and waist. Finally, old boards and the like were used to build a walkway across the worst places to the battery's brick scarp. There, a stepladder was used to get onto the battery.



Crossing the planks at Battery Bienvenue

Battery Bienvenue is located at the juncture of Bayou Bienvenue and Bayou Maxent (Villere) and was meant to close both bayous to enemy use. Indeed, the British used Bayou Bienvenue in their approach to New Orleans during the War of 1812. The battery's scarp has two shallow angles giving three fronts. Cannon were mounted *en barbette*. The work was enclosed on three sides with an earth embankment/wooden palisade.

Battery Bienvenue is privately owned. The top of the battery is overgrown, BUT hidden within the growth are six cannon; one M1819 24 pdr siege gun, one M1829 32 pdr seacoast gun, three M1845 42 pdr seacoast guns, and one M1839 42 pdr (serial No. 1) seacoast gun (all this from Wayne Stark via Bob Zink and Tom Batha—Ed Olmstead prefers not to use model numbers/dates and regards the 42 pdr, serial No. 1, as a rare prototype for what was later known as the M1845). The battery also has a shot furnace, a brick magazine, and the ruins of a brick officers quarters. Battery Bienvenue, overall, is in fine condition.

The remainder of the group, two boatloads, visited Battery Bienvenue. The additional ten-miles round trip, between Battery Bienvenue and Tower Dupre could not be done because of time constraints. Indeed, the last boat-



Greg Hagge examines a rare 42-pounder, serial No. 1, at Battery Bienvenue

load left Battery Bienvenue at dusk. The day ended with an 83% success rate because only about a third of the group got to see Tower Dupre. That, however, was better than hoped the evening before. Without Bill Hyland's efforts, it would have been considerably less.

That evening, at the conference room, presentations began at 8:00 PM and continued until 10:30 PM.

Day 3 (Friday, March 1). An early morning departure took the group through New Orleans, across the Mississippi River, and south about 75 miles to Fort Jackson. Four airboats waited there to carry CDSG across the Mississippi River (about one half mile wide at this point) to Fort St. Philip. Most arrived early enough to visit Fort Jackson before the river crossing. Fort Jackson on the west bank of the Mississippi River looks like a fort should—a pentagon with five bastions. The fort is brick, two-tiered, and mounted cannon on the barbette tier and in the casemates of the two curtains facing the river. Also, each bastion has casemates for flank howitzers. An earlier water battery southeast of the fort was rebuilt during the 1870s, and additional guns were mounted on the northwest side of the fort. Fort Jackson received two Endicott-period bat-



Fort Jackson

teries—Ransom (2x8DC) built within the fort and Millar (2x3MP) built just northwest of the fort. In addition, a southwest bastion casemate was used for a while as a mining casemate. Battery Ransom raises questions. What did it use for fire control? Were there fire control stations other than the battery's crow's-nests?



The casemates of Fort Jackson

Fort Jackson is owned by Plaquemines Parish and operated as a park. Sarah McKee and her gang do a great job tending the fort and keeping it open to the public—they deserve thanks and support.

The airboats, with five or six people per boat, shuttled the group across the river. Originally built by the Spanish, Fort St. Philip was modified and rebuilt as a Third System work. Irregular is the appropriate term to describe its trace. All of its cannon were mounted on the second, barbette, tier with the first tier having musket loopholes at some locations. The old fort is filled with eight-ten feet of sediment, probably caused by both floods and subsidence. The brickwork, however, is in remarkably good condition.



Fort St. Phillip

Water batteries were added to both flanks of the fort, and, during the 1870s, these were modified and connected to form a continuous gun line with 29 emplacements. Two of the emplacements were further modified to mount 8-inch BL rifles on Rodman carriages during the Spanish-American War. One modified emplacement (the number 2) still exists.

Fort St. Philip received six Endicott-period batteries; Ridgely (2x4.72 Armstrong), Scott (2x3MP), Brooke (2x3MP), Forse (2x8DC), Pike (2x10DC), and Merrill (4x6P). All of these batteries remain in good condition. Pike has lost the flooring from the rear of each of its loading platforms. Each loading platform now has a semi-circular free-standing concrete wall at its rear—strange and confusing. Water stands at parade level of both Pike and Forse. A mining casemate was built within the old fort, but it is now gone. Foundations remain for both the cable tank and mine storehouse. One intact fire control station, BC (?), is on Merrill's right flank. Ruins of the primary double mine station are atop the old fort, and the steel instrument column for the fire command station stands above the trees and Spanish moss at the northeast corner of the post. A concrete power house also remains, and nearby is the oil engine described by Elliot Deutsch, last newsletter. Finally, at least two wooden frame buildings are still standing, the post exchange and an officers quarters. Fort St. Philip is a most interesting place to visit. The fort is privately owned and presently used to graze cattle.

