

Coast Artillery Living History **Ft. Hancock, NJ**

On 24-25 October 2009, the National Park Service in conjunction with the Army Ground Forces Association conducted the annual Fort Hancock Day at Fort Hancock, NJ.

The members of AGFA participating were Eric Meiselman, Tom Minton, Francisco Lacy, Shawn Welch, Paul Taylor, Anne Lutkenhouse, Vincent Turner, Gary Weaver, and prospective member Joe Rosamilia. The interpretive goal was to present a view of the Coast Artillery at Fort Hancock in October of 1943.

The educational objective was to provide interpretation of the Coast Artillery mission at Fort Hancock in the World War Two era with a focus on the full operational capacity of Battery Gunnison/New Peck. The tactical focus of the event was the ongoing U-boat war and the threat of saboteurs or shelling by submarines.

The event showcased several new restoration/preservation projects performed by the NPS and AGFA. These projects included reception of another seventy-two 6-inch projectiles, the connection of the BD-95 switchboard to an original terminal strip and lead stub cable, and the painting of all the electrical fixtures within the plotting room. The most significant project completed was the installation of a gear cover on Gun #1's traversing rack and worm gear. The installation of this cover resulted in the ability to traverse the 45,000 pounds of gun and shield as originally designed. This weekend was likely the first time since 1950 that these guns were traversed as designed.

The photo below shows the participating membership on Saturday 24 October. This day was focused on work and preparation for the full event on Sunday.



Work actually began on Friday afternoon with the reception of 72 additional 6-inch projectiles. In the photo below two of the three pallets of projectiles are set on the sidewalk outside the battery.



Once brought into the magazine, Recruit Joe Rosamilia and Corporal Turner redesigned the projectile storage racks. IN the photo below, SGT Lacy aligns boards before fastening them with large wood screws. The new projectiles are OD and will be painted yellow in the spring of 2010.



Work continued into the day as the new racks were configured and the shells were stacked. In the photo below, PVT Meiselman and CPL Minton watch as SGT Lacy and CPL Turner fit the second pallet rack on top of the first stack of shells.



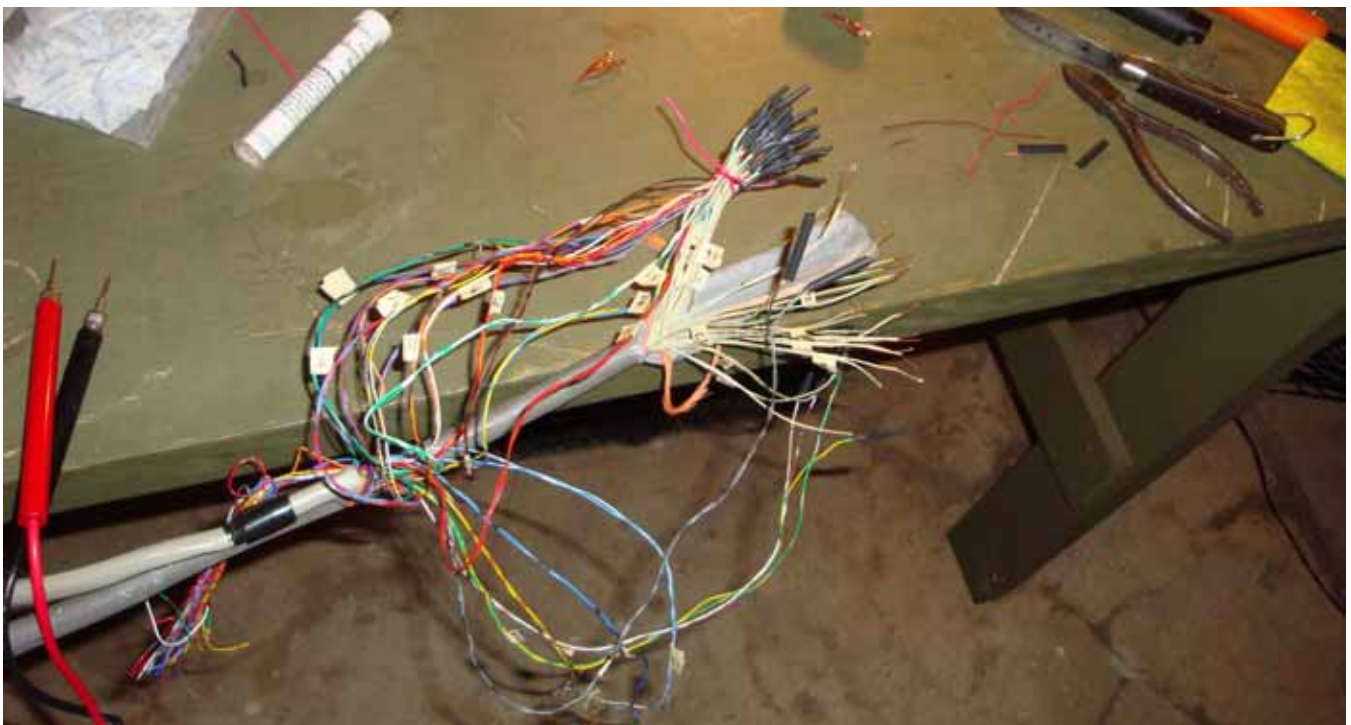
In the photo below, CPL Turner and PVT Meiselman stack projectiles on the first rack.



