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## 2014 Conference at San Diego and Los Angeles

October 1 to 5, 2014

Mark Berhow

During a good two years of preparation, the conference chairs spent a lot of time and effort coordinating the contacts with the various entities that control access to the former Harbor Defenses of San Diego and Los Angeles, California. The various levels of the navy bureaucracy that needed to be contacted to gain access to the former Fort Rosecrans and Fort Emory at San Diego was staggering; we really did not know what we were going to be able to visit and photograph until the day of our visit. Mike and Joe are to be commended for their perseverance to get us in to the sites that we were able to visit.

The conference group of 52 gathered at the Fairfield Inn near San Diego Old Town the afternoon of October 1, with evening presentations and a prep talk for our first day's adventure at old Fort Rosecrans, now US Naval Base Point Loma, home to the Main Base (formerly Submarine Base); Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command (NMAWC); Fleet Combat Training Center Pacific; Space and Naval Warfare Systems Command (SPAWAR); SPAWAR Systems Center; and the Fleet Intelligence Command Pacific.

### The Harbor Defenses of San Diego

The bay at San Diego is one of the few large natural harbors on the Pacific coast of North America. It was discovered in 1542 by Portuguese explorer Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo, who was exploring the Pacific coast on behalf of Spain. It was not until 1769 that the area was formally occupied by Spain with the establishment of a presidio and a mission. The entrance to the bay was eventually defended by a small fort on Punta de las Guajarras (Ballast Point) in 1796, which was essentially abandoned after 1835. Once the United States took over the area, most of Point Loma was reserved as a military reservation in 1852, but no actual construction of defenses were begun until 1874, only to halted later that year due to lack of funds. The first formal defenses were erected beginning in 1896 with construction of four-gun 10-inch disappearing-gun battery. This was followed by the construction of a 5-inch gun battery and a 3-inch gun battery on Ballast Point and another 3-inch gun battery on North Island. The Point Loma reservation was named Fort Rosecrans in 1899 after Civil War veteran Maj. Gen. William Starke Rosecrans.

The main defenses of the bay were to be electrically controlled mines, protected by the smaller guns. However, the meager defenses were always a concern, finally resulting in the emplacement of eight 12-inch mortars in two batteries in 1915, followed by upgrading the searchlights. The next major upgrade to the armament for the San Diego defenses occurred in 1935 with the emplacement of two 8-inch guns on modern barbette carriages. The Harbor Defenses of San Diego received a complete set of new defense weapons after 1940, with the construction of three batteries for 6-inch guns, and two casemated batteries for 16-inch guns, along with a number of temporary and AMTB

gun batteries. The defenses were shutdown after 1947, and the army reservations were turned over to the navy, except for a small section on the point previously reserved for the National Park Service and an expanded post burial ground that became the San Diego National Cemetery.

### Thursday October 2: Fort Rosecrans

Fort Rosecrans today can really be divided into four distinct sections, each with a unique set of coast artillery structures divided between the Endicott, Taft, inter-war, and WWII building programs. The first area and the one most commonly associated with Fort Rosecrans is the lower garrison or harbor side of the fort; now called Naval Base Point Loma. This area contains most of the pre-WWII batteries, as well as cantonment and support structures dating back to 1900. The remains of an older Spanish fortification called Fort Guajarras (1797 - 1838) are also on this site.

We gathered in the hotel lobby at 8 AM to board our chartered bus to be transported over to old main post area of Fort Rosecrans, now the center of operation for the submarine support facility at Point Loma. Our first stop was Battery Calef-Wilkeson (4 x 10 inch DC), a very early disappearing gun battery whose original circular gun platforms were never expanded. The navy uses the battery for storage; some of the emplacements were filled with stuff and the top of the battery is used for parking. There are some gems in the battery, including sets of nearly pristine balanced-platform hoist platforms and motors.



