



YESTERDAY

TODAY

AND TOMORROW

FMHA

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*"...To Protect And Preserve..."*

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*Cover Photo by  
Mike Rogers*

Revision 001 - January 2005

# MEMBERSHIP

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# MISSION STATEMENT

*The Fort Miles Historical Association is a nonprofit group that has as its mission to preserve, protect and defend all aspects of Fort Miles working with community and state stakeholders and other interested parties. The FMHA also has its goal to work as an active partner with the State of Delaware to develop the historical potential for Fort Miles.*

*A wave crashes against the base of Fire Control Tower #5 at Gordon's Pond, just south of Herring Point. Several Fort Miles structures are threatened by the forces of nature.*

*Photo by  
Nate Davidson*



# FORT MILES & TWO GERMAN SUBMARINES

## THE STORY OF U-853 AND U-858

By Dr. Gary Wray, President, FMHA

The history of Fort Miles and the new Fort Miles Museum that is planned is closely linked to the story of two German World War II submarines, U-858 and U-853, sister boats launched in Bremen, Germany in 1943. How they became involved with the great fort in Lewes makes for a very interesting story.

Of all of Germany's forces in World War II, the German navy's submarine arm came closest to America's shores. Most Americans do not know that during the winter of 1941-1942, soon after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Germany sent five submarines to attack the east coast of the United States. This attack, code named *Operation Drumbeat* by the Germans, brought the war to the general coast of America, and of course, also the Delaware coast. Ultimately this attack lasted six months, killed over 6000 sailors and sank almost 300 ships, making it far worse than the attack on Pearl Harbor. Yet few Americans know about this first threat to homeland security in the 20th century. This is one of the stories that we will be telling in the new WWII museum inside the completed Battery 519.



Joe Johnson and Dr. Gary Wray with the Twin Mauser 20mm Flak Cannon from U-853. It is currently being restored by Shore Electric for display in Battery 519.

If most American's don't know about the German submarine attack on the east coast in early 1942, fewer Americans know that the German navy launched a final attack on the east coast of the United States in the closing days of WWII. Just a few months before Hitler was to take his life and the war ended, the German navy sent six boats from bases in Norway to attack our coast and to, hopefully repeat the successes of *Operation Drumbeat*. These two submarines, U-853 and U-858 were a part of that attack. The attack failed and one of the boats was destroyed (U-853, the last boat sunk in the war) and the other surrendered at Fort Miles on May 14, 1945. This is their story.

These two U-boats were sisters, built as part of a six-boat contract by AG Weser in Bremen, Germany in 1943. They both were of a new model of Type IX boats, which was the long range German submarine force attack, or *frontboot*. They had extended range (almost 12,000 miles) and were streamlined to be able to drive faster than other submarines, thus better avoiding destruction by Allied aircraft. With these new capabilities, they were labeled Type IXC/40 boats. Each was armed with two twin 20mm anti-aircraft weapons made by Mauser to be able to fight off Allied air attacks. During WWII only 111 Type IX submarines were launched by Germany (of the over 1162 German submarines accepted into service) but they sunk over 25% of all the Allied tonnage sunk during the war. They were, without a doubt the most dangerous and effective of all of Germany's stealth weapons of WWII.

*Continued on page 4*

U-858 was laid down on December 11, 1942 and commissioned on September 30, 1943. Her captain was Kptlt. Thilo Bode for her entire war career and it was Bode who surrendered her to US forces at Fort Miles on May 14, 1945. After working up trials in the Baltic Sea, she had two rather unsuccessful war patrols before her 61 man crew arrived at the Fort Miles Base Brig (now the Cape Henlopen State Park Nature Center) for internment. Other than practice, she never fired a torpedo in anger, nor did she sink a ship on her two patrols. After her surrender she was visited by many schoolchildren from southern Sussex County, and then towed up the Delaware Bay to Philadelphia where she participated in the last Victory Bond drive of the war. Later she was taken to New England where she was destroyed with several other German submarines in a US Navy exercise in the fall of 1947. Ted George, secretary of the FMHA has done an excellent diorama of the surrender of U-858 which is presently on display in the Nature Center at Cape Henlopen State Park. We know quite a bit about the final trip of U-858 as we interviewed crew member Karl Heinz Bahr in 2001 and have his story. I will write about this in a future article devoted to U-858.

