

Trains and Troops
Strasburg, PA

On 4-5 November 2023, the Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA) supported the Pennsylvania Railroad Museum during the annual "Trains and Troops" event. This unique event chronicles the use of railroads throughout American military history from the Civil War to the present day.

The members of AGFA who participated in the event were Donna Cusano, Paul Cusano, Daniel Fortak and Rochelle Vollmerding, Anne Lutkenhouse, John Uhler, Gary and Deanna Weaver, Shawn Welch and our guest Becky Webb.

The educational objective was to provide interpretation of the oft-forgotten and overlooked missions of the U.S. Army's Coast Artillery railway guns; railroad-based medical operations, railroad support operations in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and New York during the World War Two and the critical morale support provided by the Chaplains of the military in all wars throughout American history.

The Pennsylvania RR Museum features a very extensive collection of excellently preserved locomotives and rolling stock within its main building. Interpreters for the Trains and Troops event set up exhibits directly in the museum proper, with the rail cars and engines as a historic back drop. The photo below shows many of our participating membership and friends on Saturday, 4 November.



The event started on Saturday morning with a meeting of each participating group's key contact person and Museum staff. Where else could you see General Grant in attendance in person with WWII G.I.'s ??



AGFA member Dan Fortak, right, attends the meeting as the lead for his exhibit on Railroad operations in Pennsylvania during WWII.



The display below shows the entirety of the Military Chaplains display.



The “Four Chaplains” display is new for the Trains and Troops event. This display tells the true-life story of four chaplains who were on a troopship that was torpedoed by the Germans in the Atlantic Ocean during WWII.



Another display that explains the role of the Chaplain in maintaining soldier morale and serving as a morale enabler during WWII.



The display below addresses all services and time periods for US Chaplains from the founding of our nation through the Vietnam War.



The display below shows a Chaplain's field desk and key materials the Chaplain would use to support soldier moral and spiritual needs.



Below is another view of the Chaplaincy display.



The AGFA exhibits were Railway Artillery, Pennsylvania WWII Railway Operations, US Army Hospital Trains, and WWII US Military Chaplaincy. Railway Artillery interpretation had several key components of Artillery Fire Control, ammunition (projectiles, fuses and propellants) and communications in support of railway artillery. The photo below shows photographs of railway artillery and inert ammunition components. To the left is a EE-8 field telephone.



The photo below shows a variety of fuses and components for artillery. The complete shell at the bottom of the case is 37mm Anti-Tank Gun ammunition with armor piercing projectile.



The display below consists of small arms for the individual soldier, a BD-71 six line switchboard, and a map of Fort Hancock that includes the locations for railway artillery firing points.



