

Fort John Custis \ Fisherman Island Military Reservation

On 1890 Marine Hospital and Quarantine Station established on Fisherman Island

driving to the former Fort John Custis, Fisherman Island

EDSG Conference Schedule

Friday, 20 October 2000

driving time to Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife

Refuge, 34 minutes, 25 miles

in 1941, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, military units arrived at Ft. Winthrop

Fort John Custis & Fisherman Island

in early 1942 Fort John Custis was designated as Fort John Custis

in October 1942 the post was redesignated as Fort John Custis

are now 46 state route 143 (Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel)

continue on Route 143 to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

Subsidiary 2000

in summer 1947 the garrison at Fort John Custis was reduced to a single artillery company

in July 1948 Ft. John Custis and Fisherman Island were transferred to the National Wildlife

into 1948, both posts and their surrounding lands were transferred to the National Wildlife

Chesapeake Bay

from high bridge you can see the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

in 1949 the US Army transferred the post with the 303d ACW Detachment

cross over Fisherman Island former gun positions on Fisherman Island

after reaching mainland take first right after parking

Road (Route 600) sign marked Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife

Refuge

continue short US 143 to end of road

right at a fork in the road, the left fork leads to the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel

The Refuge closes to the public at 4 PM

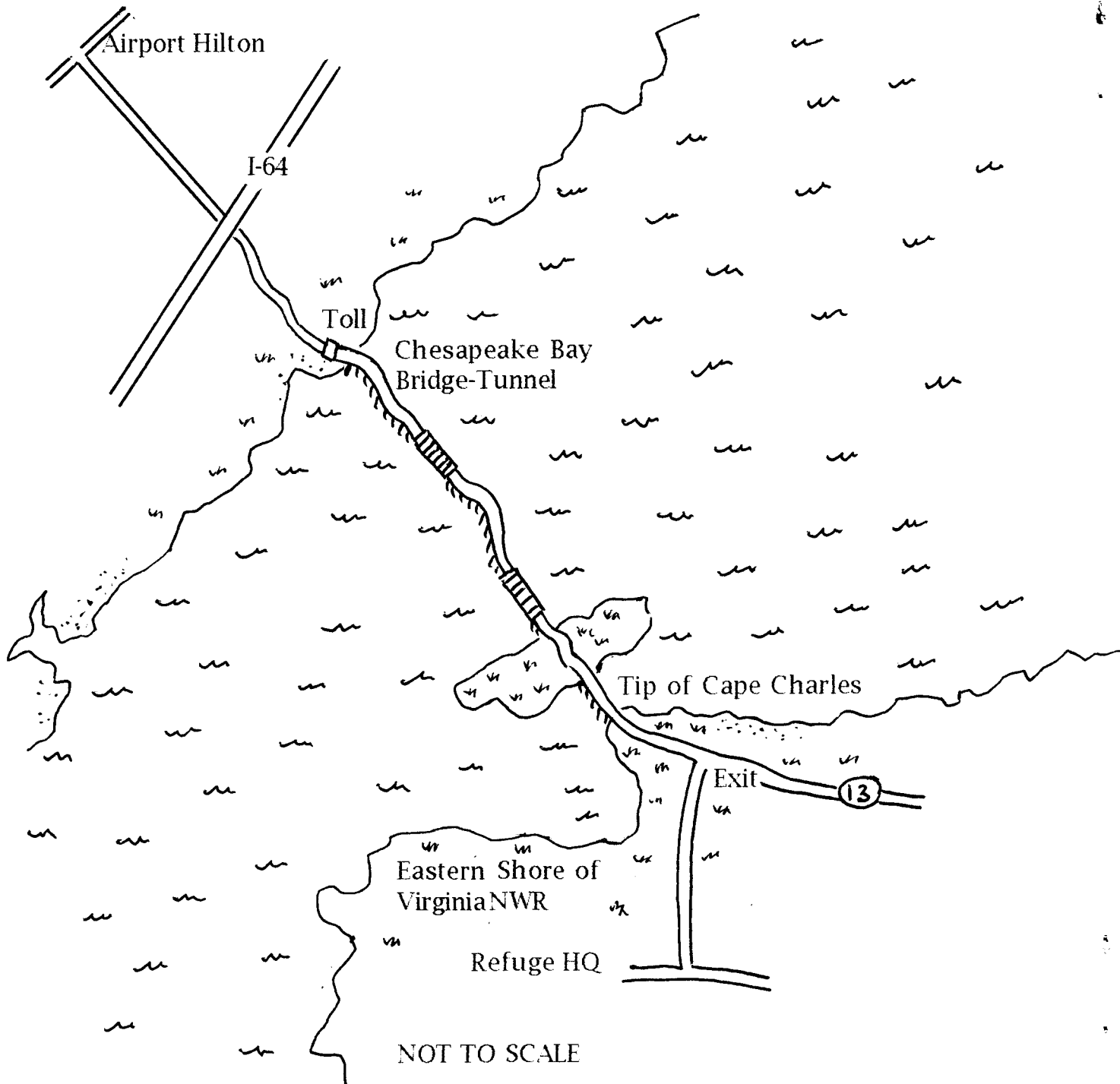
Hosted By: Eastern Shore of Virginia & Fisherman Island