The story of U-853 is a bit more exciting than that of U-858. She was laid down earlier than her sister ship, on August 21, 1942 and was commissioned on June 25, 1943 under the command of Kptlt. Helmut Sommer. She went on three war patrols and sank two ships for a total of 5783 tons destroyed. On her second patrol on May 14, 1944, she was attacked on the surface by three British Swordfish aircraft and her captain at that time (KrvKpt. Gunter Kuhnke, winner of the Knight's Cross) engaged the enemy on the surface with her anti-aircraft weapons, including her two twin 20mm Mauser cannons. Her gunners struck all three attackers and forced one of them to be jettisoned when it returned to its ship, the *Empire Mackendrick*. The FMHA presently has in its possession one of the two twin 20mm cannons which is being restored to original condition by its members. How we secured that cannon is another story that we will tell at a later date, but Joe Johnson and his team is working hard to restore the Mauser 20mm back to its original condition so it can be put on permanent display inside Battery 519. The

Association is proud that we have secured an actual German navy weapon from the sister ship of U-858 that surrendered at Lewes herself; the last German navy craft destroyed in WWII. The story of her demise is a sad one.

In early May, 1945 as Germany was about to surrender, the German naval high command sent signals to all craft at sea that they were to cease combat operations on May 4, 1945. Evidently, U-853 was submerged at the time and did not receive that transmission (or her radio equipment had been damaged in a previous attack) and continued to engage the enemy. On May 5, 1945, while submerged near the US coast in the shallow waters off of Rhode Island Sound, she spotted an enemy ship and commenced the last German submarine attack of WWII. Early in the evening of May 5, 1945, U-853 began to conduct what was to become a successful attack on the British ship *Black Point* carrying over 7000 tons of coal. Launching at least one T-5 passive-acoustic homing torpedo, U-853 tore off 40 feet of the stern of the vessel at 5:42pm near Point Judith, Rhode Island, killing 12 men and leaving another 34 sailors, including the captain, only minutes to reach the lifeboats. Racing to the protective cover of deeper water, the U-boat was discovered and attacked within two hours by several US Navy ships that were nearby when the *Black Point* was destroyed. In a series of coordinated attacks that lasted through the night and into the early morning hours of May 6, U-853's fifty-five man crew were killed in a blizzard of underwater attacks delivered by three USN destroyer escorts, one Coast Guard frigate, one destroyer and two USN blimps. The U-boat had evidently been trapped at the bottom and her crew had to endure 16 hours of at least 20 separate attacks from both hedgehogs and depth-charges before she was finally destroyed. It has been estimated that more than 400 different high explosive weapons were dropped on her. Her final resting place is beneath 130 feet of water, 6.8 miles east of Block Island, RI. She is a popular scuba diving site to this day.

How one of her twin Mauser 20mm flak cannons got into the hands of the Fort Miles Historical Association is a story for another time. ■

## FORT MILES:

### LEGACY FROM THE PAST, AND A PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

*By Lee Jennings, State Historian,  
Delaware Parks & Recreation*

As I write this brief history of recent developments at Fort Miles, I received notification that the fort has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The massive effort resulting in this recognition is emblematic of the achievements of the last several years, melding the efforts of staff, volunteers, veterans, local business and government. Since this project is gathering momentum, perhaps we should consider where we started and in so doing, better appreciate the progress made to date.

In October of 1995, I was asked to attend a meeting at Cape Henlopen State Park to discuss the future of programming. Since inception, the park provided environmental education programs to the annual throngs visiting the beach and camp grounds. In recent years a strong sentiment arose in the local community to give some thought to the World War II heritage of Fort Miles, on which the park was developed. I did not have a great deal of ready information, but some things were obvious. The plan I offered at the time was to restore what we could of the gun batteries and support facilities. I suggested that the underwater listening station be recreated. Finally, I thought it a good idea to bring back some of the heavy guns that defended our coast. The report was filed and two years would elapse before I knew if it resonated. I confess I was content with the status quo since Fort Delaware was an all consuming force at the time.

