

Coast Artillery Living History Ft. Mott, NJ

On 11 September 2010, Fort Mott State Park hosted the public event "Aiming the Guns," supported by the Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA). On 12 September 2010, members of Ft. Mott state park staff and AGFA volunteers provided much needed maintenance support to the USS Olympia in Philadelphia.

The members of AGFA that participated in the Saturday living history event were Kieren Fletcher, Andy Grant, Doug Houck, Anne Lutkenhouse, Jerry Still, Vincent Turner, Gary Weaver, and Shawn Welch. Additional participants on Sunday included Tom Minton and Joe Rosamilia.

The educational objective for AGFA was to provide interpretation of the Coast Artillery fire control for the big guns at Fort Mott at the outbreak of the World War Two era, emphasizing the G1 tower and the Battery Commander's station for Battery Arnold. Period medical displays, military and period vehicles and a search light demonstration rounded out the event.

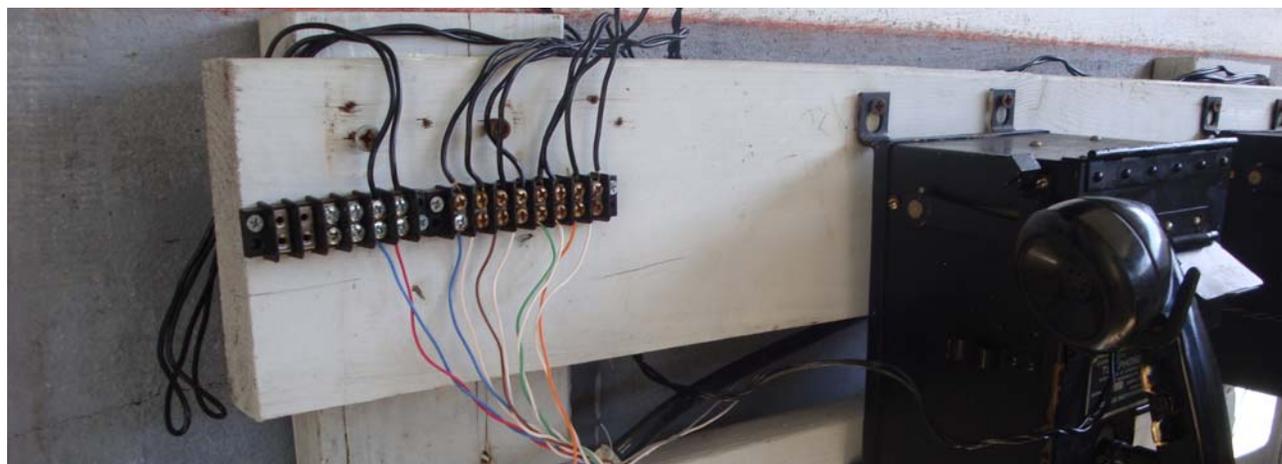
The photo below shows the Saturday's participating membership from AGFA.



Key additions to Ft. Mott were unveiled in the summer of 2010. First, a 25-pair cable was installed in the original cable conduits between the Ordnance Warehouse (currently the Fort's museum and Welcome Center) and the power room's terminal box, seen below, which is located at the end of Battery Arnold. The next major cable improvement is the 6-pair armored cable from the power room to the Battery Arnold Commander's Station. Below, LTC Welch connects the 6-pair armored cable to the fire control telephone network at the terminal box.



The photo below shows the 6-pair cable as it terminates in the Battery Arnold Commander's Station.



Below SSG Houck, LTC Welch and 2LT Still stand at the entrance to Battery Arnold's Commander's Station.



Below 2LT Still explains fire control to a visitor inside the battery commander's station.



