

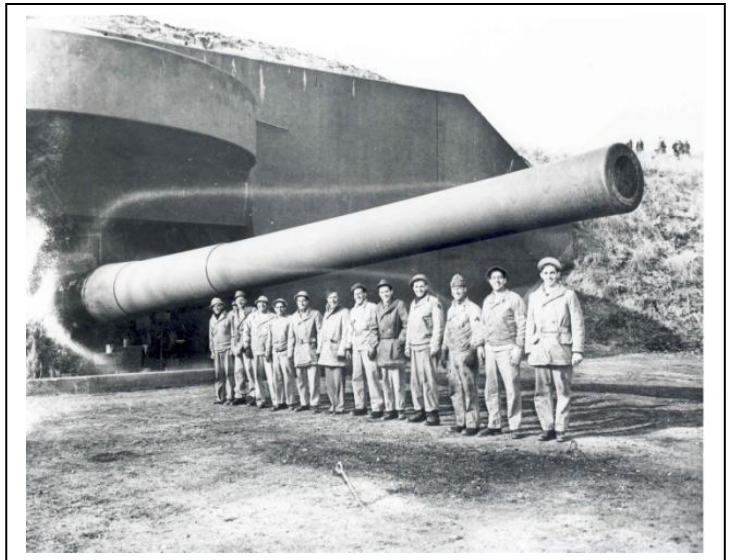


Monmouth County Park System Battery Lewis Restoration, Hartshorne Woods Park

PROJECT INFORMATION

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 designed 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 Army removed the guns after WW II, and sold

them 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 federally-declared 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 of Battery Lewis is Complete

The Park System began planning the restoration of Battery Lewis in 2013, and completed the first phase of work, restoring the concrete on the two casemate canopies and wing walls. In 2014 the Park System nominated the 224-acre Navesink Military Reservation to the National Register of Historic Places (see link to complete nomination on the Hartshorne Woods Park page at www.monmouthcountyparks.com). **The Navesink Military Reservation Historic District was listed on the National Register on October 13, 2015.**

The second phase of the project, finished in 2017, completed work to the interior of the 600-foot long battery. The \$710,000 project included extensive restoration and repairs to the concrete walls, historic steel doors, new steel gates, and new electrical service and lighting.

The 16-inch gun barrel, now on display in the battery's south casemate, was originally mounted on the USS New Jersey during WWII. Declared surplus when the battleship's guns were modernized, the gun barrel was acquired from the Navy Inactive Ships Program in 2014. Weighing about 120 tons, the 68 foot long gun barrel is very similar to the original guns 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, when the gun barrel was unloaded to its temporary position next to Battery Lewis. A concrete foundation and pedestal for the gun barrel were constructed in fall 2016, and the restored gun barrel was moved to its permanent display location.

Exhibits in Battery Lewis

Interpretive exhibits have been completed for three rooms off the main corridor and at the gun barrel display. Exhibits focus on the park's military past and on Battery Lewis, and provide visitors an overview of the unique geography of the Navesink Highlands and the Hartshorne legacy.

Funded by the Friends of the Parks, the interpretive displays were developed by an exhibit design firm working with Park System staff, and include graphic panels with a wide array of historical photographs and images as well as reminiscences of veterans who served there. Most of the exhibits are now in place. Historic artifacts will be installed as they are acquired and/or fabricated.

The site is now open to the public. Hours are 10 am to 4 pm Thursday through Sunday until the end of October. Tours are offered on the hour and are free and open to individuals and groups up to 30 people. Visitors are 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.

See www.monmouthcountyparks.com for more information about the park's military past