

Trains and Troops
Strasburg, PA

On 4-5 November 2017, 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, our guest Melanie Cusmano, Daniel Fortak, Doug and Lynda Houck, Anne Lutkenhouse, Gary and Deanna Weaver, Steve Rossi, Shawn Welch. The educational objective was to provide interpretation of the oft-forgotten and overlooked mission of the U.S. Army's Coast Artillery mobile railway guns; railroad based medical support during the World War Two era, as well as the U.S. Army in the Korean War period.

The Pennsylvania RR Museum features a wonderful collection of excellently preserved locomotives and rolling stock within its main building. Interpreters for the Trains and Troops event set up shop in the museum proper, and use 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. Member Gary Weaver provided Civil War era interpretation on Saturday and WWII Coast Artillery Railway artillery on Sunday 5 November 2017.



The location for our exhibits changed this year. We requested a location so that our M1910A1 azimuth instrument would be able to see a long distance.



The AGFA display had several focus areas. The portion of the display below focuses on fire control. Major items from left to right are the BD-71 six line switchboard from 1939, a Wind Component Indicator (mfg 1906 at Frankford Arsenal in Philadelphia, PA), charts on fire control, a "circular slide rule" from 1941 to solve right triangles, and a EE-5 field telephone from 1918.



Next to the Fire Control table, the table below was focused on different types of Railway Artillery guns and organizations. The units we focused on were assigned to the 52nd Coast Artillery (Railway) which was stationed at Fort Hancock, NJ, Fort Eustis, VA and Fort Custis, VA.



Another view of the table which also included selected small arms for Coast Artillery soldiers. The weapons included an M1 Garand, an M1 Carbine, an M1903 from 1918 and an M1903 National Match rifle from 1930.



At the corner of our display, we were able to use our M1910A1 to look out over the countryside to give the public an idea of its capabilities. Next to it on the right is the electrical system to include the Time Interval Bell and light rheostat.



Below PVT Cusano and T-5 Rossi prepare to work on the instrument.



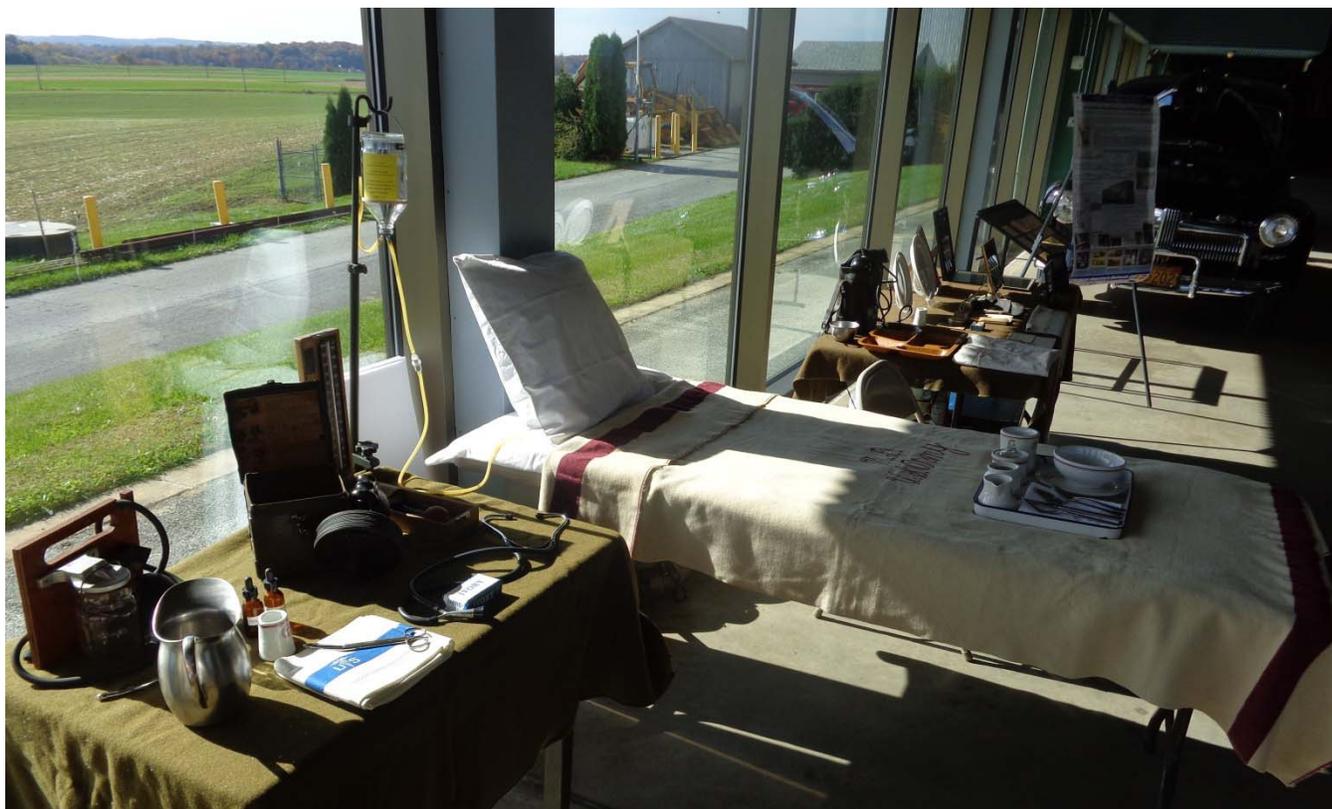
Below CPL Weaver (Civil War infantry) uses the M1910A1 to view the farmland behind the museum.



