

FORT MILES



HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

# The Battery

SPRING 2022



## USS Arizona Exhibit Oil Still Bleeds on Display



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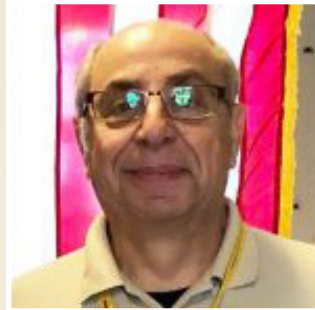
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## MISSION

Fort Miles Historical Association is a nonprofit group that works to preserve, protect and defend all aspects of Fort Miles, working with community and state stakeholders and other interested parties. FMHA also partners with the State of Delaware to develop the historical potential of Fort Miles.

To learn more, visit  
[fortmiles.org](http://fortmiles.org)

## From the desk of the Co-President



# Hello from Fort Miles

By Jeffrey DiBella

The past 12 months have been very busy and exciting at Fort Miles. We were able to reopen the museum, resume tours and finally unveil new exhibits and projects. We are especially proud of our exhibit called Oil Still Bleeds about the battleship USS Arizona, our piece of the Arizona, and the 21 Delawareans who were stationed in Hawaii during the Dec. 7, 1941, attack.

We've experienced sad times: Four of our volunteers passed away because of ill health. Among those was Dr. Gary Wray, our former president and an FMHA founding father. During his tenure, Dr. Wray was FMHA's voice, poster boy and chief historian. His vision and relentless advocacy of Fort Miles contributed to our success and what we have become. His spirit, drive and accomplishments will always be remembered. He will be missed by many.

## WWII history

It's 1942 and America's war effort is stalled. We're still recovering from our losses at Pearl Harbor in December 1941. We've lost the Philippines. Men are answering the call to join the fight but they need to be trained and armed. Americans are worried about loyalty, especially on the West Coast with its Japanese population. American factories, industries and farms are just beginning to move into full-scale production to support the war effort.

The picture also is grim for our allies. Although Britain held off the German Luftwaffe air assault on its homeland, it's incapable of going on the offense. Rommel's Africa Korps is running wild. German U-boat commanders are succeeding in the Atlantic and calling this the Second Happy Time. Although the severe winter and Red Army have stopped the Germans outside Moscow, the Russians know the Germans will begin a spring offensive. The Japanese seem unstoppable. British Hong Kong and Singapore have fallen, and the Japanese continue to gain ground in Indonesia and Malaysia.



## Morale boost

Then, in mid-April, the United States landed a punch. On April 18, 1942, Lt. Col. James Doolittle led a surprise bombing raid on Japan. The raid consisted of 16 B-25 bombers dropping an undisclosed amount (25,000 tons) of bombs on Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya, Osaka and Kobe industrial targets. Although the raid caused little damage, it provided a much-needed boost to U.S. morale. This unexpected strike on the Japanese homeland brought a needed shot of good news and hope to a frightened nation. It also sent a message to Japan and our allies that the United States was capable of striking back.

After the raid, the Japanese were forced to hold back military units to expand homeland defense and accelerate their plan to strike Midway Island to prevent the United States from using it to launch attacks.

Of the 16 Doolittle bombers, 15 ditched in China when they ran

out of fuel before reaching their Chinese destination. One bomber made it to Vladivostok. The Soviets, however, interned the entire crew for a year before releasing them. Of the 80 airmen who took part in the raid, 69 survived and many returned to duty. Three airmen died when their plane crashed in China. Eight were captured by the Japanese (one died of dysentery, three were executed and four remained prisoners until the end of the war). The raid was, and still is, considered a resounding success.

## Meaningful to Fort Miles

The Doolittle Raid is especially meaningful to Fort Miles. In 2016, we heard Jimmy Doolittle's co-pilot, Richard Cole, talk about the mission. Cole was a lieutenant in 1942. We were honored to spend time with him and listen to his story. We shook his hand and thanked him for his service. It's a memory we will never forget



and enjoy sharing. Richard Cole passed away April 17, 2018, at age 103, the last of the Doolittle Raiders.

## See you in 2022

We hope you will visit Fort Miles this year. We truly believe you will be pleased with what we've accomplished and look forward to your comments. On behalf of the entire FMHA organization, thank you for your support, generosity and confidence in our programs.