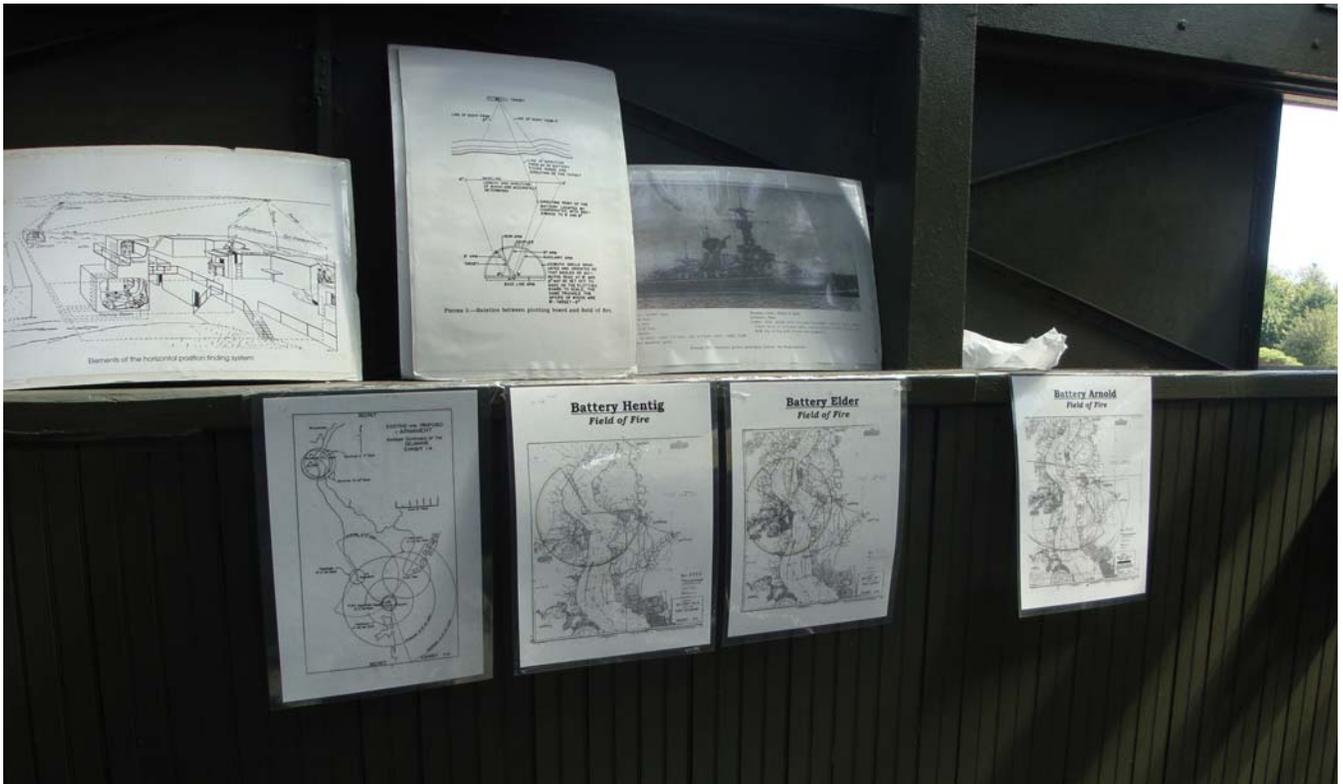
Ssg Weaver professionally manned the G1 tower as pictured below.



In this photo, Ssg Weaver adjusts the M1910A1 azimuth instrument in the G1 tower.



Charts to explain the purpose of the G1 tower are pictured below. They show the fire control system and the locations of the different batteries and their fields of fire. This tower coordinated the batteries from three different forts.



The tower once had a clear, panoramic view of the Delaware River, The photo below shows the portion of the river that can still be seen from the G1 tower.



Below Kieren Fletcher and PVT Vincent Turner, Jr. support the medical and search light stations.