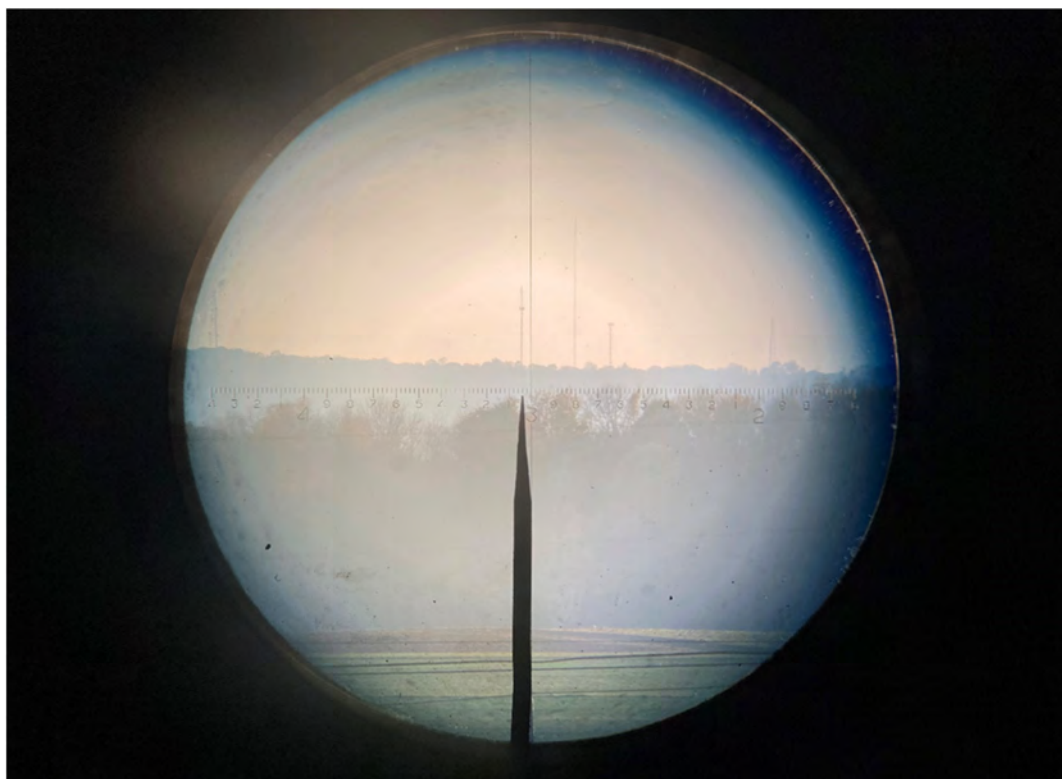
The brass disc is a "Wind Component Indicator" which provides fire control data on the effect of wind for Range and Direction. Next to the Wind Component Indicator is an M1905 Deflection Board and charts explaining Railway Artillery fire control.



A M1910A1 Azimuth Instrument in our corner display area, set to look out over the expansive countryside view so visitors could see the magnification capability. Two EE-91 fire control telephones are also shown to the left of the instrument.



A view through the azimuth to the distant fields and wood line showing the detail of the image.



TSG Weaver is awaiting visitors to share his knowledge of the M1910A1 Azimuth Instrument.



A Boy Scout visitor has just looked at the view through the azimuth, and his 'Wow' comment says it all.



Below TSG Weaver with azimuth instrument in the corner area, showing just how the view out the back window of the museum was spectacular, and how distant the wood line.



On Sunday TSG Weaver wore the Army Blue Denim uniform with a railroad workers jacket and hat. This was not an uncommon combination for the soldiers of the Railway Artillery.



The charts below explained the history M1A1 8-inch railway artillery piece. This expansive exhibit on railway artillery was done by one of our friends, Vince Turner.

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8-INCH GUN, Mk. VI on RAILWAY MOUNT M1A1

The MK. VI railway gun was quickly put together at the start of World War II, to supplement and replace the older World War I 8-inch railway gun. These guns had a very short life, rolling out in February 1941, and being cut up for scrap immediately after the war. The gun was based on the Navy's 8-inch (200 mm) Mark VI. The barrel was mounted both on Barbette as well as on the M1A1 railway carriage. Baldwin produced some 24, M1A1 railway carriages and support cars for the Navy's 8" Mark VI guns produced by the Naval Ordnance Factory at the Washington Navy Yard. Eight of these guns were sent to Fort Miles, Delaware.

D8 8-inch MK. VI railway gun in firing position.
Date: 7 Feb. 1944
Source: TM 9-2300 Standard Artillery and Fire Control Material



FIRING POSITION



FIGURE 1—Overall dimensions of gun and barrel.

TECHNICAL OVERVIEW & SPECIFICATIONS

SPECIFICATIONS	
In service	1941 - 1946
Manufacturer	Baldwin Locomotive Works
Number built	247
Weight	42,000 lbs. (tube and breech)
Length	30 feet, 9 inches
Shell type	Separate loading High Explosive (HE), and Armor Piercing (AP) - hand fed
Caliber	8 inches (200 mm)
Breech type	Interrupted screw, step type
Reload	Hydropneumatic
Carriage	M1A1 railway
Elevation	45 degrees
Traverse	360 degrees
Rate of fire	2 rounds per minute
Maximal velocity	HE - 2,840 feet per second (fps); AP - 2,750 U/s
Maximum range	35,300 yards