Off in the distances, CPL Weaver spots a series of towers as you can see in the photo below. The reticle scale is in degrees and hundredths. The pointer is to location the splash of an artillery shell relative to the target on the scale.



The medical display consisted of a "hospital car" simulation. The display consisted of a table of medical equipment on either side of a table configured as a hospital bed.



Below 1LT Lutkenhouse and 2LT Cusano speak with the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania director about the display. He was very impressed with the concept and they spent time discussing how to improve and enlarge it for next year. The hospital car concept was very warmly received.



The materials used in the Hospital Car included this vintage Medical Department Blanket.



On the table to the left of the simulated bed were several major WWII-era medical pieces of equipment such as a manual suction device, Kreiselman resuscitator, a stethoscope and a blood pressure gage.



The table to the right contained a EE-8 field telephone (connected to the BD-71 switchboard), and medical table ware, photos and an large chart about hospital trains.



The display below of a Chaplain's field service was provided by our friend John Uhler. Notice the field organ to the left - a wonderful instrument in fantastic condition.



The Chaplain's field desk below contains many liturgical items.



The 100th Infantry Division (reenacted) provided a display on returning home after the war via railroad.



Our friend Stephen Turner from Fort Mott, NJ had a wonderful World War One display about the artillery of Fort Mott. Steve is standing at the end of the display next to a replica 10-inch artillery shell.