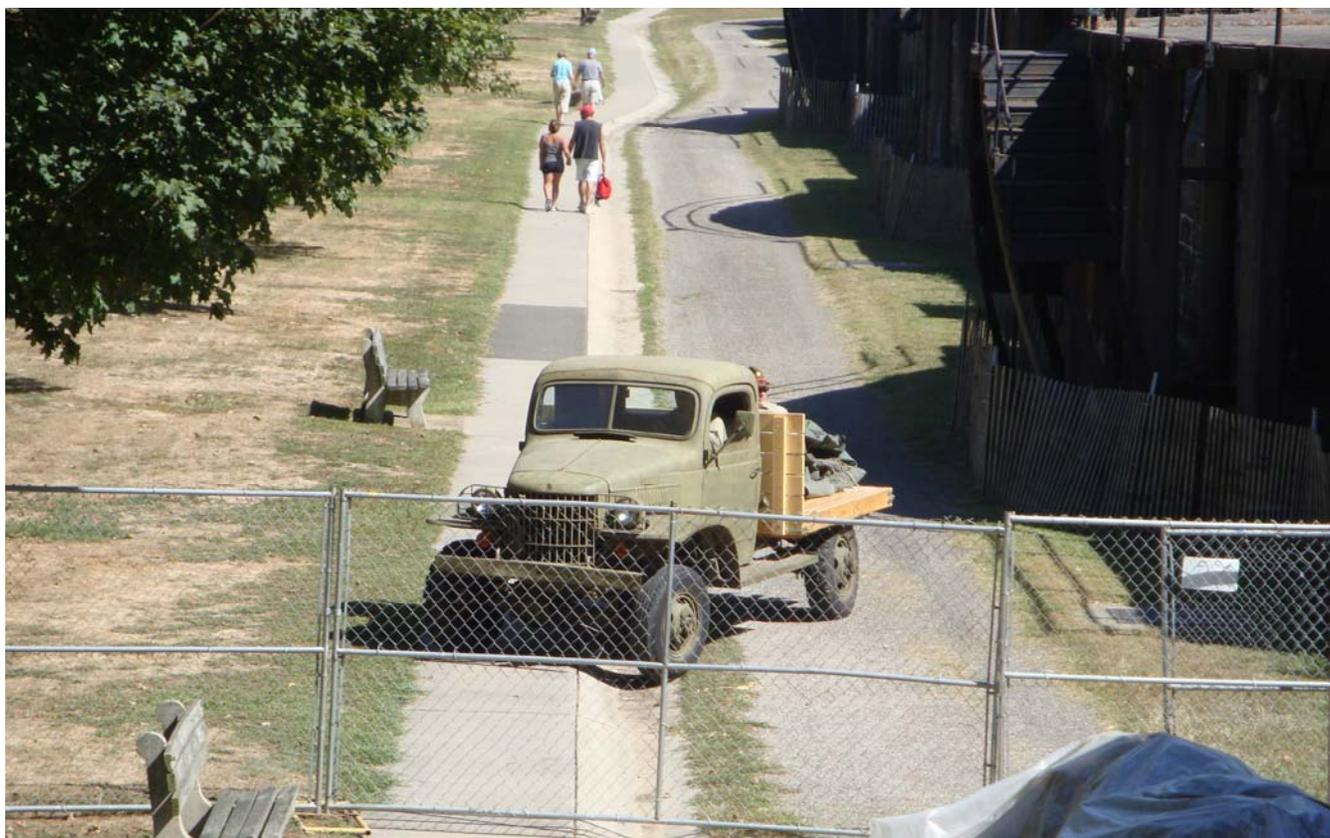
Selected medical display items are shown below.



About half way through the day the medical display was moved over to the shade. Below 2LT Lutkenhouse explains the various medical items to visitors as CPL Turner driving the jeep stops to check that members have water during what was a very hot and humid, 98 degree plus day.



In the photo below 1LT Grant drives the 1940 Dodge truck with materials for the battery commander's station.



After the event the membership enjoyed a picnic behind the post headquarters. In the photo below SSG Weaver, Erika Still, 2LT Lutkenhouse, 2LT Still and SSG Houck enjoy the dinner.



