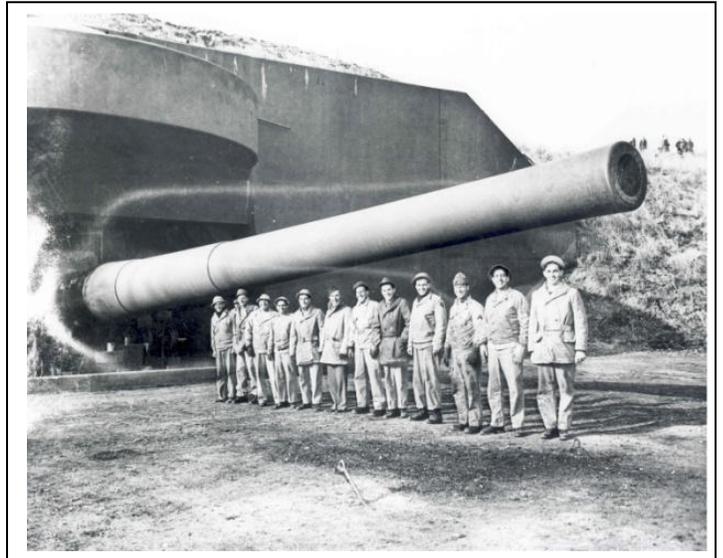


Battery Lewis and the Navesink Military Reservation at Hartshorne Woods Park – Monmouth County Park System

Information Sheet on Restoration & Interpretation

Key to Defense of America's Greatest Harbor

With the looming threat of war in the late 1930s, the United States initiated a program to modernize and expand coastal defenses along the eastern and western seaboard. The Hartshorne property in the Navesink Highlands was deemed a desirable site due to its high elevation and location at the southern entrance to the New York harbor. In 1942 the US Government purchased 224 acres, and between 1942 and 1944 the Army constructed the Navesink Military Reservation as part of the Harbor Defenses of New York, headquartered at Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook. The objectives of the Harbor Defenses of New York were to deny enemy ships access to New York Bay, and to furnish heavy artillery support for defense against landings.



Two batteries were constructed at the Navesink Military Reservation during World War II. Battery Lewis, the larger of the two, is a 600 foot long casemated battery, consisting of two 16 inch caliber gun emplacements connected by a corridor housing ammunition storage and power rooms. **Battery Lewis is the only 16 inch gun battery in the State of New Jersey.** Constructed of steel and thick reinforced concrete and covered with earth, and built upon the prototype developed by the Army for all 16 inch gun batteries, Battery Lewis was designed to withstand battleship and aerial attack. Two 16 inch Navy Mk11 M1 guns on M4 Army barbette carriages were mounted in Battery Lewis in May 1943. Originally fabricated for mounting on Navy battleships, the guns with their carriages weighed over 150 tons each. With barrels over 60 feet in length, they were able to fire armor-piercing projectiles 16 inches in diameter and 2100 pounds in weight. Their range reached from just offshore near Point Pleasant Beach to the east end of Long Beach, New York. For the WW II-era coastal defense program, the Army built 20 batteries with 16 inch guns and of those only 14 were actually armed. Battery 219, begun in July 1942, was fitted with a pair of 6 inch guns on barbette carriages in May 1943. A heavy cast steel shield with curved surfaces to aid in deflecting enemy fire made the guns resemble a Sherman tank.

Change of Purpose

The imposing Battery Lewis and the smaller Battery 219 survive today, along with the stand-alone Plotting-Switchboard Room from which the firing of the 16 inch guns was plotted and four Fire Control Stations. As with all the coastal batteries, the guns were removed after WW II, cut up on site and sold as scrap metal. Other WWII structures, including troop housing and a 100-foot observation tower, were demolished by the Army, as were the structures built during the site's use from 1949 to 1974 as Highlands Air Force Station, later the Highlands Army Air Defense Site.

The entire 224 acre former military base became part of Hartshorne Woods Park as a result of two no-cost transfers of surplus land in 1974 and 1984 from the US Government to the County of Monmouth. Hartshorne Woods Park now totals 787 acres and welcomes over 250,000 visitors annually.

Restoration and Public Interpretation

In 2013 the Park System began planning for repairs and improvements to prepare Battery Lewis for interpretation and public visitation, and completed the first phase of work on Battery Lewis, restoring the concrete on the two casemate canopies and wing walls. Two projects funded by The Friends of the Parks were completed in 2014 – a 150-page nomination of the Navesink Military Reservation to the National Register of Historic Places, and an exhibit plan for Battery Lewis. When the restoration is complete, visitors will be able to walk from one end of the battery to the other, explore various rooms, and learn through exhibits and guided tours about Battery Lewis and the historic coastal defenses of the United States.

Phase 2 of the Battery Lewis Restoration is funded and scheduled for 2015.

The second phase of construction includes interior repairs (concrete, historic steel elements, gates) and improvements (utilities, drainage) to the 600-foot long battery, and acquisition of a 16 inch gun barrel for permanent display in one of the casemates. This project is in the final design phase, and construction will take place in 2015.

A limited number of surplus 16 inch Navy Mark 7 gun barrels are available at the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia. Originally mounted on the Iowa class battleships during WWII (including the USS New Jersey), these gun barrels are very similar to those that were installed at Battery Lewis. Each gun barrel is 68 feet long and weighs about 120 tons. The Board of Recreation Commissioners authorized application to the Navy Inactive Ships Program for one 16 inch gun barrel from the USS New Jersey, which has been approved by the Navy. The transport of the gun barrel to Hartshorne Woods Park will take place in early 2015.

The Friends of the Parks are raising funds for the Battery Lewis exhibits.

Exhibits are planned in three rooms off the main corridor as well as at the gun barrel display, and at the parking lot where visitors first encounter the site. While exhibits will focus on the park's military past and on Battery Lewis, the themes are broad-based to give visitors an overview of the park's history and landscape including the unique geography of the Navesink Highlands, the Hartshorne legacy and the creation of Hartshorne Woods Park.

The interpretive displays, which are being developed by a professional exhibit designer working with Park System staff, will include graphic panels and kiosks with a wide array of historical photographs and images as well as reminiscences of veterans who served there. To complement the exhibit graphics, a section of the steel ammunition service (the overhead trolley) will be reconstructed, and additional artifacts will be acquired for display. The Battleship New Jersey Museum is donating 16-inch projectiles for display in Battery Lewis.

The size and the uniqueness of Battery Lewis promise to add another popular attraction to the area, with possibilities for cooperative programming with the National Park Service at Fort Hancock, Sandy Hook and the Battleship New Jersey in Camden.