In 1997 movement began again on the project. At the direction of Cultural and Resources

Services Section manager, Jim O'Neill I began a search for a 16 inch gun. That search took us to the Naval Surface Warfare Center in Dahlgren Virginia. Upon arrival we were shown at least 40 of these incredibly large weapons. The navy was pleased to give them to us if we could move them. The sheer mass of the artifact made acquisition impossible. Over 100 tons in weight and almost 70 feet in length, the guns could only be shipped by rail or water. We sadly set our sights lower. Fortunately, Bill Lewis, a Fort Delaware Society member, found a twelve inch gun for us back at Dahlgren. We had been informed by the naval history center that no such gun existed, but after a quick run down rt. 301, we found 18812, rusty but regal, formerly of the Battleship Wyoming, sitting on a piece of marshy ground with a number of other forgotten weapons.

Over the ensuing years we planned to move the 12 inch gun its mount, an eight inch gun resting close buy, and a six inch gun from Dahlgren. During this time we learned that a three inch gun was available at Fort Howard Park in Baltimore County. The Delaware National Guard unit in New Castle moved the gun for to its new home in Delaware. Hard work on the part of a seasonal employee, Bob Steves resulted in the location of two 155 mm guns at Aniston Alabama.

The winter and spring of 2000 and 2001 were busy and exciting. The Fort Howard gun came first drawing a great deal of visitor interest. The six inch gun came next along with a mount donated by the navy. A team of specialists was required to move the 12 inch and the 8 inch. Rob Howard of Anchorage Productions in Wilmington directed the preparation of the guns and mount for moving. The mount was partially disassembled for ease of movement. Two 150 ton cranes were positioned to pick the tube up and place it on special a 13 axle vehicle for transportation to Delaware. DeIDOT supplied trucks and man power

for the eight inch gun the 12 inch mount and other required equipment. In April the team convened on site for the move. Two full days of dawn to dusk work got it all moving. News helicopters followed the big gun as it made its way north. The park was crowded on delivery day, as hundreds watched the delivery. Navy Seabees from the Wilmington area volunteered to assist as did a local Americorps team. At the end of the day we all drew a deep breath knowing that the real work was about to begin.

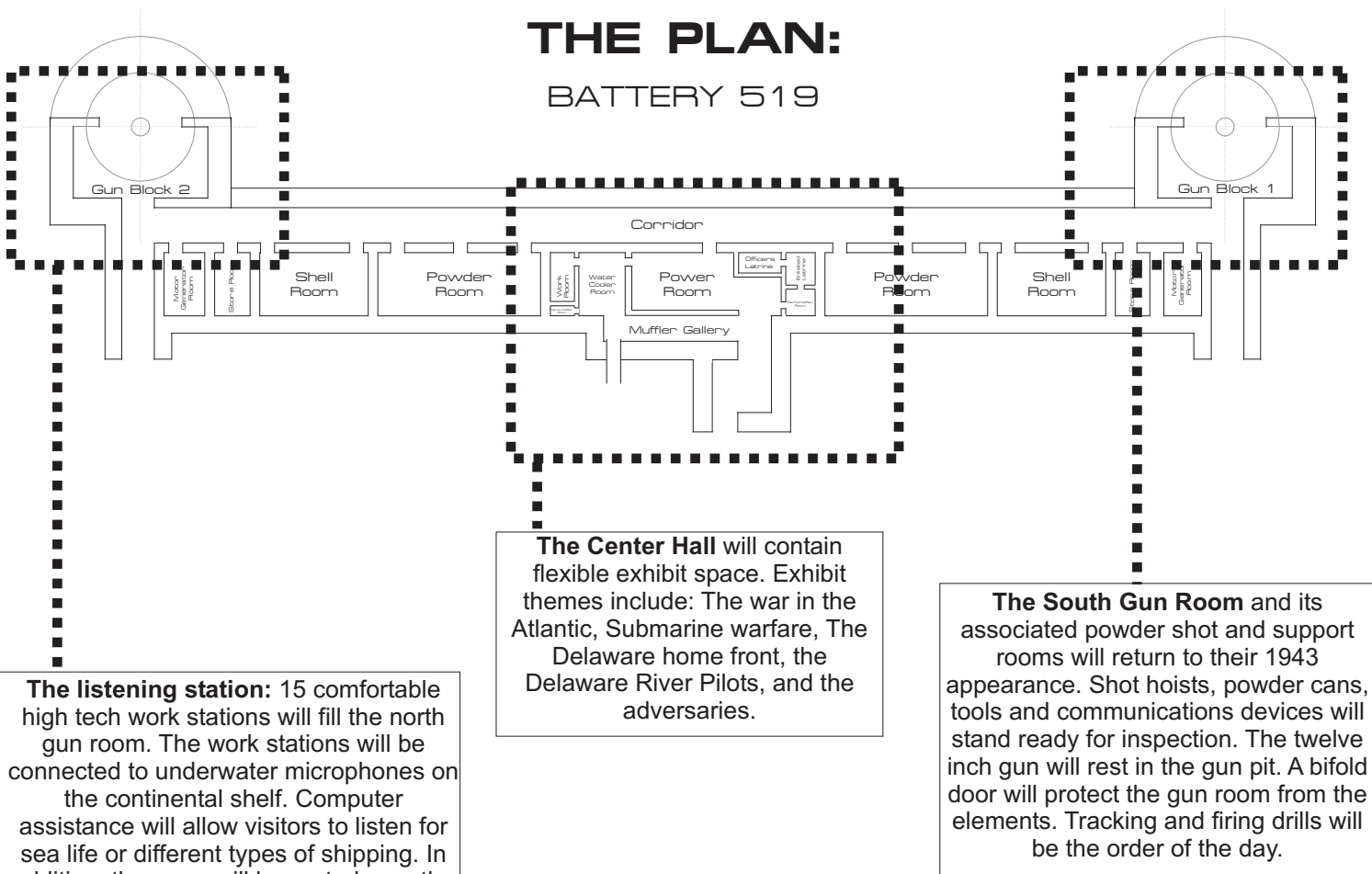
The delivery of the guns caused quite a stir in the community. People began to come forward with stories, pictures, and expertise. A welcome surprise came in the form of a call from Bill Manthorpe, a retired naval officer who was very familiar with the underwater listening station (SOSUS station) at Lewes. After a brief meeting, Bill mobilized the entire SOSUS community to assist in the recreation of the site. I was pleasantly surprised by the volume of email that I received including one from a Rear Admiral who ordered his staff to assist the project in any way possible.