In the photo below, 2LT Still, SSG Houck, CPL Turner, SGT Turner, 1LT Grant enjoy the dinner after the event.



After the dinner the membership moved the 1942 Sperry Searchlight down to the Fort's Engineer's Wharf, or dock, for the night demonstration as pictured below.



The search light is shown below on the dock, with 1LT Grant at the controls.



On Sunday we formed up on the fantail of the USS Olympia (C-6) which was built in 1892. She was Admiral George Dewey's flagship and participated in the Battle of Manila Bay in the Philippines at the outbreak of the Spanish American War in 1898. She remains as the oldest steel warship in the world. Members and friends who attended this special work and tour day are Shawn Welch, Anne Lutkenhouse, Greg Hagge, Andy Grant, Jerry Still, Tom Minton, Kieren Fletcher, BW Smith, Joe Rosamilia, Steve Turner and Gary Weaver.



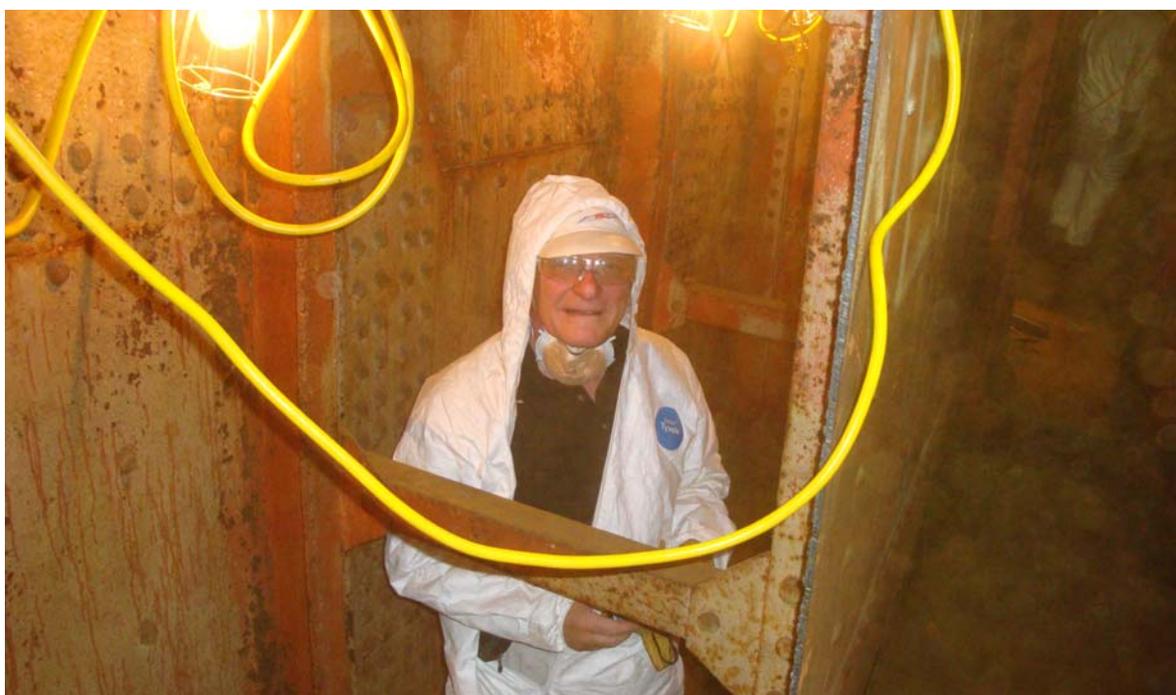
The photo below shows the stern of the ship and the aft 8-inch gun turret. To get onboard the Olympia, you have to cross the deck of the USS Becuna, SS-319, a US Navy submarine on display with the Olympia.



Upon arrival, we moved to the officer's wardroom and fitted ourselves into Tyvek suits for rust removal work inside the cofferdams of the ship. Cofferdams are the spaces between the double hull of the vessel. This was our contribution to saving the vessel. In the photo below, Kieren Fletcher prepares to move into the cofferdams.