National Wildlife Refuges

The Old Coast Guard Station, Virginia Beach

NOT TO SCALE

Norfolk Airport Hilton to Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge



FLT 2000

driving guide from Eastern Shore of Virginia National Wildlife Refuge to Cheapside tower.

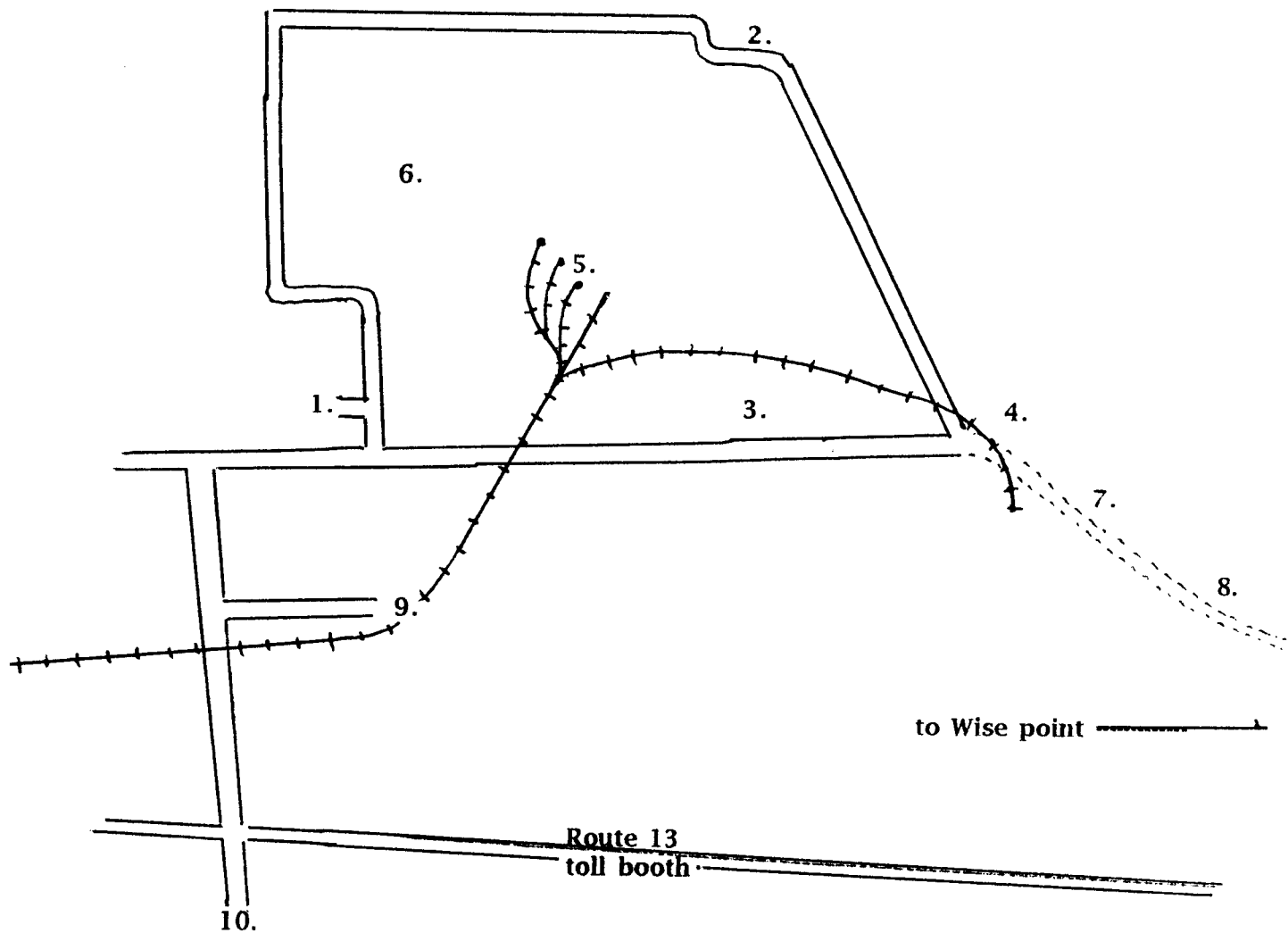
- exit Wildlife Refuge and proceed back to Route 13
- turn right on Route 13 heading north
- proceed north for about 10 minutes and 3.7 miles.
- Townsend Road on right and Citgo Station on left.
- turn left on State Route 656.
- at end of road turn right on Route 645 and then after one tenth of a mile turn left back on Route 646(before white house)
- proceed west on Route 646(Pickett's Harbor Road) to end of paved road. Park on shoulder of road. Limited turning space.
- Cheapside tower is in thickly wooded area on right.
- best viewed from beach
- former site searchlight platform also south of tower location. Nothing remains.