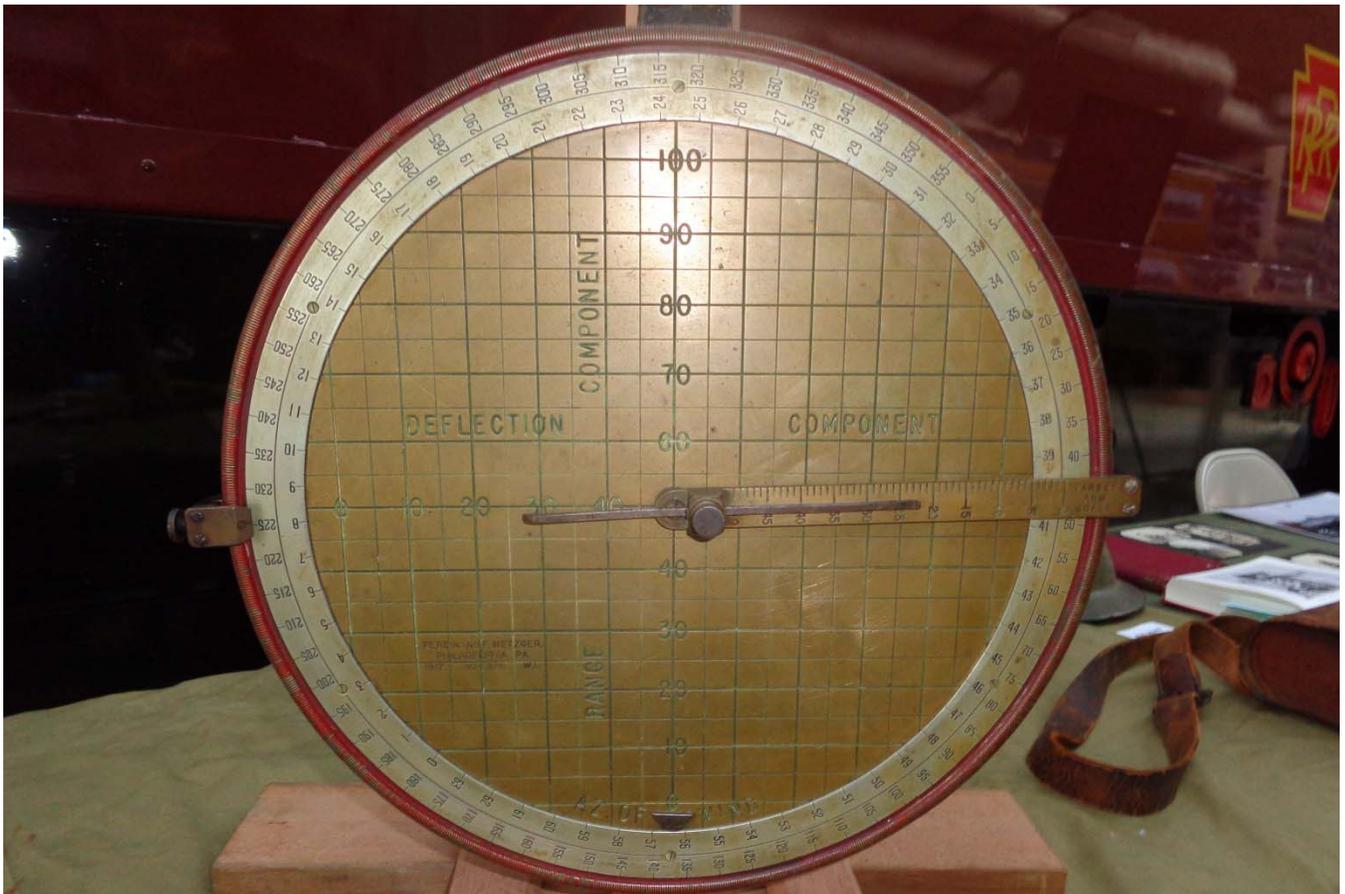
Steve had two very rare items in his display. Below is an “emergency” depression position finder from the 1907 time period. This is an incredibly rare instrument and the only one of its type we have seen.



Steve's table below shows from left to right the Depression Position Finder, a small "training" plotting board and the Wind Component Indicator.



Below is a close up picture of the wind component indicator. This one was manufactured in 1917 by a Philadelphia contractor. Having two of these instruments on site at the PA Railroad Museum was quite amazing. We only know of three that exist. The third is located at Fort Monroe, VA in the Casemate Museum. The Wind Component Indicator was used to resolve the effect of wind action on a traveling projectile. These instruments were used from about 1905 through the end of WWII in 1945 by Coast Artillery fire control plotting rooms.



Saturday evening brought the much enjoyed Swing Dance. As you can see below, many dancers came out for the event.



In addition to a great band and great dancing, a local swing dance group provided a fantastic show of their own of very highly choreographed swing dancing.



Sunday dawned early and several new players joined our team.



Below, Chaplain Uhler and his “chaplain assistant” prepare for a service.



The display grew on Sunday with the arrival of PVT Fortak and Miss Cusmano. Below SSG Weaver and PVT Cusano speak with the public.



There was steady interest in the M1910A1 instrument. Below 1LT Lutkenhouse speaks with a visitor who is preparing to look through the instrument. Notice the lights are visible on the side of the instrument. SSG Weaver (left) had just finished with a visitor when this gentleman walked up.



Another view of the fire control and communications display shows the BD-71 switchboard in the center and two EE-91 telephones on the far right of the picture on a table. All telephones are connected to the switchboard and can communicate together.



A longer view of the display showing the many railroad photos provided by PVT Fortak to the left.