In the photo below, Jerry Still is working inside a cofferdam, scraping and removing bulk rust in preparation for rust conversion and sealing of the rusted/rusting metal. The deck we stood on was the 4-inch armored top deck.



In the photo below, Gary Weaver dumps rust particles into a 5-gallon bucket. Working in teams of two and three, each member removed about five to six of these buckets of rust in our three hours of work.



In the photo below, BW Smith prepares to enter a cofferdam.



After our work, we enjoyed a pizza in the Officer's Wardroom. The wardroom is where the ship's officers gather to eat, relax and discuss operations within the ship. It is located in what is called "Officer Country" by the Navy, and is off limits to the enlisted men.



Another view of the wardroom shows historian BW Smith making a point about the ship's history, and Greg Hagge and Joe Rosamilia enjoying pizza. The lunch was provided by our hosts for the volunteer work we had done earlier.



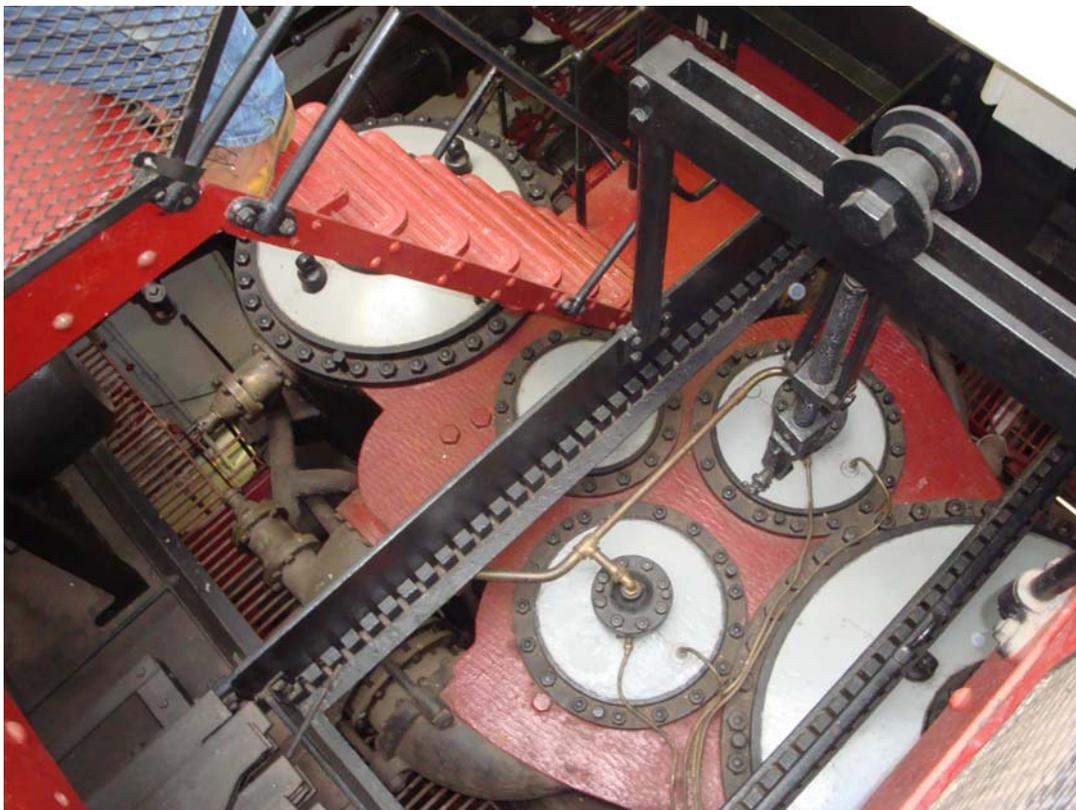
After our work we were treated to a VIP tour of the ship, to include areas not seen by the public. Below is a steam-powered (coal hoist. Restored to working condition, the pump uses compressed air to lift coal ash from the ship's engines up and out to the main deck for disposal.