Good fortune has smiled on this project. Bob Fredricks and David Main teamed with Dr. Gary Wray to form a very active support organization. Mike Rogers and Nate Davidson, two young men with a deep interest in the post agreed to assist the project and have accomplished a great deal in a short time. A formal planning organization is meeting on a monthly basis insuring the orderly progress of the plan.

In several instances above, I have referred to the plan. What exactly is the plan?

The Fort Miles historic area will include Battery 519, the cantonment buildings related to it, and fire control tower 7. The battery exhibit plan breaks into three parts:

## THE PLAN: BATTERY 519



**The listening station:** 15 comfortable high tech work stations will fill the north gun room. The work stations will be connected to underwater microphones on the continental shelf. Computer assistance will allow visitors to listen for sea life or different types of shipping. In addition, the array will be rented over the internet to researchers around the world.

**The Center Hall** will contain flexible exhibit space. Exhibit themes include: The war in the Atlantic, Submarine warfare, The Delaware home front, the Delaware River Pilots, and the adversaries.

**The South Gun Room** and its associated powder shot and support rooms will return to their 1943 appearance. Shot hoists, powder cans, tools and communications devices will stand ready for inspection. The twelve inch gun will rest in the gun pit. A bifold door will protect the gun room from the elements. Tracking and firing drills will be the order of the day.

The cantonment provides context and facilities for living history. A recreation building containing ping pong tables, a pool table and a sampling of propaganda posters will offer visitors an interactive experience. Two barracks, a supply and administration building and a mess hall will round out the facility. Living history weekends will feature contingents of World War II re-enactors as well as our own staff. Engaging program design will create a dynamic atmosphere in which visitors may learn while having fun.

Fire Control Tower 7: The use of period range finding instruments and methods will allow us to use this all important structure as a center piece for our school program offerings. We hope to offer the programs to at least 6,000 school children per year. Similar programs will be offered in summer camps and to the public at large.

Thanks to an Americorps grant, Fort Miles will be staffed through the winter and summer by two talented young men. Mike Harris and Nate Davidson will offer year round programs, be available to gather oral histories, and will assist in the recruiting of volunteers. The pair will also assist in the development of research and assist in building restoration.