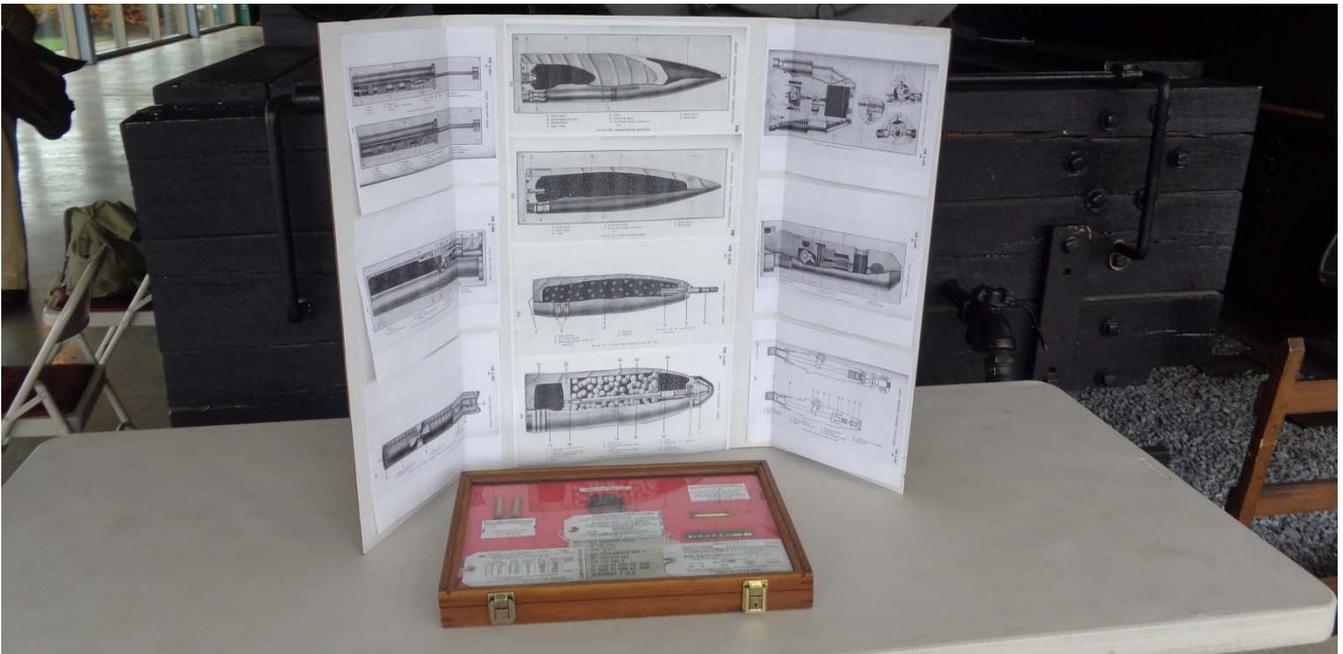
Additional photos of the WWII wartime train photos displayed by PVT Fortak.



And another set of vintage photos provided by PVT Fortak. Over the next year PVT Fortak will be refining and preparing this display for Trains and Troops in 2018.



On Sunday we also added an ammunition exhibit with charts explaining the various types of projectiles used by railway guns and some key components such as fired primers in the wooden case.



This view shows the train and railway artillery displays looking away from the azimuth instrument.



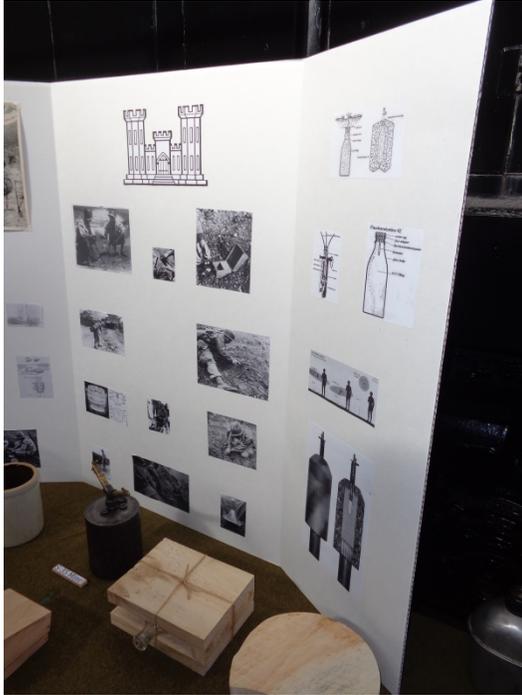
There were many other displays at the museum. Our living historian friend Tim Kuntz and his daughter set up a WWI-period USMC display.



The equipment they brought is shown below - all 1917-18 vintage and in fantastic condition.



A very interesting display was from the 4th ID Engineer group - the focus was on German and US land mines of World War II.



Below one of the unit members describes these mines.



Another living history friend, Christine Lurk, provided a very detailed display on Chemical Warfare - GAS as it was known in WWII.



In addition to her table, the posters and charts below provide a very clear understanding of the nature of chemical warfare and the role that "war gasses" played in WWII.



One of the nice things about our display was the ability to use the telephones to talk from one end of the display to another. Below Miss. Cusmano is using a EE-8 field telephone to speak with 2LT Cusano over at the "hospital train" display.