The photo below shows a coal ash bucket being lifted by the hoist from the engine room to the main deck.



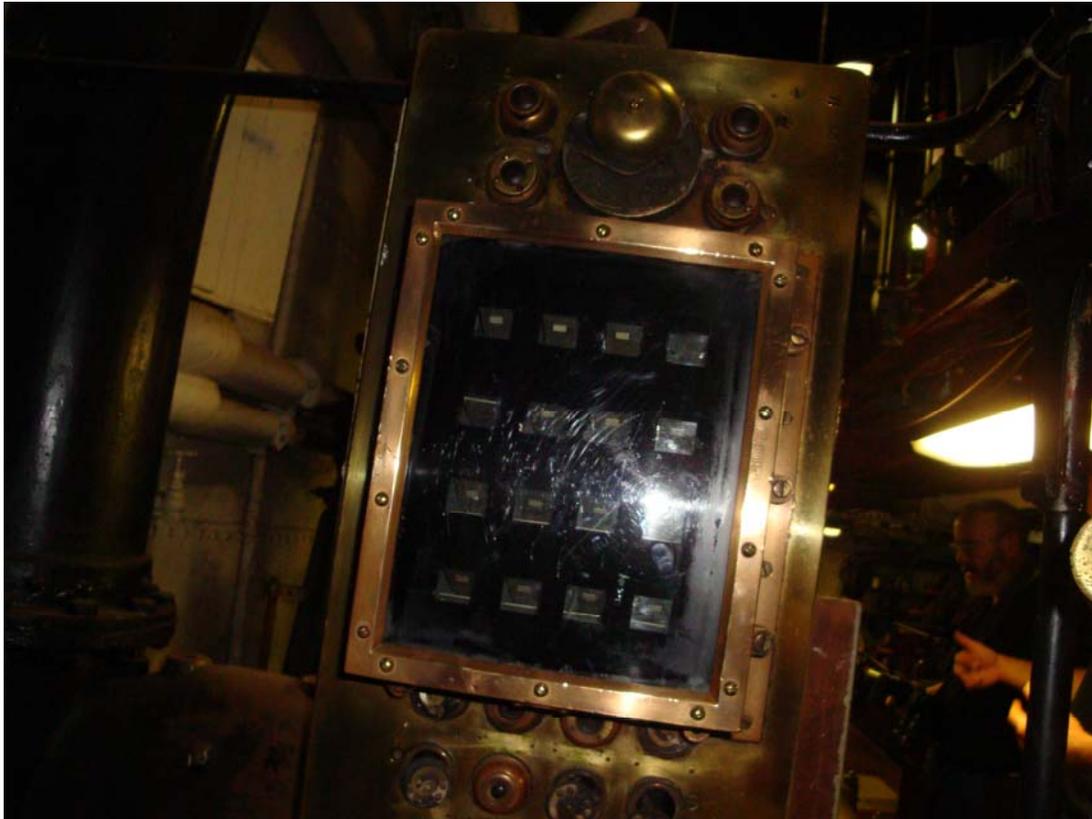
The photo below is the view seen when looking down onto the top of the main engine pistons. The Olympia has two rare triple expansion steam engines.