The new battle for Fort Miles has only just begun. Funds must be raised for the 10 million dollar projected costs. Thousands of hours of volunteer time are needed to create the atmosphere of the war years. As I look behind to what has been accomplished I am excited about the possibilities of what can be accomplished. The most impressive aspect of this project is that it is very much a "people's project" Public interest and demand spurred action. Public contribution of money, time and talent resulted in greater than anticipated progress. Public excitement, due in large measure to the programs offered by volunteers this summer, has drawn support from both the government and private sectors.

Personally, I still pause and think how much fun I am having creating this and shake my head. Can I really believe that I'm getting paid to do this? ■



*Fire Control Tower 7 (foreground) was a spotting station for the mines beneath the surface of the Delaware Bay. Fire Control Tower 12 (background) was the Harbor Defense Observation Post. The SCR-582 Radar Tower footings remain bolted to the very top of Tower 12.*

*Photo by Mike Rogers*



# CREATING THE U-858 DIORAMA

## HISTORY IN GLUE AND PLASTIC

*By Ted George, FMHA Secretary*

In December of 2003, Gary Wray, President of FMHA and I discussed the possibility of creating a scene that would reenact the surrender of the German Submarine U-858 at Fort Miles on May 14, 1945. The challenge was to get a submarine model large enough to give the viewer accurate details of the boat. I called several companies, but all the available models were too small. Gary helped me find two models of the same 125:1 scale. I needed to use two kits because there had to be two anti-aircraft platforms behind the conning tower where the flak guns were positioned. The front of this sub is unique because its front deck is equipped with ballast vents and is very narrow to allow quick surface and dives. I used a Dremel cutting wheel to achieve this look. Actual photos from the Delaware Archives showed the American soldiers on the deck with the US flag furled on the ship's flagpole. Also on the deck is the German sub's crew luggage waiting to be inspected.

The second step was to reproduce the pier and dock area as it looked in 1945. This was a challenge because a fire destroyed the entire pier in 1972, and the state of Delaware has since rebuilt part of it. However, the old pilings are still in the water. I took pictures of the underside of the old pier as well as the new pier. The old pier was wider and stronger, able to withstand truck traffic. This fact led me to calculate that I would need 110 1/8 inch dowel rods for the diorama. The soldiers at the forefront of the diorama are larger than the men on the sub to give the viewer depth perception. The men on the submarine are to scale. The Archives pictures showed the pier to be of very dark wood. The pictures also indicated some rust and dark areas on the sub, and even the numbers "858" were hard to read. I painted the model accordingly.



*U-858's surrender is forever captured in this diorama created by FMHA member Ted George. It is currently on display at the Cape Henlopen Nature Center and will eventually find itself a permanent fixture in the Battery 519 museum. Photo by Nate Davidson.*

In order to show the water, pier, and approaching submarine, I calculated that the base for the diorama needed to be 36 inches by 30 inches in size. A local lumber yard cut birch plywood for the 1 1/2 inch sides which were then stained. Duplicating the brackish brown water of the Fort Miles region was quite an undertaking. It took several painting experiments to get the right combination of green and brown that I hoped to achieve. The idea of adding the background of sky and clouds came after seeing some displays in a museum of miniatures while vacationing in Victoria, British Columbia. The cover I needed, with everything made was done by Archstreet Plastics in Philadelphia, PA. Archstreet did a beautiful job.

The final step was installing the diorama at the Nature Center at Cape Henlopen State Park on September 25, 2004. It is the hope of all members of the Fort Miles Historical Association that visitors from Delaware and elsewhere can gain a greater appreciation for Delaware's important contribution during World War II - capturing the first of two German submarines. ■

# THE FOUNDING OF THE FMHA

*By David Main, Co-Founder, FMHA*

Here are a few reflections on the origins of a wonderful community effort to save historic landmarks and to build a first class museum in honor of our World War II veterans. This effort culminated with the formation of the Fort Miles Historical Association.

When we heard that the World War II lookout towers were in danger due to deterioration and neglect, Bob Frederick, the former Mayor of Dewey Beach, and I wanted to see what we could do to help. The Towers have always been an important landmark up and down the coast, and they always intrigued me, since my father was a World War II veteran and I had heard lots of stories about wartime in Lewes from my mother in law, who was a teenager there at the time.

Bob and I had been making the rounds as part of our campaign for the Dewey Beach Town council, and we thought that in the process of that campaign, we might be able to pull together some friends and community leaders around this very worthy cause.