SIGHTING & FIRE CONTROL EQUIPMENT

- M1 Deflection board
- M1 Fire adjustment board
- M1A1 Range correction board
- M3 Spotting board
- M1912 Clinometer
- M1 Percentage corrector
- M1A1 Height finder
- M2 Azimuth indicator
- M5 Elevation indicator
- M1910A1 Azimuth instrument
- M8 Helium filling kit
- M1 Gunners quadrant
- Type B, set forward rule
- M1 Prediction scale
- Base site
- Firing table, B-1-1
- M7 Microscopic trainer
- M1 Generating unit



SUPPORT CARS

- M2 Fire control car
- M1 Machine shop car
- Modified box car for ammunition

AMMUNITION CRANE



BATTERY LOCATIONS

Originally built as a temporary coastal gun battery with two 8" MK. VI guns mounted on M1A1 firing railcars. This was a mobile railway battery with two fixed emplacements located on a rail spur track. The battery was dismantled in 1946 and the guns were sent to the Naval Ordnance Factory at the Washington Navy Yard for scrap.



RAILWAY BATTERIES AT FORT MILES, DELAWARE

Battery Number	Battery Name	Completed	Abandoned
20	Batt A	Dec 1942	08 APR 1944
21	Batt B	June 1943	

Four MK. VI, M3A2, 8-inch guns mounted on M1A1 Railway Carriage (8 each MK. VI) were positioned in each battery.



ORGANIZATION & OPERATIONS



GUN SECTION: Each emplacement of 1 gun is manned by a gun squad and an ammunition squad. The strength is 18 railroad men.

GUN SQUAD: The gun squad (17 railroad men) consists of the gun commander (chief of section), gun pointer, elevation setter, battery commander's telephone operator, range board operator, sliding rule operator, chief of breech, and 9 crewmembers numbered 1 to 9. Men are assigned permanent positions according to their aptitude, but will be interchanged frequently in drill positions in order to develop flexibility and facilitate replacement.

AMMUNITION SQUAD: The ammunition squad (9 railroad men) consists of the chief of ammunition and 8 ammunition handlers numbered from 10 to 17. This squad is divided by its chief into details for the service of powder and projectiles, and for miscellaneous duties assigned by local conditions.

FORMATION: Each gun section formation in the ranks as shown in Figure 1. Unarmored ammunition base on the right of their respective squads. The chief of breech and the chief of ammunition form at the right of the numbered men in the gun squad and ammunition squad, respectively. After firing the gun service, the chief of section takes post in the rear rank, 90 inches to the right of the gun pointer.

