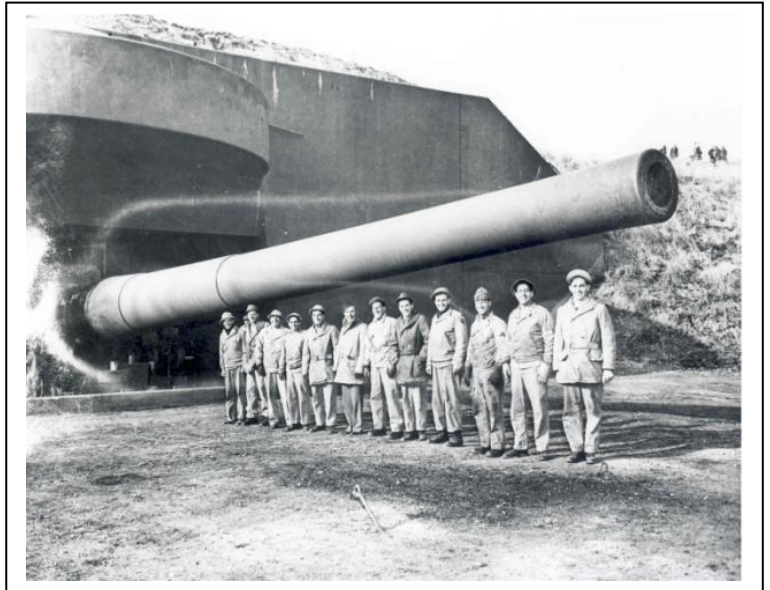


# Battery Lewis and the Navesink Military Reservation at Hartshorne Woods Park – Monmouth County Park System

## *Information Sheet on Restoration & Interpretation*

### *Key to Defense of America's Greatest Harbor*

With the looming threat of war in the late 1930s, the United States initiated a program to modernize and expand coastal defenses along the eastern and western seaboard. The Hartshorne property in the Navesink Highlands was deemed a desirable site due to its high elevation and location at the southern entrance to the New York harbor. In 1942 the US Government purchased 224 acres, and between 1942 and 1944 the Army constructed the Navesink Military Reservation as part of the Harbor Defenses of New York, headquartered at Fort Hancock on Sandy Hook. The objectives of the Harbor Defenses of New York were to deny enemy ships access to New York Bay, and to furnish heavy artillery support for defense against landings.



Two batteries were constructed at the Navesink Military Reservation during World War II. Battery Lewis, the larger of the two, is a 600 foot long casemated battery, consisting of two 16 inch caliber gun emplacements connected by a corridor housing ammunition storage and power rooms. **Battery Lewis is the only 16 inch gun battery in the State of New Jersey.** Constructed of steel and thick reinforced concrete and covered with earth, and built upon the prototype developed by the Army for all 16 inch gun batteries, Battery Lewis was designed to withstand battleship and aerial attack. Two 16 inch Navy Mk11 M1 guns on M4 Army barbette carriages were mounted in Battery Lewis in May 1943. Originally fabricated for mounting on Navy battleships, the guns with their carriages weighed over 150 tons each. With barrels over 60 feet in length, they were able to fire armor-piercing projectiles 16 inches in diameter and 2100 pounds in weight. Their range reached from just offshore near Point Pleasant Beach to the east end of Long Beach, New York. For the WW II-era coastal defense program, the Army built 20 batteries with 16 inch guns and of those only 14 were actually armed. Battery 219, begun in July 1942, was fitted with a pair of 6 inch guns on barbette carriages in May 1943. A heavy cast steel shield with curved surfaces to aid in deflecting enemy fire made the guns resemble a Sherman tank.

### *Change of Purpose*

The imposing Battery Lewis and the smaller Battery 219 survive today, along with the stand-alone Plotting-Switchboard Room from which the firing of the 16 inch guns was plotted and four Fire Control Stations. As with all the coastal batteries, the guns were removed after WW II, cut up on site and sold as scrap metal. Other WW II structures, including troop housing and a 100-foot observation tower, were demolished by the Army, as were the structures built during the site's use from 1949 to 1974 as Highlands Air Force Station, later the Highlands Army Air Defense Site.

The entire 224 acre former military base became part of Hartshorne Woods Park as a result of two no-cost transfers of surplus land in 1974 and 1984 from the US Government to the County of Monmouth. Hartshorne Woods Park now totals 787 acres and welcomes over 250,000 visitors annually.

### ***Restoration and Public Interpretation***

In 2013 the Park System began planning the restoration of Battery Lewis for public visitation, and completed the first phase of work, restoring the concrete on the two casemate canopies and wing walls. When the entire restoration is complete, visitors will be able to walk from one end of the battery to the other, explore various rooms, and learn through exhibits and guided tours about Battery Lewis and the historic coastal defenses of the United States. Two projects funded by The Friends of the Parks were completed in 2014 – a 150-page nomination of the 224-acre Navesink Military Reservation to the National Register of Historic Places, and an exhibit plan for Battery Lewis. The Navesink Military Reservation Historic District was listed on the National Register on October 13, 2015.

#### ***Phase 2 of the Battery Lewis Restoration is in progress.***

The second phase of construction, funded by the County Capital Budget and now in progress, includes interior repairs and restoration (concrete walls, historic steel elements, wrought iron gates, and painting) and improvements (lighting and utilities) to the 600-foot long battery. Construction is expected to continue into 2016.

The Park System also has acquired a WW II 16 inch gun barrel for permanent display in one of the casemates. An application was submitted to the Navy Inactive Ships Program in 2014 for one surplus 16 inch gun barrel from the USS New Jersey. Originally mounted on the Iowa class battleships during WWII, these gun barrels, 68 feet long and weighing about 120 tons, are very similar to those that were installed initially at Battery Lewis,. Transport of the gun barrel from the Norfolk Naval Shipyard in Virginia to Hartshorne Woods Park took place with much fanfare in March 2015. The gun barrel was unloaded to its temporary position next to Battery Lewis, where it is being cleaned and painted as part of the current construction contract. Once a pedestal is constructed, it will be moved to its permanent location in the battery's south casemate.

#### ***The Friends of the Parks are raising funds for the Battery Lewis exhibits.***

Exhibits are planned in three rooms off the main corridor as well as at the gun barrel display. While exhibits will focus on the park's military past and on Battery Lewis, the themes are broad-based to give visitors an overview of the park's history and landscape including the unique geography of the Navesink Highlands, the Hartshorne legacy and the creation of Hartshorne Woods Park.

The interpretive displays, which are funded by the Friends of the Parks, are being developed by an exhibit design firm working with Park System staff, and will include graphic panels with a wide array of historical photographs and images as well as reminiscences of veterans who served there. To complement the exhibit graphics, a section of the steel ammunition service (the overhead trolley) will be reconstructed, and over time additional artifacts will be acquired for display. The Battleship New Jersey Museum is donating 16-inch projectiles for display in Battery Lewis.

***Anticipated Opening Date – Late 2016***