So we went to see Lee Jennings at the Delaware Division of Parks and Recreation. He told us that restoring the towers, and reopening several of them, were part of a larger project to create a World War II museum at Fort Miles. This would be a museum where the old barracks would be returned to their wartime condition, where there would be underwater listening stations so that visitors could hear the sounds of ships going by, and where people could see how triangulation methods were used to calculate the aiming of weapons at enemy ships.

We also contacted Gary Wray, since he had been prominently mentioned in an article on the

Towers in the Delaware News Journal. Next we talked to a number of veterans here in the area, like Jack Lingo and learned that they would be enthusiastic supporters of the project. Finally, we talked to community leaders like Steve Montgomery, the owner of the Starboard, Steve Taylor of Ann Marie's Restaurant, Jim Kiernan of Irish Eyes and Coldwell Banker. We asked if they would help us raise some money for the project through a series of fundraisers. These and many others offered to help and did host fundraisers at their restaurants over the following months.

Once we knew the project had a future, I incorporated the Fort Miles Historical Association, Inc., a not-for-profit Delaware corporation, and we formed an initial Board of Directors comprised of Gary Wray, Lee Jennings (ex officio), Bob Frederick, and myself. The Board has since been expanded to include a number of other community leaders and World War II enthusiasts. We also began the process of recruiting members at our fundraisers, whose numbers grew to over 130 in the following months.

We hope that one of the first towers to reopen will be one of the two on the eastern end of Dewey Beach. Not only will people of all ages be able to see what it was like to be on guard duty during World War II, but the view from up in the towers is tremendous, and we believe it will be a major tourist attraction for Dewey, Rehoboth, and Bethany. Inside, we also hope to post the names of World War veterans whose friends and relatives would like to have them especially remembered in that way. Visitors to that tower will be linked to the Fort Miles museum as well for further information and educational opportunities.

In the end, it was teamwork that made this happen. All parts of our community came together veterans and local residents, business leaders, government agencies and political leaders. They have demonstrated how leadership and teamwork can unite our town to accomplish good things like this. ■

# MY FONDEST MEMORIES AT FORT MILES

## THE 2004 TOUR SEASON

### *A Memoir by Nate Davidson*

As I write this, the air is cooling and the leaves are beginning to change color and fall at Cape Henlopen State Park. Surprising almost all who were involved, our historic tours through Battery 519 were a resounding success. The tours that I, Nate Davidson and my colleague and best friend Mike Rogers put together this past summer were, as I have been told numerous times, the most popular programs in *all* of the state parks in Delaware. Not a bad first step for our grand long term project here at Fort Miles. The following are my musings and lighthearted tales of some of the memorable events that marked the historic first year of this program.

A week and a half before the tours began, Lee Jennings asked me, "So, what are you going to include in these tours?" My response: "I thought you were going to tell me."

The awesome power-point that Mike and I created almost ended our friendship because of our differing working styles. However, our adversity produced an amazing program that participants raved about all summer long.

We had two great volunteers this past summer: Candace and Billy. Their help and input was invaluable. We couldn't have made the tours a success without their dedication.

After the tours Mike, Candace, Billy, and myself would get together in the Nature Center to discuss how things went. However, within minutes we would begin joking and fooling around. I count

these times as among my favorites this past summer.

On Billy's last day of volunteering, he took the opportunity to "roast" me, making fun of habits of mine during the tours. I can't remember the last time I laughed so hard.

Early in the summer we had a volunteer that fooled around a lot. His two most infamous moments are as follows: Once I was at the top of the observation tower waiting for a tour and talking to a guest. I stated that my partner was at the base of the tower waiting for the group. She responded, "Oh, you mean the guy asleep on the park bench?" Once in the gun park and during a tour, I turned around and he was doing pull-ups on the gun barrel. I stopped the tour and scolded him by saying, "You're not only embarrassing yourself, but the whole Delaware parks system." He wasn't around long after this.

I talked to many veterans that served at Fort Miles as well as many people that lived in the area during WWII. Many of their insights and anecdotes were incorporated into the tour. Their expressions whenever I mentioned the fish processing plant were priceless.

I gave a private tour to one veteran that served at the fort during WWII. I told him about the grand plan for Fort Miles and that we were doing this to honor him and the other men that served here. After hearing this he got choked up and almost started to cry.