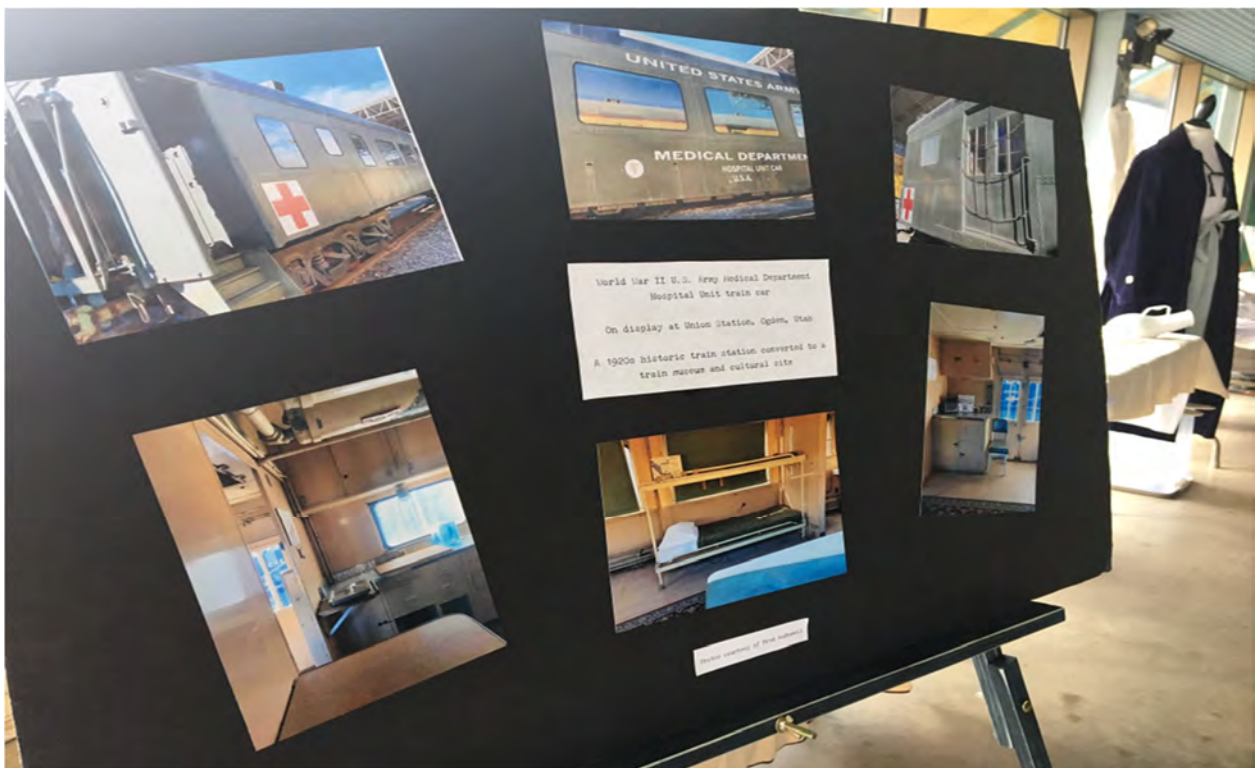


8-inch Railway Gun, Mk. VI

The view below shows the medical display area from its start up to the Railway Artillery display in the far right corner.



From the right corner where the M1910A1 Azimuth instrument is sited, the AGFA medical display starts with images of a WWII hospital train car, which is in Ogden, Utah and photographed by fellow living historian Fred McDowell of CA. A Medical Dept. bathrobe and patient pajamas is on the right side of the below image.



The AGFA medical displays centerpiece is the “hospital train beds” and various pieces of medical equipment and patient clothing for traveling home via railroad.



Additional Medical Corps dining place setting, and magazines to pass the time, are shown below.



The table below exhibited many different types of WWII period medical equipment that would have been used on medical trains during WWII.



The table below exhibited many different advertisements and photos of medical trains and evacuation of wounded personnel by rail. On the right side of the table is a EE-5 field telephone from 1918. It is connected to the rest of the telephone network that was operational across all the AGFA exhibit areas.



AGFA member Dan Fortak and Rochelle Collantes had an extensive exhibit of WWII railway information ranging from stations, travel, security, and operations. Below Dan talks with visitors at one end of their layout.



One of the more interesting - and pertinent to Fort Hancock - was Dan and Rochelle's display on Operation Pastorius - the German operation which landed saboteurs from U-boats into New York (Long Island) and Florida.