Battery Calef-Wilkeson



Battery Calef-Wilkeson

Other stops in the morning tour included Battery McGrath (2 x 5 inch BP, modified for 2 x 3 inch Ped), the mine primary station, and Battery White (4 x 12 inch mortars). Battery White had some interesting signage and was a good example of using the terrain to position the two pits connected by a tunnel. A final short stop at the submarine veteran memorial and we were off to the west side of the point. As with all stops on navy property, we were warned about being careful not to take pictures towards the docks.



Battery White



This sign at Battery White says it all!



Battery White

Next stops were on the "Pacific Side" of old Fort Rosecrans. This area is no longer directly accessible from the main post because it is separated by the Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery. The Pacific side of the fort contains many of the pre-WWII searchlight stations, fire control structures, and newer batteries. Today this area contains a number of navy and DOD laboratories and access is very restricted. After a lunch stop, we headed out to visit Battery Strong (2 x 8 inch BC), but could only look at the outside of the back of the battery. We stopped at BCN 237 (Woodward) (2 x 6 inch SBC), viewing the outside only. We were not able to visit Battery Whistler (4 x 12 inch mortars).





Original barracks of Fort Rosecrans



Fire control stations



Battery Strong



Battery Ashburn

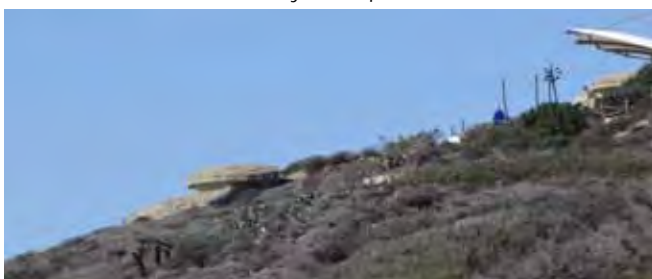
Our final stop for the day was Cabrillo National Monument, out on the fort's southern tip. This area has a wide variety of fire control-related sites and some of the smaller batteries used to control the harbor entrance. We moved on past the back of Battery Ashburn/BCN 126 (2 x 16 inch BC), which was off limits, down to Battery Point Loma (4 x 155 mm GPF on PM) a relatively intact (though partially buried) WWII Panama mount battery, and one of the better preserved "disappearing" searchlight emplacements. One of the Battery Point Loma Panama mounts



Groupment 2 station



Battery Humphries



WWI-era fire control stations at Cabrillo NM



Battery Point Loma

has been uncovered and the tops of the ammunition storage bunkers can be seen. After a brief stop at Cabrillo Monument visitor center we headed out to visit the G2 station and the outside of Battery Humphreys/BCN 238 (2 x 6 inch SBC). We then visited the remaining fire control stations, searchlight shelters, and the radio room on Cabrillo National Monument. Before heading back to our hotel, Eileen Martinez, the chief of interpretation, who told the group that Cabrillo National Monument is renewing its commitment to increasing their interpretation of the military history of Point Loma.

At the hotel, we gathered for a few more presentations after dinner and an overview of the next days' events.

#### Friday October 3: Fort Emory

In October 1942 the army acquired 412 acres at Coronado Heights and on December 14, 1942, this site was officially designated Fort Emory in honor of Brigadier General William Helmsley Emory. Fort Emory was a sub-post of Fort Rosecrans. Two gun batteries were built on the site along with barracks and

support facilities. Today Fort Emory is used by the navy as a radio station and training facility.

We started with another 8 AM departure on the tour bus, which took us over to Coronado, past Naval Base San Diego, where we picked up our navy escorts for our trip out to the ex-Fort Emory reservation, now a navy training facility. After some discussion of the ground rules for photography, we were able to visit the outside of Battery 134 (2 x 16 inch BC, never armed), the PSR for Battery 134, and Battery Grant/BCN 239 (2 x 6 inch SBC). The general theme for most of the navy owned items was that we were not allowed inside most of the larger batteries as they were being used.

Returning to the hotel, we made the 2-3 hour drive to San Pedro and the DoubleTree Hotel at Via Cabrillo Marina on what once was the bottom-side reservation of Fort MacArthur. We met for our annual banquet and business meeting and a short briefing on what we would be seeing the next day at the old upper reservation of Fort MacArthur.