Our host for this tour is the Eastern Shore of Virginia and Fisherman Island National Wildlife Refuges established in 1984.

The purpose of the refuge is to conserve, manage and enhance the habitat for endangered and threatened species, migratory birds and other species of fish and wildlife.

The Refuge closes at 4 PM daily.

FORT JOHN CUSTIS, VIRGINIA



LEGEND:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Wildlife Refuge Headquarters | 5. 8-inch railway firing spurs |
| 2. Battery No. 9,228, two 6-inch | 6. concrete gun group tower |
| 3. Plotting & Switchboard, 122-A Winslow | 7. Met station |
| 4. Battery Winslow, 122, two 16-inch | 8. Wise fire control towers & 296-A. |
| | 9. Refuge Visitors Center |
| | 10. searchlight platforms |

NOT TO SCALE

FLT 10/00

a tour of the batteries: Fort John Custis

Battery 8 (8-inch railway gun firing positions)

In the summer of 1941, tracks were laid by the Pennsylvania Railroad into the fort and firing spurs for four 8-inch railway guns were constructed.. The first 8-inch railway guns arrived shortly after Pearl Harbor, being moved by rail from Fort Monroe, up to Baltimore and down the Eastern Shore. In tactical status until early 1944. **nothing remains**

Group Station

The four story concrete structure was built as the command and control of the Gun Groups assigned to Fort John Custis and Fisherman Island. **still remains. no access.**

Plotting and Switchboard Room , Battery Winslow.