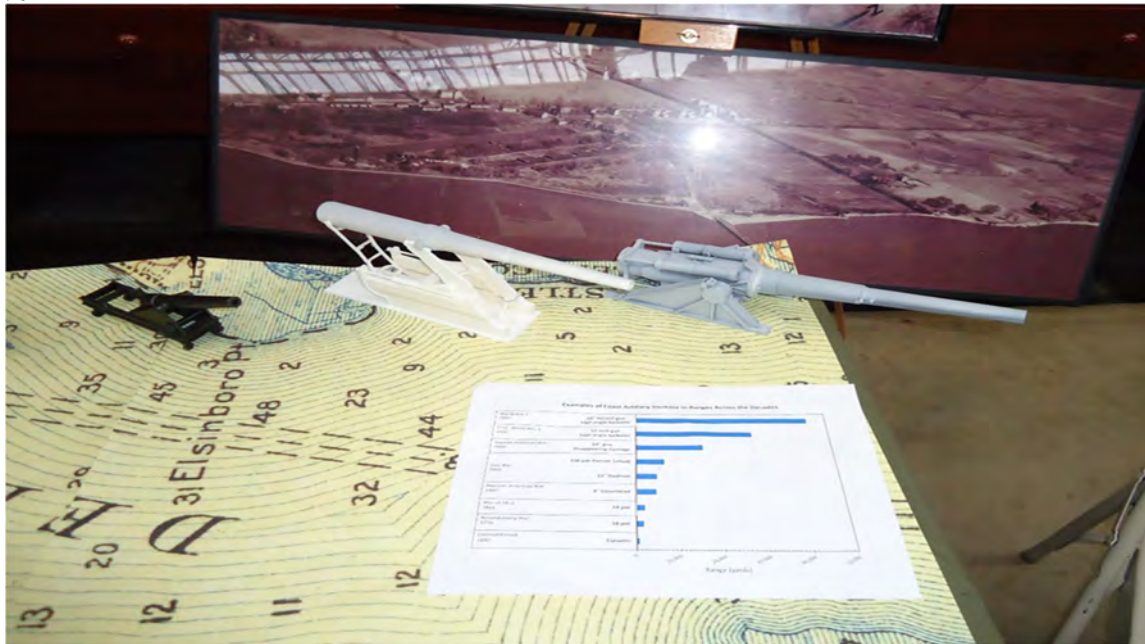
'Railroad Security Measures of WWII' was another section of Dan and Rochelle's display. Here Rochelle stands beside the photos and memorabilia, wearing railroad worker clothing of the period.



Fort Mott (N.J.) had an exhibit of coast artillery sound equipment. Below, PFC Turner looks at some of hardware (for???) displayed.



Additional coast artillery equipment and models showed..... From the first World War era.



A fellow living historian, Steve Turner in WWI coast artillery uniform, and his wife, visited 1LT Lutkenhouse (L) and 2LT Cusano (R) during Saturday afternoon.



Saturday a real WWII Rosie the Riveter came by visiting with our nurses 2LT Cusano, 1LT Lutkenhouse and 1LT Webb.



Other exhibitors showed unique facets of WWII operations. Below, a (type of car?) ready as an American Red Cross Motor Corps transport vehicle for military purposes.



AGFA friend and living historian Charlie. With his 1942 Indian motorcycle and related gear one carried with it. He rides this motorcycle to and from events, it purrs along beautifully after 80 years of service.



Exhibitors showed WWII from the railways to the air. Below, a display on 'pigeon soldiers' the birds being used for courier/cARRIER communications purposes.



A display featured the 724th railway operating battalion. Below, some of the equipment those soldiers used for maintenance and operation of the railways under US government/Army control.



Living historian Christine Lurk gives the 'V for Victory' sign while showing off her 'Siren Suit' - a British one-piece pajama used for sleeping in case of a bomb attack and needing to get to a shelter. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously wore a 'Siren Suit' in his Cabinet War Rooms under Whitehall in London.



On Saturday evening the USO-style swing dance was held, and wandering the Museum's exhibits is a quiet time to see new acquisitions. Pullman train cars and memorabilia, which figured so prominently during WWII. Below, a sample of Pullman railway china which was used in their dining cars on the rails.



The Museum's exhibits are educational and some specifically hands on - below, 1LT Lutkenhouse and 2LT Cusano test the best configuration for railcar wheels to keep them on the rails especially in a curve.



Sunday, TSG Weaver, Mrs. Weaver, 2LT Cusano and 1LT Lutkenhouse pack out the final trolley of exhibits and prepare to head home.



We look forward to returning to Strasburg for Troops and Trains in 2024 and we hope to see you there! For more information, visit AGFA Website <http://armygroundforces.org> and the Troops and Trains website at: <http://www.rrmuseumpa.org/>