#### The Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles

San Pedro Bay was first visited by Juan Rodríguez Cabrillo in his 1542 exploration, but it use as a harbor did not begin until the settlement of area was begun with the establishment of a mission in 1771 and a pueblo in 1781. San Pedro Bay, which was not a protected harbor, did not emerge as a major commercial harbor until a series of breakwaters were completed in 1900. With the growing network of roads, rails, and shipping, Los Angeles became an important shipping location that warranted harbor defenses that were authorized in 1910. By 1919, the location received four 14-inch guns, eight 12-inch mortars, mine defenses (never installed), and four 3-inch guns in batteries. The post, built on two separate reservations, was named Fort MacArthur after Civil War and Philippine Insurrection veteran Lt. Gen. Arthur MacArthur in 1914. The harbor defenses were supplemented with two 14-inch railway guns after 1925, and greatly expanded during WW2 with three 6-inch batteries and two 16-inch batteries, along with a large number of 155 mm and AMTB batteries. Following WWII Fort MacArthur continued to serve as a training post, then as a Nike missile brigade HQ through 1972. As



Battery 134



The Plotting & Spotting Room for Battery 134



Battery Grant



The Battleship Iowa at her berth in San Pedro



the Nike program was phased out, Fort MacArthur's army role ended, and some of the lands were transferred to the City of Los Angeles, with the main housing area becoming a housing area for the Los Angeles Air Force Base in 1982.

Saturday October 4: Fort MacArthur Upper Reservation and Whites Point Reservation

Fort MacArthur is divided into a number of discontinuous reservations commonly referred to the Lower, Middle, Upper, and White Point reservations. The Fort MacArthur Reservations hold an important collection of coast artillery batteries and support structures mostly developed out of the "Panama Style" battery design associated with the major "Taft"-era gun batteries. One of the more fortunate aspects of the fort is how much original material survives and the physical condition of the structures. The Fort MacArthur Museum was the highlight of the tour, and the restored generator room is fantastic example of bringing this old equipment back to life.

Arriving at Battery Leary-Merriam (2 x 14 inch DC) at 8:30, we were met by the personnel of the Marine Exchange, which occupies the remodeled Nike HIPAR radar power room on top of the battery. After a short visit to the double fire control station in front of the battery, we headed down to visit the magazine area below, remodeled during WWII to become the harbor entrance command post for the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles. A volunteer crew has done an extensive clean up of the junk that was



Battery Leary-Merriam interior

piled in the rooms, making this a much better visit than the last one 25 years ago. The battery was again modified in the 1950s for use as a Nike radar control site (Site LA-43 IFC), with the radar facilities built in and around Battery Leary's pit. A short journey to the north brought the group to Battery Barlow-Saxton (8 x 12 inch mortars), which was opened up by school district custodians.



Fire control stations in front of Battery Leary-Merriam



Battery Leary



Battery Barlow-Saxton



Battery Osgood: Breech from the USS Arkansas



Battery Osgood-Farley: Power room



Battery Osgood: Shell Room



Battery Osgood: Plotting room



Battery Osgood



Battery Farley: Radio Switchboard room





Battery Osgood: Battery commander's station



Taxi services in a circa 1918 truck



Battery 241



Battery Osgood: Small weapons display



Quad .50-caliber AA



Battery 241: Power panel



Mobile searchlight system



Battery 241: Generators

This battery, on the National Register of Historic Sites, is a sad poster child of neglect, the walls are covered in graffiti, and the pits are littered with thousands of empty spray paint cans.