Assigned Construction Number 122-A. Reinforced concrete structure located behind Battery Winslow. Completed in November 1943 and covered with earth fill. Used as NCO club when Cape Charles Air Force Station was active. **All entrances covered with earth. No access.**

Battery Number 12 (Winslow)

Assigned Battery Construction Number 122. Work on this 16-inch position began in August 1941 and was transferred to the Army at the end of 1943. In 1944 battery still not fully operational and by May 1945 was listed in maintenance status. position dismantled in 1948-49. **access to firing platform no. 2 .**

Tactical Battery Number 9

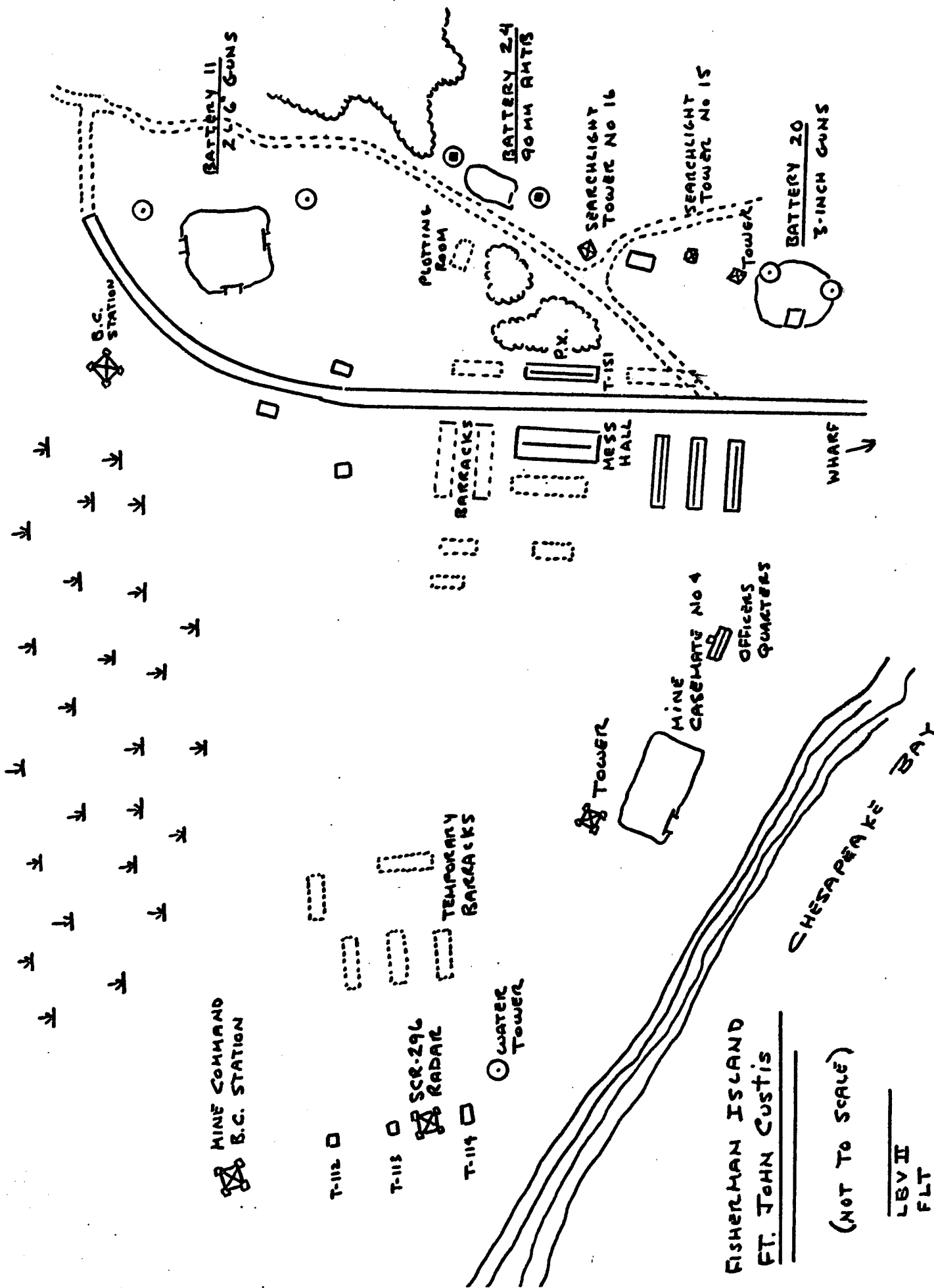
Assigned Battery Construction Number 228. Work on this 6-inch position commenced in September 1942 and the battery was completed in November 1943. A battery commanders station was completed a month later and located 200 feet to the northwest. Replaced **Battery 9 (Temporary)** consisting of four 155 mm guns.