A lot of people have come to the park for years but did not grasp the history of this place. They would often ask about the structures they have seen. They were so relieved that finally

someone could tell them what it was they were seeing. I can't count the times that I heard visitors exclaim, "So *that's* what that is!"

There was this little blonde haired girl of about seven years of age on a tour. After stating that the cantonment area is going to be completely restored to as it looked in 1944, she raised her hand and asked, "Does that mean that you will make this place smell like rotting fish? If you do, no one will come."

This one elderly woman on a tour asked if there were any volunteer opportunities for women at the fort. She concluded her inquiries by proclaiming, "I'll be the fort hooker. Every fort has a hooker! Those boys needed to do something with their free time."

One of the Nature Center seasonal employees told me that a couple years ago her and her friends found an unexploded rocket out in the dunes. She said she left it in her car all summer, used to throw it off of her back porch, and that it now sits by her bed. She concluded by asking if she should get rid of it. I don't know if she has.

I gave a tour to a group of educators and administrators from a Delaware school district that I shall not name. As far as behavior goes, they were the worst tour group I had all summer long. They joked, talked, and made crude remarks concerning the gun sizes and parts of the anatomy. At one point I stopped the tour and exclaimed, "You're worse than your students!"

A gentleman drove all the way from New York City to specifically take our tour. He got lost trying to find where we were at and was really upset. He eventually found our tour group and was so impressed on how he was treated that he stayed for a second tour and then wrote a glowing review on the Coast Defense Study Group website.

Youngsters would get really excited inside the battery, especially when the lights went out. However, I am sure that my hearing is permanently damaged because of all of their screaming.

The bathroom in Battery 519 was frightening. Adults would laugh and kids would cry. The looks on their faces were priceless. One time a kid almost threw up.

During one tour, Rick, who was restoring the guns, decided to play a practical joke. He turned off all the lights inside the battery and hid in a side room. As the tour was concluding, he jumped out of a side room and scared us all half to death.

Early in the summer the lights rarely ever worked and it was very wet inside the battery, giving it a sinister atmosphere. I feel that for many, the atmosphere was part of the experience. It made people feel that they were someplace they shouldn't be.

Billy, one of the volunteers, heightened this experience. He would sneak away during a tour and turn off all the lights in the battery except the one in the room we were in. We then had to navigate down the corridor with just a small flashlight.

*The echo of footsteps down darkened halls* was one selection of graffiti I was partial to. Also, the "Door to Hell" is located in a side room. However, someone crossed out the word "Hell" and replaced it with "Spongebob Squarepants." It continues to amuse me.

Our immensely popular night tours would typically have 50-60 participants. As tour leaders Mike and I had great chemistry together. We would often throw in little inside jokes or be sarcastic to try to make each other laugh. Mike once yelled, "It'll be a blast!" while I was talking about blowing the minefield. It was so corny and off the cuff that I erupted into laughter and couldn't continue. To get Mike laughing, I would usually use the word "represent" at inopportune times as a reference to our failed volunteer.

It is amazing to see how the audience feeds off of your energy, just as you feed off of theirs. Having 50 people erupt into laughter or give a huge ovation at the end of the tour is the most incredible feeling imaginable. I can only imagine what this summer will bring! ■

# FINDING WHAT DOESN'T EXIST

## PLOTTING THE LOST BUILDINGS OF FORT MILES

*By Mike Rogers, DNREC*

For a year now, I have been one of the tour guides at Cape Henlopen. I've met hundreds of amazing people, who all share a fascination for Fort Miles. One of the most common questions I am asked is, "how did you get involved in this project?" Well, here is the story....

In the spring of 2003, my best friend, Nate Davidson and I were at Fowler Beach, DE when we noticed a concrete structure in the waves. All we were sure of was that it was World War II in origin, but we had no idea what purpose it had served. We ran home to get a camera and returned a short time later to photograph it. The sky was looking pretty ominous, and we found ourselves running up the beach in a pouring rain to get back to the car. Later that evening we decided to jump on the internet and research it a little more.

Our research led us to Fort Saulisbury, a World War I era fort just outside of our home town of Milford, DE. Fort Saulisbury is now private property, and when we attempted to visit the site, we were not allowed to explore it. However, our research revealed that the 12 inch guns that were once stationed at Fort Saulisbury were transferred to the much larger Fort Miles at the beginning of World War II. We had no idea such a fort existed. With this, we turned our attention entirely to Fort Miles.

