

Coast Artillery Living History at the “Historic Soldier’s Weekend” **Ft. Mott, Pennsville NJ**

On 24-25 September 2011, Fort Mott State Park hosted a living history timeline event, the annual “Historic Soldiers Weekend” (<http://historicsoldiersweekend.com/>). This event, first held in 2004, has traveled to several different historic venues in both New Jersey and Pennsylvania, and chronicles all eras of military history, from the Roman era through to the Cold War. This year, the event was actively supported by the Army Ground Forces Association (AGFA) and many other living history and reenacting groups. Most prominent of these was the 9th Infantry Division WWII Historical Preservation Society (<http://www.9thdivision.com>).

The members of AGFA that participated in the living history event were Andy Grant (Fort Mott State Park Historian), Kathleen Kluxen, Anne Lutkenhouse, Tom Minton, Deanna Schafer, Kyle Schafer, Vincent Turner, Vincent Turner, Jr., Stephen Turner, Gary Weaver, and Shawn Welch.

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 World War Two-era, emphasizing the G1 tower and the Battery Commander’s station for Battery Arnold, which was armed with three 12” guns. Period medical displays, military and civilian vehicles and a WWII-era Coast Artillery search light demonstration on Saturday night rounded out the event.

The photo below shows the participating membership from AGFA right after a rigorous period of physical exertion setting up displays. All would shortly be in full uniform ready for the public to enjoy the day.



Of the many groups participating, the 9th Infantry Division struck a most impressive pose as they marched past Battery Harker below.



Here is another view of the 9th ID encampment, as well as a U.S. Army Signal Corps Messenger Pigeon Trailer – complete with live pigeons! For those of you who may have been there, you may recall seeing this same living historian and his display at this past year's annual WWII Weekend, held by the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum at Reading, PA.



Seen here is an early-morning view of the 9th Infantry Division's encampment, located just behind Battery Harker. The GI's are in the process of making chow – something that's universally important to any soldier, regardless of what uniform he wears!



The photo below shows several members of the 9th Infantry with a “French Resistance” reenactor. She is carrying a British “Sten Gun,” which was a small machine gun issued to Paratroops. Easily produced, these were dropped into occupied territories for resistance members across Europe to use to fight the Germans. She is also carrying a German soldier's equipment, including a “zeltbahn,” or tent (the camouflage material strung across her chest), as well as a small rucksack, most likely obtained in an ambush on German troops. Directly behind them is the interpretive display of a Roman Legionnaire.



Another view of the Roman station is seen below, which includes a lion skin. Such pelts and skins were indicative of rank in the Roman Army, and were also used as unit insignias.



Here, the Roman living historian does a firing demonstration of a "Ballista," a torsion-powered crossbow-like device for hurling large spears at enemy infantry.



In the afternoon, the 9th Infantry prepared for a “soldier’s concert” with period WWII music, compliments of the 9th Infantry Division’s very own “Fubar Boys Band,” which was performed just outside of the Ordnance Warehouse. In the foreground, two Revolutionary War living historians set up period displays of their own.



Below, the multiple military eras mix as a living historian portraying a member of the French Revolution (1789–1799) speaks with Recruit Kyle Schafer and SSG Gary Weaver at the Battery Commander’s station on top of Battery Harker.



As you can see in the photo below, Fort Mott is amassing a respectable collection of both period military and civilian vehicles to add realism to its various year-round living history displays and events.



Below, CPL Turner, assisted by PVT Turner, help support visitor access and traffic flow by directing the visitors into the nearby parking lot.



Below, in vintage attire, are AGFA members 2LT Lutkenhouse, portraying a member of the Army Nurse Corps, Miss Schafer portraying a period civilian, and Miss Kluxen, who was portraying a Woman Ordnance Worker, or "WOW." This image is fondly marked forever in American History as the epic "Rosie the Riveter."



Inside the magazine of Battery Gregg were two separate displays. On the left was 2LT Lutkenhouse's medical display, which provided a detailed overview of military medicine and some of the materials used by medical professionals in the 1940s. Although some medical equipment has changed since the early 1940's, there are some familiar items that doctors still rely upon today. Can you spot them?



On the right side of the magazine, Miss Kluxen provides interpretation of munitions and the American woman's role in wartime ammunition production. With her is a Revolutionary War period re-enactor portraying a Loyalist Tory.



Here is another more detailed view of the munitions display. Items on display included medium-caliber Coast Artillery projectiles, as well as .90mm and 3" cartridges, which could fulfill both an anti-ship and anti-aircraft role. Other artifacts included various primers and fuses.



Below is another view of the vehicle display, in preparation of the search light drill to be held later that evening.



This event marked the second time that Fort Mott has successfully interpreted the Battery Commander's station atop of Battery Gregg. This station, added for Battery Harker's 10" guns, was added in 1922 after Battery Gregg's own 5" guns had been removed. Here we see the station fully set up with working EE-91 telephones and an M1910A1 azimuth instrument, and prepared for interpretation to visitors.



From the 1900's to the 1940's, newly trained Coast Artillery NCO's (sergeants) would report to the many harbor defense commands around the nation and overseas, having recently graduated from the Coast Artillery School at Fort Monroe, VA. Upon arrival, they would provide special and localized training to new recruits in the respective units to which they were assigned. Below, SSG Weaver levels the M1910A1 Azimuth Instrument in preparation for instruction and orientation for Recruit Schafer.



As the training continued, Recruit Schafer also got some "hands-on" experience with Fort Mott's recently restored fire control network, as well as fully operational telephones and headsets. Below he tests a EE-70 head telephone (headset) on a EE-91 fire control telephone.



By far, one of the most impressive views for the public upon first arriving at the Fort at the parade field entrance was the armed Military Police (MP) officer who showed them politely but firmly where to park!



Most living historians and reenactors devote the majority of their research and study to one or two time periods. In the case of the Roman Centurion, he had a passing knowledge of German WWII weapons and had a strong desire to see how an MG-42 handled. While this photograph appears humorous, it is in fact, instructive. In this case, expert knowledge of one military period is being shared with an expert on another period. Thus what appears to be a form of comedy is actually experiential learning. And this is one of the most interesting and intellectually stimulating features of a timeline event...the ability of experts from different time periods to share and expand each other's knowledge. After all, how would the battle of Teutoburg Forest (9 A.D.) have turned out if the Roman Legions were supported by MG-42's?!?!



As the event wound down and members of the various units left the post, a classic car group drove through the park. Among the dozen or so vehicles that came through were several pre-WWII vehicles, adding a unique touch of realism to finish the day. It was quite the sight!



The members of AGFA were honored to have been able to support in this multi-group living history presentation and look forward to more events at Fort Mott in the future.

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