For me the highlight of the trip was the time spent at the Fort MacArthur Museum. Housed on the grounds around and in the rooms of Battery Osgood-Farley (2 x 14 inch DC), the crew at the museum pulled out all the stops and had all their hardware out on display. They started with a display of several vehicles and searchlight/antiaircraft equipment that have been meticulously restored to operating condition. They also hosted a delightful lunch prepared on military portable cooking equipment. The CDSG members wandered around the grounds visiting the restored battery commander's station and plotting room, as well as a room that housed a small arms collection and radio/telephone communications equipment. For me a highlight was seeing (and hearing!!) the two GE 25 kW gas-powered generators running in the restored battery power room. This was followed by a trip in a WWI truck out to BCN 241 (2 x 6 inch SBC) and a visit



Battery Bunker



Nike Site LA-43 launch area at White Point

to its power room with its three Worthington Diesel generators in nearly pristine condition. The Fort MacArthur Museum Association folks are in charge of the interior of this battery and plan to use it for storage and restoration work, including trying to get one of the Worthingtons running in the future.

The final stop of the day was at the White Point Reservation and Battery Bunker/BCN 127 (2 x 16 inch BC). Planning for the construction of the White Point facilities began in 1917 with the development of a small parcel of land used to build base end stations for the guns on the Upper Reservation of Fort MacArthur. Over the years, the Army's ownership of this area would grow and by 1942 the entire property was under the control of the government. The museum association volunteers opened up the battery so we could walk through the magazines and power rooms, long empty. The site is being encroached on by Air Force housing built behind and above the battery, construction that has destroyed or buried Battery Bunker's PSR and the Taft-era fire control stations that were once behind the battery, although the BC station for Battery Bunker can be seen behind one of the houses. The magazines, missile assembly, and warhead buildings for Nike site LA-43L are still present, now part of the White Point Nature Preserve that makes up the remaining open space in the area.

Finishing up the conference was one more night of presentations.

Sunday October 5: Sea Bench and Long Point Military Reservations



Sea Bench FC stations



Battery Barnes





Fire control station above Long Point



Nike Site LA-55 Launch area

The final day of the conference involved more or less independent visits to the remaining fire control stations at the old Sea Bench Military Reservation, now a part of a nature preserve, and the Long Point Military Reservation, now a mixed use area by the City of Rancho Palos Verdes.

The Sea Bench fire control reservation of Fort MacArthur was acquired in 1917 for the construction of six Taft-era base end stations for the guns at Fort MacArthur. During WWII a large three-level station was added to support BCNs 127, 241, and 240. Today the area is under development for homes and coastal walking trails. One Taft-era station and the WWII three-level station remain today.

The military reservation at Long Point was also first acquired by the army in 1917 for the construction of six base end stations for the guns at Fort MacArthur. By WWII the area had expanded considerably. The Rancho Palos Verdes city hall is located in two of the Nike-era barracks and the city's cable TV station is located in the missile assembly building. The site includes Battery Barnes/BCN 240 (2 x 6 inch SBC), Nike launch and administrative area LA-55, and a complete set of 6 Taft-era fire control stations on the hillside overlooking Long Point.



St. Babs XXXII group photo at Battery White, Fort Rosecrans

## Summary:

For a modest number of fortification structures at these two harbor defenses that are separated by 120 miles, there were a number of unique jewels that cannot be seen anywhere else in the continental US. The "Taft-era" mortar batteries and 14-inch DC batteries are the only ones in the continental US. The relatively intact status of Battery Osgood-Farley has made it a great place for restoration efforts, and the museum's collection of equipment and vehicles is outstanding. The trip went well and we were able to see at least the outside of most of the gun batteries and many of the fire control & searchlight structures remaining. Time has taken a toll, however. A number of Los Angeles structures have been destroyed or buried in the past 20 years, including the batteries at Bolsa Chica (BCN 242 and BCN 128), and some of the fire control stations at Whites Point and Sea Bench. The US Navy continues to use and modify the old gun batteries on its properties; there is even a plan to remove all the structures at Fort Emory to build a new training facility. So it was good to get to once again visit what is there.

I would like to thank Mike Fiorini and Joe Janesic for all their efforts in organizing and administrating this meeting. I know it was not easy!