Information on Fort Miles is pretty scarce on the internet, and what few websites that do feature it do not have much information on it. We now

know that much of that information is inaccurate. Armed with a digital camera with the intention of building a definitive Fort Miles information database, Nate and I set out to Cape Henlopen State Park to set the record straight.

Nate had found a research thesis written by Elizabeth Ross at the University of Delaware library on the architecture of Fort Miles. It's a good thing they don't charge late fees, because we kept that book for the entirety of the summer. Apparently when we finally did return it, there had been a waiting list on the book... oops. This book served as our starting source of information. The maps contained in its pages pointed us to sites all over the park where buildings once stood. Starting from the very northern tip of the park, we began to build our own final definitive database.

At first, we really didn't know our way around the park at all. Everything seemed so big... we knew we could easily get lost in such a large park. Using a program called CorelDraw, I was able to pen a map that would guide our research through the park, and give us a method of plotting our progress. Little did we know how versatile this map would become.

As we began our actual field research, we noticed that the database in the thesis was not entirely correct. Nate and I would spend hours pouring over a small plot of land searching for any trace of what once stood there. These traces would range anywhere from small shards of scattered concrete to solid foundations and even sections of walls still nestled in the sand. Because of the varying range of evidence we were discovering, we decided that as we plotted these building sites on our map, we would color code them to illustrate the amount of rubble that remained, or even if the building still stood.

One fateful day Nate happened to be at the Cape, and noticed a gentleman that looked familiar to him from a newspaper article he had read shortly before. It so happened that this was a one Lee Jennings, who is heading up the restoration project for Delaware State Parks. Nate briefly mentioned what we had been up to, and we were able to get a meeting with Lee shortly thereafter. We showed him our work and some of our photographs, and with that we were welcomed as volunteers and officially became part of the project.

As the summer dragged on, Nate and I became very good at picking out concrete among the sand. We have proven the existence of buildings that were thought to have been gone forever, including a 3 inch magazine that had been written off as non-existent.

We continued our research through the winter braving single-digit temperatures; and although we froze to death on many days, we found that it was much easier to find lost buildings when the trees and shrubs were bare, but that we also preferred freezing to being eaten alive by ticks and mosquitoes in the summertime.

Phase 1 cataloging consisted of a preliminary visit to every site recorded on the Army's Report of Completed Works (RCW) documents as having a building present and cataloging what remained of that building. These categories were broken down into color codes. Orange depicts no physical evidence of the building that once stood there. Green shows that of the building that was once there, only a few shards of concrete and rubble remain today. A gray color code means that there is a solid foundation still in the ground or a solid section of wall remaining, showing physical evidence of the building's existence. Finally, a black color code means that the building remains standing today. The maps we created and the information we had plotted so far became critical in getting Fort Miles added to the National Registry of Historic Places in Fall of 2004.

Phase 1 was completed in March of 2004. Phase 2 will begin shortly with Nate and I revisiting each site and re-evaluating its color code to fine

tune our research, and GPS plotting each building site. This will culminate in a final report we will prepare which will be the final definitive database on what remains of Fort Miles.

To date we have taken some 1,100 photographs of the remains of Fort Miles. We have literally visited the sites of every one of the over 700 structures that once stood on the Cape and carefully cataloged what is left today. Still for as thorough as we strive to be, Fort Miles occasionally gives up a secret or two. As recent as November of 2004, Nate discovered the foundation and wall remains of the cable test building near the fishing pier; a building thought to be entirely gone. I'm looking forward to beginning our Phase 2 research. Perhaps more secrets will be told!

As I have been writing this, I've been reflecting on a year filled with new beginnings. I have been fortunate to be a part of what will become the greatest WWII museum in the country. I realize that the work we do today will tell a story to generations to come, and to be a part of that gives my life a meaning like I've never known. I am looking forward to the historic years of our future. ■



*Battery 519's south gun block (above) will soon be home to a fully restored 12 inch artillery gun. The battery will be the centerpiece of the finished museum, the huge gun no doubt one of its major attractions. Its barrel will be colossal, reaching some 30 feet out of the building toward the sky. The gun is scheduled to be mounted in the summer of 2005.*

*Photo by Mike Rogers.*

*“...To Protect...”*



*“...And Preserve...”*