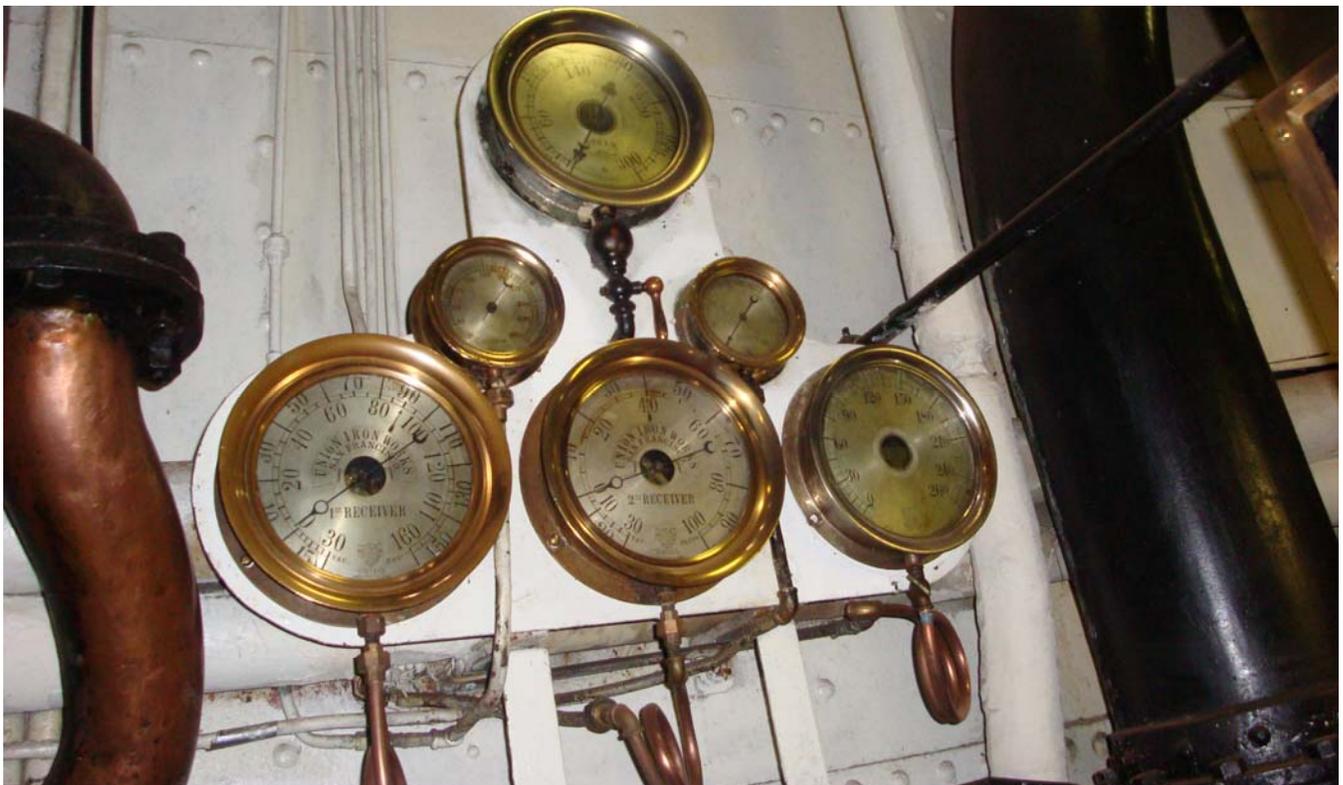
The main steam line, seen below, sends steam pressure to the various mechanical components of the ships propulsion system. Nearly two feet in diameter, it is wrapped in wood with insulation underneath. Workmanship and details like this abound onboard.



The photo below is of one of the engine signal boxes.



Below are steam gages for the boilers and engines.



Below is one of the main engine piston rods – about six feet tall!