# Financially healthful despite COVID's salvo

By Larry Boyer, Treasurer

Since our last newsletter, the pandemic continued to batter our operations, the battery tour schedule and museum store sales. Our store has been hit the hardest. It's the victim of the perfect storm of COVID-19, losing our store manager, and a malfunctioning phone line that knocked out credit card sales. On the bright side, we have opened the battery for tours. We have a new and very capable store manager (thank you, Roy Messmer, for answering the call). The possibility of installing Wi-Fi at the battery is getting closer every day. These won't restore our lost sales but they move us in the right direction.

FMHA has relinquished management of the Overlook Venue to Delaware State Parks effective the end of the year. This was a strategic decision by our board because DSP has the expertise and infrastructure to better manage the venue for maximum value. Venue rental revenue will continue to benefit Fort Miles because all proceeds will go into an enterprise account managed by DSP for Fort Miles.

## Supporters' contributions

We continue to remain in great financial health because of a generous annual grant-in-aid from the state of Delaware and our supporters' contributions. Membership in FMHA remains steady – thank you. All restoration work, museum refreshes and projects are scheduled and fully funded. We anticipate our solid financial position to continue with an anticipated increase in our grant-in-aid for the next fiscal year beginning July 1, 2022, and your support.

I am proud to report that the Oil Still Bleeds exhibit focusing on the Dec. 7, 1941, attack on Pearl Harbor and the Delaware families there during the attack was a success. It was funded primarily by the generosity of Delaware foundations and businesses and families in the Lewes area. We thank you. (See the FMHA website for the donor listing). We're also grateful to Horizon Philanthropic Services for raising the money for our first-class exhibit. Because of Mike Rawl and his team at Horizon, FMHA could host this exhibit on a cost/revenue-neutral basis, which was essential under the agreement FMHA has with the Navy. The exhibit continues through Dec 7, 2022.

## Fort Miles Museum

I reported in our last newsletter that the Fort Miles Museum board was being formed. This board consists of three members each from FMHA, DSP and the community. The board is in place and has been meeting since the middle of last year. You will be hearing more about this.

## Financial planning, fundraising

Financial planning and fundraising now are under the purview of two committees created under the Fort Miles Museum board. The goal of each is to develop plans to raise and manage enough money to complete the museum build-out by adding bathrooms, ticketing and a new exhibit plan developed by Gallagher & Associates. The architectural firm GWWO, in a partnership with DSP, FMHA and the Fort Miles Museum, is responsible for the design and construction drawings. Keep a lookout for updates on the FMHA and Fort Miles Museum websites and email blasts.

As always, FMHA and the Fort Miles Museum thank all our members for continuing to support our restoration and expansion.



# Volunteers nearly break record set in 2019

By **Jim Pierce**, Secretary

FMHA is fortunate to have a core group of more than 300 members, many of whom volunteer their skills and time to the Fort Miles Museum. Whether your support is a membership at the captain, major, colonel or general (lifetime) level, as a purchaser of a Wall of Honor paver or as a regular donor, the FMHA board of directors salutes and thanks you.

FMHA has established a record of consistently supporting the events, programs and projects at Fort Miles and elsewhere in the Delaware State Parks system. And, when FMHA dedicates its efforts to a project, it is completed to the highest standards. Your contributions are spent wisely.

## Thousands of hours

Our dedicated group of about 75 volunteers logged 20,272 hours in 2021, despite the need for added safety and fewer workdays. That is only 671 fewer hours than the record number recorded in 2019. Dedicated is indeed an understatement.

## Supporting the museum

Through your memberships and donations, FMHA supports the development of the Fort Miles Museum. This January, the museum was designated a nonstock, tax-exempt Delaware corporation, Fort Miles Museum and Historical Area Inc., doing business as Fort Miles Museum. Members of the Fort Miles Museum board of directors have been selected and will be announced

this quarter. Also in this quarter, Fort Miles Museum will complete its application to become a 501(c)(3) corporation under the Internal Revenue Division tax code.

Continue to visit the FMHA website, FMHA Facebook page and your favorite publications as plans for a dynamic expansion of the Fort Miles Museum and Historical Area are announced. These are exciting times for our members, volunteers and the thousands of tourists, veterans and students who visit the museum each year.

## Saddened by loss

On a somber note, we are saddened by the passing of three volunteers in recent months - Tom Anderson, Don Martz and Nancy Roberts. Tom and Don were long-standing FMHA Bunker Busters admired by their colleagues for their good nature, hard work and kindness. Nancy Roberts, the board's recording secretary, spent scores of hours maintaining our membership records and database. Tom, Don and Nancy are missed.