Once PVT Fortak completed his display, Miss. Cusmano took several photos to document the display.



On Sunday 2LT Cusano and 1LT Lutkenhouse boarded the Strasburg Railroad. These cars are vintage wooden rolling stock from the 1910s period.



One of the very interesting displays inside the RR Museum was the “telegraph station”. The telegraph keys can be seen against the end of the desk below.



Another view of the telegraph office shows the lanterns and megaphone used by the station personnel.



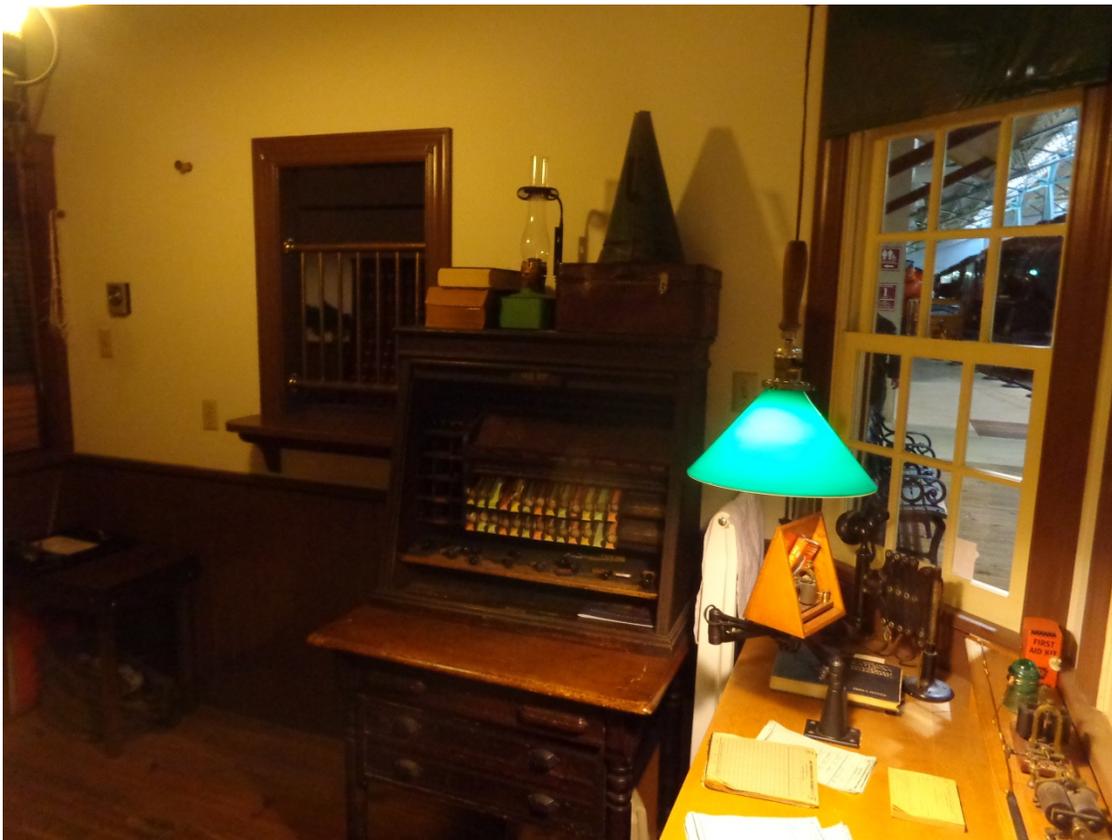
Another view of the telegraph desk showing one of the telegraph receivers - this receiver works!



This is the telegraph office looking from the outside window in to the doorway.



And a final view from one side of the desk to the wall near the door.



SSG Houck discusses his Korean War display with a visitor.



SFC Rick Stauber shows his Explosive Ordnance Disposal table display below.



As the sun goes down and the event begins to end, PVT Cusano gets one last look through the azimuth instrument as the shadows grow across the hospital car "bed".



The event ended at 1700 and we began to disassemble the displays. Below PVT Cusano disconnects the EE-91 telephones.



Below the majority of the displays are boxed up with about 30% of the exhibit remaining to be packed.



Below 1LT Lutkenhouse and 2LT Cusano begin the sad task of packing up the "Hospital Train".



Though we were sad to leave, we very much had a wonderful time. We look forward to returning to Strasburg for Troops and Trains in 2018 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/>