While the shells were being moved into the magazine on Friday, LTC Welch spliced the BD-95 switchboard into the 1940's vintage terminal box. The lead stub cable from the terminal box had to be split and opened so the cable from the switchboard could be connected. In the photo, LTC Welch is using an I-166 volt ohmmeter to test the lines as they are connected. He is using a Coleman 242B from 1940 for lighting. Behind him 2LT Taylor works on lanterns to ensure the function.



The photo below shows the splice taking shape. The flat piece of metal is the lead cable cover flattened.



The photo below shows the full view of the back of the BD-95 switchboard and the splice work. The stool in the background supports the terminal box that is connected to the lead stub cable.



The photo below shows the terminal box installed in its box and the plotting room phone lines connected at the top of the strip, and the lines to Gun #1 connected towards the middle (read lines) and the bottom are Time Interval lines. The Time Interval system line is spliced into the terminal box using the bottom four pairs.



The fixture below is the inside of the new gear cover that was made for Gun #1. Notice the grease paths on the inside of the shaft bearing surfaces.



The new gear cover is shown fixed to Gun #1. This cover is probably the most significant new item manufactured for these guns in over 60 years and ensured the capacity to traverse them as designed.



In the photo below, CPL Minton and Recruit Rosamilia work on Gun #1, a 6-inch M1900 rifle, SN 23, manufactured in 1903.



Saturday evening, the battery was open for tours from 1800-2100 hours. Unfortunately, the rain was heavy and less than 20 people came out to visit the battery. In the photo below, Gun #1 is shown with the breach block open just prior the start of the heavy rains.



The photo below shows CPL Minton at the Battery Gunnison/New Peck access control point. At this station he briefed visiting public participants and issued them their security badges.



Below 2LT Taylor, SGT Lacy, Recruit Rosamilia and PVT Meiselman stand in front of the stack of over 160 projectiles. The total weight of the stack of shells is over 6 tons. As you can see in the photo, SGT Lacy is very wet from the rain.



On Sunday, a large group of West Point Prep School cadets visited the battery. In the photo below they are inspecting the shells and one large 6-inch shell fragment.



In the photo below, retired Army Colonel Hal Guera discusses the operation of the gun with SGT Weaver. COL Guera was a CMTC cadet at Ft. Hancock in the late 1930's and learned seacoast artillery training on the guns at Fort Hancock. He became a Coast Artillery Officer in 1942 and spent much of WWII in anti-aircraft units.



In the photo below, a large group of visitors moves up the stairs to Gun #1. Many visitors had the opportunity to participate in a gun drill and to traverse the gun.



In traversing the gun, visitors could track ships or look at the New York City skyline through the M1904 3-inch telescopic sight. This particular sight was manufactured in 1908 and is 20-power with crystal clear optics.



Beginning on Thursday evening, and culminating on Saturday, CPL Minton and Recruit Rosamilia painted all the electric fixtures black within the battery. This shows clearly in this photo of the plotting room.



The photo below shows the completed switchboard installation with revised terminal box and connections. This greatly improved telephone communications between Gun #1 and the plotting room.



2LT Lutkenhouse's collection of medical material has grown since the spring. Additional bandages and treatment material from the 1940's have been added to the display. Additionally, a special "non-combatant" gas mask hangs on the door to the left.



In the photo below, a new 1943 issued instrument sterilizer is open for exhibit. On the floor, and M1943 Army Coleman lantern provides light.



Before the rush of people on Sunday, the group took the photo below in front of the 6-inch M1900 rifle of emplacement #1. The new powder bag is shown on the ground next to a drill projectile. This new powder bag is stiffer than the original bag we made, and has made loading drills more realistic. Hats off to CPL Minton and Recruit Rosamilia for their work on this bag!



At the end of the day, a final photograph was taken under the gun tube of emplacement #2's M1900 6-inch rifle. The end of another successful event!



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