We also lost Dr. Gary Wray, one of the four founders of Fort Miles Historical Association and association president from its inception in 2003 through 2019. His dedication, service and love of history will always be remembered.



# Bunker Busters are busy with barracks, batteries

By John Roberts



We've had a very busy year, despite the pandemic's complications. We've all been well, and we've all been responsible.

## Barracks repair

Our barracks got a lot of tender loving care this year.

After more than 50 years with no maintenance, we spent a lot of time on the masonry. All the buildings have had the mortar repointed, loose paint scraped, repairs to doors and windows, electrical systems upgraded and many more tasks. The buildings will be ready for painting this spring. They look like works in progress and will look amazing by our April event. And, thanks to Delaware State Parks, two buildings will get new roofs.

We have also been working on the Orientation Building, getting ready for new doors and windows this year.

## Battery 519 diorama

The diorama has been upgraded with lights at all the key features. Push each button, and that feature will have a light, with a placard describing that feature under the button. The added interaction will make it far more self-explaining. We also repaired features, removed and replaced several features with more accurate representations and added a cover to keep busy fingers away.

## 12-inch gun project

The 12-inch gun now elevates. This is important because the breech won't close in the elevated position. We added a five-horsepower motor and an inverter to work the original mechanism.

We are waiting for the contractor to install a sliding window for the barrel. It's nice to see this work for the first time since the gun was installed 16 years ago.

The Flak 38 now has a soundtrack of a representative 20mm anti-aircraft gun. Sounds great.

Bunker Busters were instrumental, with the AV contractor, in the creation of the Arizona display. This is the direction we are going to make this a first-class and professionally designed and built museum. We've come a long way from having to do many things with little money. This is a great thing to see.



### Museum refresh

We have refreshed everything in the north powder room. We have uniforms in cases and our mines are displayed with appropriate signs. We have improved many other features around Battery 519. We are raising our game.

We are working on making our displays far more interactive. The more people can touch and operate exhibits, the more interesting the displays become. Expect a lot more of this.

### Battery 519 security

We now have several cameras inside and outside Battery 519. These all go to a high-capacity digital recorder with time stamp capability. No act will go unnoticed. This is a huge step toward protecting our museum. The capabilities and expandability of this system are considerable.

### Battery Herring

We cleaned up Battery Herring and installed temporary lighting. The intent is to allow special tours of this structure, which very few people have seen on the inside. We need to get rid of the graffiti left by 40 years of interlopers. A lot of it isn't G-rated.

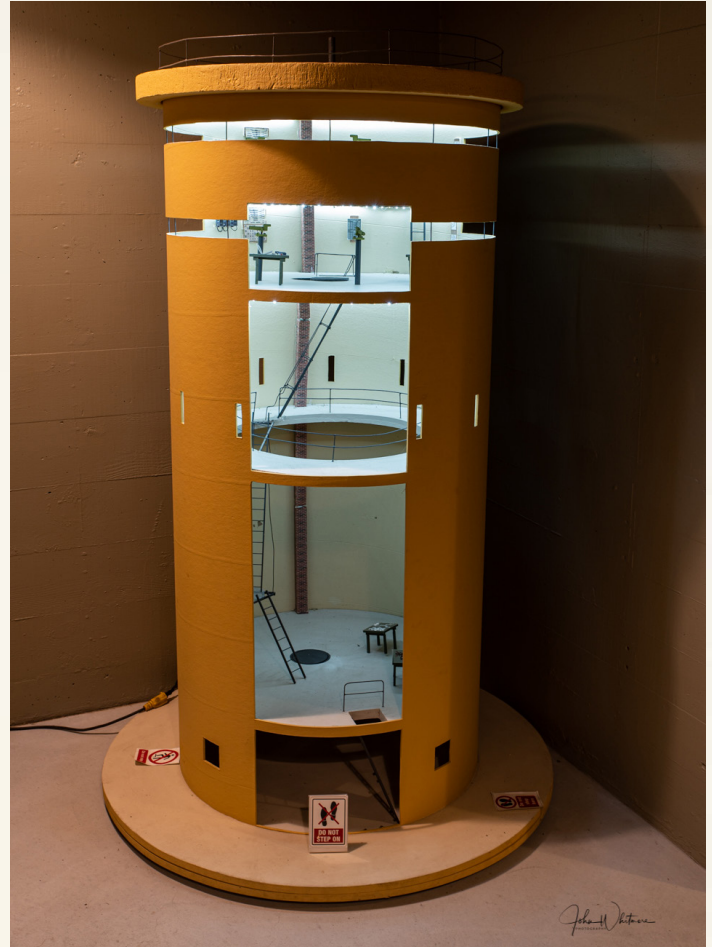
### Doors on bunkers

We are making progress at securing the mine casemate and Battery 519 Plotting, Switchboard and Radio room. We secured Smith's PSR last year, and vandalism has totally stopped in that building.