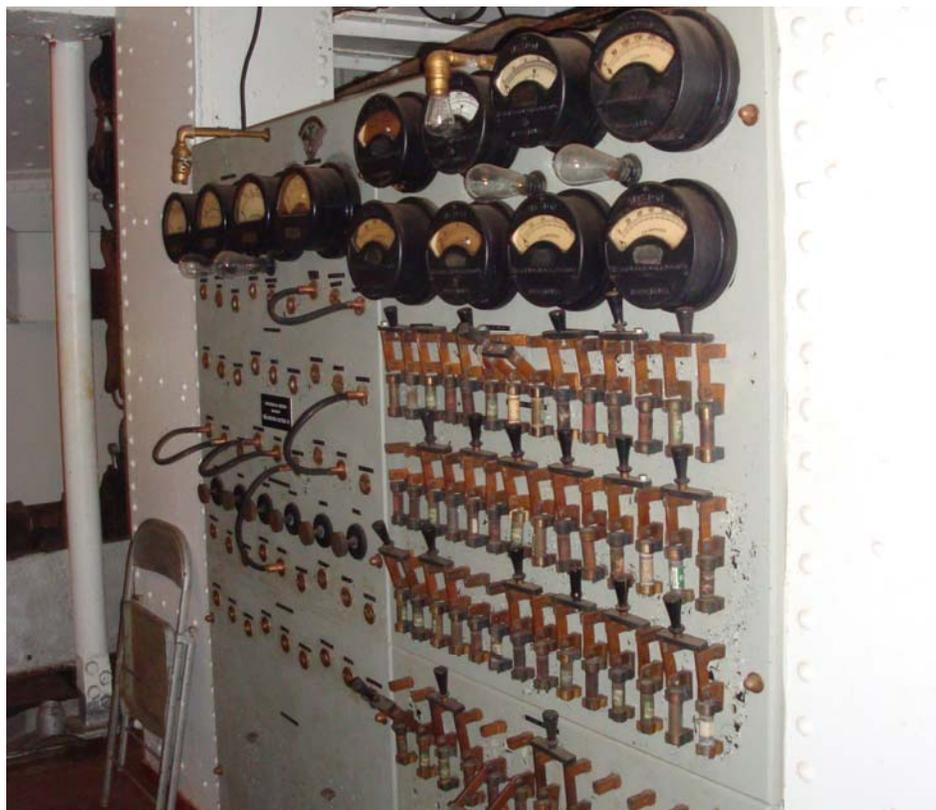
Below is the crank shaft at the bottom of the piston shaft.



In addition to coal to make steam, the ship also had power generators. Below is one of the gasoline power generators.



The photo below shows one of the power panels inside the power generation room. They are not much different from the large power panels found in Coast Artillery batteries of the same time period. The need and development of reliable electrical power systems by the US military paved the way for our common-place use of electricity today.



The photo below shows two boiler furnace doors. Here, sailors lived and worked in a dark, hot and sooty world as they constantly shoveled coal into the fire boxes to maintain the steam level for the ship's engines.



The photo below shows the inside of a boiler furnace.



The photo below shows a 5-inch/51 caliber "broadside" gun. These guns were originally from the Battleship West Virginia (BB-48) and were installed aboard the ship (the Olympia or the West Virginia?) when she was moved to Philadelphia. The 5-inch guns were originally removed after the USS Olympia was decommissioned in 1921.



Joe Rosamilia stands beside the breech of the 5-inch/51 caliber gun. This was a rapid-fire weapon, capable of firing about four-six shots a minute with a about a 10 man crew.



This photo shows the wooden pilot house, located on the bridge, and the ship's main wheel. The pilot house was recently restored to its former glory by volunteers for the museum ship.



Just forward of the pilot house is the spot marking where Admiral Dewey was standing when he commanded the Olympia's commanding officer, Captain Charles Gridley. "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley," during the Battle of Manila Bay in 1898. This battle, where the US Fleet destroyed the Spanish fleet, marked America's entry as a world power.



This photo shows Joe Rosamilia inside the armored “conning tower” of the ship. Made of solid steel, the cabin has a moveable ceiling or “overhead” that can be raised or lowered during a battle to protect the crew inside. It would be the wheel seen in this photo that would be used to steer the ship during battle conditions.



The photo below shows the USS New Jersey across the river in Camden, NJ as seen through the conning tower slit – a fitting tribute to two great warships.



The members of AGFA were honored to have been able to assist in preservation of this great ship and look forward to other opportunities to preserve and honor our nation’s past.

For more information, visit the Army Ground Forces Association Website <http://armygroundforces.org>