On the San Diego side, thanks go to the US Navy PAOs who worked with us to make this happen, including Lt. Kelly Kohlhofer from the Judge Advocate General's office, Lt. Ben Addison from San Diego Naval District Public Affairs Office, and Jim Mugg from the Naval Facilities Department at Naval Base Point Loma. Our thanks as well go to Jon Nylander, PAO for the training area at Coronado, and to Marv Heinze, CDSG member and Special Assistant for Homeland Defense of the Mine Warfare Command, who helped with providing some key contacts, especially when it came to our visit to Fort Emory, and gave a great talk on the current status of mine warfare. At Cabrillo National Monument we are grateful to Superintendent Tom Workman and Chief of Interpretation Eileen Martinez, and to the volunteers of the San Diego Military History Association for their support.

At Los Angeles, thanks go to Fort MacArthur Museum Director Steve Nelson and his crew, specifically Dave Hancock, Dave Kyllonen, Dave Oneslager, and Chris Simich, for getting us into Battery Leary-Merriam, Battery Barlow-Saxton, Battery 241, and Battery Bunker. Also thanks to Capt. Kip Louttit, executive director of the Marine Exchange, for arranging our tour of Battery Leary-Merriam.

And, after all these years, the food at the Lighthouse Cafe at 39th and Pacific in San Pedro was just as good as I remember it, from the days when I used to volunteer at the Fort MacArthur Museum!

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**CDSG Logo Hats, Shirts & Patches**

The CDSG is pleased to offer custom-made hats, T-shirts and patches to our membership. Wearing these hats, T-shirts and patches are a great way to make others aware of the CDSG and its goals. It is also an excellent way to promote new memberships in the CDSG.

The CDSG patches have been available for several years. Designed especially for the CDSG, these quality patches combine the Coast Artillery Corps and the Corps of Engineers symbols to reflect their involvement in U.S. coastal defenses. This logo is now on hats and a set of T-shirts which are great for showing the CDSG "flag."

To order your hat, T-shirt or patch, please complete the order form below and send it along with your check (made out to CDSG, Inc.) to Terry McGovern at 1700 Oak Lane, McLean, VA 22101-3326 USA (e-mail: [tcmcgovern@att.net](mailto:tcmcgovern@att.net)).

CDSG hats, T-shirts and patches ordering information

Black T-shirt with white ink:

Size & # \_\_\_L \_\_\_XL \_\_\_2XL \_\_\_3XL

Red T-Shirt with white ink:

Size & # \_\_\_L \_\_\_XL \_\_\_2XL \_\_\_3XL

Kaki T-Shirt with black ink:

Size & # \_\_\_L \_\_\_XL \_\_\_2XL \_\_\_3XL

Navy T-shirt with yellow ink:

Size & # \_\_\_L \_\_\_XL \_\_\_2XL \_\_\_3XL

Total Number: \_\_\_ times \$ \_\_\_ = Total \$ \_\_\_

(domestic \$18/overseas \$26 each)

Patch: \_\_\_ times \$ \_\_\_ = Total \$ \_\_\_

(domestic \$4/overseas \$6) each

Hats: \_\_\_ times \$ \_\_\_ = Total \$ \_\_\_

(domestic \$20/overseas \$25) each

Be sure to include your name and shipping address.

You can also order online at <http://cdsg.org/shopping/>

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**The CDSG Fund**

The CDSG Fund supports the efforts of the Coast Defense Study Group, Inc., by raising funds to support preservation and interpretation efforts concerning seacoast defenses around the United States. The CDSG Fund is seeking tax-deductable donations for preservation projects around the United States consistent with the goals of the CDSG.

The CDSG Fund is always seeking proposals for the monetary support (up to \$500) of preservation and interpretation projects at public parks and museums. A one-page proposal briefly describing the site, the organization doing the work, the project to be done or supported, and how the money would be used, should be sent to Terry McGovern, Mark Berhow, or Sam Stokes.

Send donations and proposals to:

The CDSG Fund

C/O Sam Stokes, Trustee

P.O. Box 807, Bodega Bay, CA 94923-0807

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