Ultimately, we'll make these structures available for special tours as well. Then we can tell the Fort Miles story more completely.

### Battery Smith

Battery Smith is the site of our machine and woodworking shops and artifact storage. We've been upgrading the lighting, dehumidification and electrical systems. All of this is interesting because this building has never been abandoned since its construction in 1941.



### Continuing projects

We have all the sidewalks through the artillery park. Our electrical crew is installing pathway lighting. We will depend on JROTC crews and rental machines to put all the wiring below ground. We will install state-of-the-art automated controls for these as well as parking lot lighting. We will no longer be in the dark for nighttime events.



# Docents are up to date on 519's **fresh exhibits**

By Will Short, Docent Program Coordinator



Docent Team Members in Refreshed North Exhibit (Powder) Room

In 2020, our FMHA docents and volunteer support teams had a very busy and successful event season at Fort Miles. Although we were unable to conduct our 2021 winter lecture series because of COVID-19 restrictions, FMHA used the winter months productively to finish the exhibit refresh in the north powder room. When it was finished, we met with our docents to review the new exhibits; plan the updates to our tour guidelines; designate shift leaders for our Summer Sunday museum tour program; and assign team members.

After the meeting, Docents Ed Paterline and John Warren thoroughly updated our tour guidelines. The guides were circulated to our docents for review and our shift leaders used them to conduct tour walkthroughs for their team members.

## Successful Sundays

The Sunday tours program began June 20 and ended Sept. 12. New this year, in addition to our Battery 519 tours, was an artillery walk. Visitors gathered by the Orientation Building at noon. An FMHA docent led visitors through the cantonment area and up the artillery walking path while explaining the exhibits. The walk ended at the Missouri gun by the north entrance to Battery 519. A new feature of our Sunday program was the opening of Building 601 in the cantonment as a welcome center. This was led by FMHA's Don Martz, who proposed the idea and worked to furnish the building and staff it almost every summer Sunday. It was very popular with the public and steered visitors to the museum.





FMHA hosted four weddings and one birthday celebration in 2021 at our event venue. Our team of Roy Messmer, Don Macauley, Jeff Romans and I worked hard before, during and after every event to ensure they ran smoothly for our guests. Many other FMHA members volunteered to support these events. We received many nice post-event thank-you notes from our guests.

Other noteworthy events supported by our docents and Bunker Buster volunteers included:

- 09/02** – VJ Day Celebration with the reading of the names of Delawareans killed during WWII
- 09/04** – Rehoboth Beach Red, White and Blue celebration
- 09/17** – Tunnel-To-Towers memorial and gala
- 09/23** – USS Arizona display unveiling
- 09/24** – Conduct of tour for Vietnam Dustoff Association
- 09/25** – Delaware Defense Day
- 10/03** – FMHA Awards Ceremony
- 11/13** – Veterans Day open house

### Potluck dinner

Our final event of the year was the FMHA Christmas potluck supper Dec. 9. It was the brainchild of Bunker Busters Don Martz and Matt Williams. All FMHA Bunker Busters, docents and board members were invited. Seventy-four FMHA volunteers and their significant others attended, each bringing an appetizer, salad, entree, side dish or dessert. Tables and chairs were set up in the event space in the north gun room. Serving tables were set up in the north hallway. The event room was decorated and lighted for a holiday theme, with holiday music playing over our AV system. Don and Matt sold 50-50 cash tickets and held a drawing for several prizes donated by our attendees. It was a very lively affair and a great way to end the year.

The 2022 event year promises to be busy for our docents and other volunteers with many of the same events as last year plus new ones. Delaware Defense Day at Fort Miles returns April 23 and Rehoboth's Red, White and Blue event returns to its normal time, the first week in June. I'm happy to announce that Big Oyster Brewery is sponsoring another run this year to benefit FMHA. The name has been changed from The Big Gun Run to the fourth annual Big Oyster 5K. Information and registration: <https://raceroster.com/events/2022/57002/4th-annual-big-oyster-brewery-5k>.

We wish all our FMHA members a healthy 2022 and invite everyone to visit Fort Miles often.