Meteorological Station.

The Met Station was erected 500 yards southwest of Battery Winslow and was completed in August 1943. The entire structure is built with reinforced concrete. **Structure intact. accessible.**

Wise Fire Control Towers

Three fire control towers and a SCR 296-A tower erected in this area. towers removed. **some foundations remain. accessible.**



a tour of the batteries: fisherman island

1. small-arms range target parapet

This concrete parapet is possibly a small arms target parapet (butts) and is inscribed. "A-246 CA 1943". Battery A, 246th Coast Artillery probably constructed the parapet with troop labor. It is in front of the line of fixed gun positions. Research indicates it was not constructed by the Corps of Engineers. Recent interviews with former members of the battery does not shed any light on the mystery. When the second road to the bridge was being planned, the location of this parapet was noted by the engineers. **Your Guess.**

2. Tactical Battery Number 11.

The battery was assigned Construction Number 227 and constructed started in April 1942. The reinforced concrete and structural steel structure was completed in October 1943. The battery mounted two 6-inch M1905A2 guns which had been manufactured at Watervliet Arsenal. A battery commanders station was built in late 1942 and located 200 feet behind the battery **The tower was demolished in 1986. not accessible.**

3. Tactical Battery Number 24.

Work on this battery commenced in December 1942 and was completed in January 1943. The battery was originally designated as battery Number 22. The gun platforms were constructed of reinforced concrete on wood piles. Two 90 mm fixed guns were mounted on the platforms. The battery commanders station and plotting room were located in a cottage type wood building northeast of the position. In 1976 the armament(less gun tubes) was removed to Fort Monroe. **Only gun platforms remain.**

4. Searchlight Platforms

Two steel searchlight platforms were erected in December 1941 with troop labor. They mounted 60 inch Sperry lamps and were designated as searchlights Number 15 and 16. **Towers demolished 1986. Only concrete foundations remain.**

5. Emergency Battery

This battery erected in May 1917 and mounted two 5-inch guns from Fort Dupont and two 5-inch guns from Fort Slocum. The guns were approved to be dismantled in July 1919. The exact location of this battery has been the subject of limited research. The best guess at the location is between Batteries 20 and 24 due to the access to the wharf and road as well as being on high ground. **Your Guess again.**

6. Tactical Battery Number 20

Work on this battery commenced in May 1942 and was completed three months later in August 1942. The position was built of wood piles and reinforced concrete. A magazine was built between the gun positions. Two M1902 3-inch guns manufactured by Bethlehem steel were mounted in this position. Research indicates that these guns were transferred from Fort Wool. **Magazine remains.**

7. Mine Casemate Number 4

The Mine Casemate was completed and transferred to the US Army in August 1944. The structure was entirely built of reinforced concrete and concealed and protected by sand fill. It contained an operating room, plotting room and power room. The Mine Command Battery Commanders Station was located to the rear in a reinforced concrete station room on top of a steel tower. Five reinforced concrete cable huts were located on the shoreline southeast of the wharf. In 1952 the casemate and portions of island were turned over to the US Navy for harbor defense activities. **Nothing remains.**

8. Cantonment area.

The wood buildings to support the gun crews were erected on the island. Following World War II they were abandoned by the US Army. Later the US Navy occupied some structures. By 1976 there were only a half dozen buildings remaining. The last of these buildings were torn down prior to 1985. **Some foundations and road remain.**

Fielding L. Tyler
October 2000