After recrossing the river, most continued the visit to Fort Jackson. A little time was allowed to reflect that both Forts Jackson and St. Philip saw serious action during the Civil War, and that Fort St. Philip saw action during the War of 1812—two working forts.



Battery Merrill

The afternoon trip north was met with downpours of rain which continued into late evening. The annual dinner and business meeting was held that evening at Sclafani's Restaurant, located about two miles from the hotel. Plenty of good food, an open bar, and lots of laughs, capped a most interesting day.

Day 4 (Saturday, March 2). The day broke clear and bright. Heavy rains had passed, but strong winds remained. Jackson Barracks and Fort Pike remained to be visited to complete the original itinerary to date. Permission had been given for CDSG to tour Jackson Barracks as a group. Though not a seacoast fort, it was a Coast Artillery post



The parade ground at Jackson Barracks

during the early 1900s—a garrison post supporting Forts Jackson and St. Philip. Many of the 1830s buildings remain. A brick wall surrounded the original post with defensive towers at the four corners. The wall is now gone, but two of the towers remain. The two towers nearest the Mississippi River were removed during 1912 to make way for a new levee. Several wooden frame buildings built during the early 1900s are still in use. These include two barracks, mess halls, NCO quarters, and the guard house. The original powder magazine is now a military museum.

The entire complex belongs to the Louisiana National Guard and is kept in fine condition. Their efforts deserve high praise. Jackson Barracks, near the Chalmette battlefield (Battle of New Orleans), is well worth seeing.

The decision was made not to visit Fort Pike as a group as originally planned. Many had already seen the fort, and, because it is a park and open daily, it is very easy to visit. Rather the decision was made to make the rest of the day free time to be used as the individual wished.



Fort Pike

Fort Pike is a state commemorative area managed by Michelle Lewis, and the grounds are kept in fine shape. Fort Pike was the first newly-built Third System work. Like its twin, nearby Fort Macomb, it also protected New Orleans' back by closing Rigolets Pass between Lake Borgne and Lake Pontchartrain. Its description is the same as Fort Macomb, and it also has a citadel, at least the first



Fort Pike

story. Like Fort Macomb, Fort Pike is suffering serious cracks caused by settling. Fort Pike is the easiest New Orleans fort to visit and is more than worth the effort.

Day 5 (Sunday, March 3). The last official day began with a three hour drive, about 120 miles through interesting countryside, to the town of Grand Isle where we boarded a boat to travel two miles to Grand Terre Island and Fort Livingston. Though the state parks system owns Fort Livingston, access is through the small harbor and dock of the state wildlife and fisheries marine laboratory on Grand Terre Island.

The continued strong winds hampered entry into Grand Terre Island's harbor. The approach to the harbor was shallow, and people were moved to the bow to level the boat. Speed was kept to a crawl to keep the stern from digging into the mud. After docking, a quarter mile walk was needed to get to the fort.

Fort Livingston is a four-sided, diamond-shaped work with fronts facing the channel and the sea. Its role was to prevent an enemy from using Barataria Bay as a route to New Orleans. The land fronts are protected by both dry ditches and counterscarps. At least some, if not all, of the



Fort Livingston

walls are tabby with a brick veneer. The main armament of the fort was on the barbette tier. Portions of the first tier had musket loopholes. The counterscarps had eight casemates for flank howitzers. Storms have destroyed sea front wall, and sand has filled the dry ditches above the cannon embrasures. However, the bulk of the fort remains.

The visit to Fort Livingston took about two hours. The boat once again crept out of Grand Terre Island's harbor, grounded, broke free, and was almost pushed by the strong winds onto the rip-rap protecting the harbor's channel. Open water was finally reached, and the threat of spending the night on Grand Terre Island lifted.



CDSGers inside Fort Livingston

Everyone gathered at the hotel conference room at 7:00 PM. Presentations continued until 11:00 PM, at which time the conference officially ended.

Day 6 (Monday, March 4). A follow on to Fort Massachusetts on Ship Island, Mississippi, was intended. About 30 people planned to travel to Gulfport, Mississippi, and take a scheduled commercial tour boat to Ship Island. The boat operator decided at 5:00 PM, March 3, that winds were too strong to attempt docking at Ship Island. Indeed, the winds did not abate until Wednesday, March 6. One member waited, made the trip to Fort Massachusetts, and reported that it was well worth the effort. To complete the record, Fort Massachusetts was intended to prevent an enemy from using the deep water anchorage near Ship Island, the closest to New Orleans. The British had used it to launch the attack on New Orleans during the War of 1812.

The following gave appreciated, informative, and enjoyable evening presentations; John Weaver (The ditch in Third System forts), Joel Eastman (Forts of Portland, Maine), Bolling Smith (Non-tactical building research), Glen Williford (Construction photos of US fortifications in the Philippines), Terry McGovern (Aerial views of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, fortifications), Dale Manuel (Second System forts), Mark Berhow (Coast defenses of North Dakota—the ABM site), and Gordon Bliss (Portsmouth, New Hampshire, fortifications—at ground level). In addition several members provided information for inclu-

sion in the handout; Dale Manuel, Glen Williford, Dale Floyd, Bolling Smith, Michelle Lewis, Bill Gaines, Bob Zink, and Henry Trawick. Again, thanks and hopefully no one was forgotten!

The assumption was that a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 70 would attend the conference. The number 50 was selected as probable. Above 50 presented boat problems. Two trips would be needed by both the Lake Borgne crew boat and the Grand Terre Island boat. There would be no problem with the airboats as seven were available. Attendance, however, was low for at least four reasons that can be identified: (1) The New Orleans area just does not have a decent cluster of our people (unlike New England, San Francisco, etc.); (2) The 9/11 scare kept a lot of people from flying; (3) New Orleans St Babs was too close to the Portsmouth St Babs—a little over four months; and (4) New Orleans was more expensive than most St Babs—boats cost money. In light of the unexpected bad weather that fell upon the conference, 39 attendees were about right. Any more would have aggravated the Lafitte Skiff shuttle on Lake Borgne, and it is unlikely that the boat captain at Grand Island would have made two trips to Fort Livingston to accomodate a number above 50.

All arrangements were made by phone, fax, and mail. Bill Hyland was a great help by agreeing to handle both permissions and water transport to the three Lake Borgne works. Limited face to face coordination was done the two days prior to the conference. The only serious problem before the conference was getting a boat for Fort Livingston.

No new lessons were learned, but some things are worth repeating. Do face to face coordination if possible, followed by hard copy. At least make a phone call prior to a letter—it is too easy to say no to a piece of paper. Cell phones and lots of numbers, both work and home, are invaluable when facing unexpected situations such as bad weather!! All in all St Babs XX was a great adventure and a lot of fun. How could it not have been at New Orleans and environs?

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Fort News

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Martello Towers Offered for Sale in England

A recent article in the *London Times* that reported the Ministry of Defence is selling three Martello towers on the Kent coast for £1 each, part of the Strategic Defence Review plan to dispose of £700m of MoD property. Towers 6, 7, and 9 are for sale for £1 through CBHillier Parker, 020 7882 8231. Only 47 of the original 103 towers still exist.

Prospective buyers will need more than a pound to convert the towers into residential homes. Detailed plans will

have to be submitted to the local planning department and any work must comply with preservation regulations and have the authorization of English Heritage.

Katy Goodman of selling agent CBHillier Parker warns: "The purchaser will have to prove they have the financial backing and expertise to renovate to English Heritage's criteria." The restoration work is not for the faint-hearted. The towers, at Shorncliffe, near Folkestone, are located away from other buildings, in a wooded area near a military firing range. Although are being sold with rights of way to the main highway, the first tasks will include creating access to the main road, and removing the vegetation currently growing out of the walls. Buyers will almost certainly not be allowed to add or alter the existing windows, but roof extensions might be allowed, which would enable an additional room with almost unlimited light.

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Conanicut Battery on Prospect Hill Jamestown, Rhode Island

Submitted by Walter K. Schroder

Ceremonies to commemorate the completion of the Historic Park were held on June 29, 2002. The preservation project was completed by the Friends of Conanicut Battery and dedicated to its founder, the late Edwin W. Connelly. The work was done in association with the Town of Jamestown and the Jamestown Historical Society.

A Short History

What we now call Conanicut Battery was built by order of the Rhode Island General Assembly in the spring of 1776. The legislators had earlier ordered 300 militiamen to Jamestown, believing that control of this island could mean control of Narragansett Bay. The original fort was probably a simple, crescent-shaped earthwork designed to house and protect six to eight heavy cannon and their men. It appears that Americans did not long occupy this spot, for in August the General Assembly ordered all cannon on the island removed to Newport, presumably deciding that city was more strategically important.

In December 1776, the British in eleven warships and 60 transports sailed up West Passage and reported that, "... the Rebels had a Battery with 4 embrasures toward the Channel. But it appeared to be abandoned." This diary entry by a captain in the British army is our best evidence that the Colonials actually built an earthwork here.

The British settled into a four-year occupation of Newport and quickly decided to garrison and fortify Jamestown. We believe it was the British who rebuilt the earthworks in the shape seen today. Surrounded by a ditch and with bastions extended at each end, it was designed both to repel land attack and to house heavy cannon in defense of West Passage. The same principles of design can be seen more clearly at Fort Adams in Newport, designed in 1824.