# In Remembrance of Dr. Gary Wray

By Cliff Geisler, friend



Dr. Gary Wray



I met Gary Wray about 30 years ago, when, after deciding that Lewes is where I would spend my retirement, I built my house in Covey Creek. Gary was in residence there and, when I began to meet the neighbors, Gary immediately stood out as someone special. As I explored my new surroundings, Gary was one of the first people to introduce himself and make me wise to the ways of Lewes, Sussex County and lower, slower Delaware.

Our friendship really took off when I learned that we shared an interest in history. We had undergraduate and graduate degrees with a special emphasis

on military history. We spent a great deal of time educating one another in our areas of expertise. It became clear to me very quickly that Gary's knowledge of Fort Miles' role in World War II was something out of the ordinary.

I had a general notion about significant military activity along the Atlantic Coast during the war, but I didn't know details. Gary opened my eyes to the fascinating, complex and unique role that coastal Delaware played to support the U.S. contribution to the allied victory in WWII.

## Remarkable career

Over time, I became aware of his truly remarkable career as an educator and public servant. I marvel to this day at his energy, intensity, intelligence and dedication to the young people of our community. It seemed to me that he was always in the newspaper, or on TV, promoting a project where his advocacy for the students he was responsible for educating was on display.

About a decade ago, after years of trying, Gary finally persuaded me to become a member of the Fort Miles Historical Association board of directors. It was here that I really observed the scope of his accomplishments.

## Vision for the museum

His vision for the future of FMHA and the Fort Miles Museum vividly illustrated his leadership, drive, his seemingly endless energy and his ability to reach far afield to get what he wanted for Fort Miles. His efforts occasionally met resistance, which did not deter Gary. His acquisition of the USS Missouri gun barrel is a classic example of his talent for mastering an arcane and complex federal bureaucracy and overcoming concern among FMHA members that we might be biting off more than we could chew, considering the project's scope.

If I had to reduce Gary's greatest talent to one word, I would have to say leadership. He knew what he wanted, he knew how to get it





and, above all, he attracted the right people to help him move his ambition forward. FMHA and the Fort Miles Museum were and are a product of his single-mindedness, his leadership.

Beyond his love of history and his profession, he loved his family. Not once in all the hundreds of times we got together did he fail to tell me about the activities of his children, their partners and especially, most especially, his grandchildren. He was enormously proud of them all.

A long time ago, one of my elementary school teachers told me that if people were very lucky in life, they would meet at least one teacher whose ability to educate, influence, motivate and inspire would leave them with a lasting and positive gift. For many of us associated with Fort Miles, Gary Wray was that teacher.

### Enduring memory

My most enduring memory of Gary will always be the sight of him on summer days when the Fort Miles Museum was open to the public. He is seated on a bench across from the USS Missouri gun barrel, just outside the entrance to Battery 519

and the museum. He has surrounded himself with passersby and is delivering an impromptu lecture on Fort Miles, its history, and its significance to our community. When he finishes, he invites his audience inside to see the exhibits.

I have no doubt that as Gary adjusts to his new existence, nothing much will change. In my mind's eye, I see him now, seated on a bench just outside the Pearly Gates. He is wearing his West Virginia baseball cap, his FMHA hoodie and a pair of shorts. He is surrounded by a host of angels. Nearby are the 12 apostles. Gary is delivering a lecture on the history of heaven, and his audience is hanging on his every word. When he finishes, he will announce the formation of heaven's first 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization -- HHA, Hereafter Historical Association. He has persuaded the 12 apostles to join as the organization's board of directors. Gary, of course, will be its president.

Sailors customarily wish departing shipmates "fair winds and following seas." I hope that wherever this new adventure takes Gary, he finds those same fair winds and following seas.



Cape Gazette - March 12, 2021

# USS Arizona and USS Missouri— Forts Miles' Historic Bookends

By **Cliff Geisler**, Historian

On Sunday, Dec. 7, 1941, Japanese carrier-borne aircraft launched a surprise attack on U.S. Navy ships based at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. The Japanese caught the American fleet unprepared, and their airplanes quickly inflicted severe damage on the U.S. warships. Many of the military casualties, 1,177 sailors and Marines, lost their lives aboard the USS Arizona (BB39), which was tied up at Battleship Row adjacent to Ford Island in the center of Pearl Harbor.

The Japanese attack began about 7:55 a.m. The Arizona was hit by bombs and strafed almost as soon as the attack began. None of this damage was immediately fatal. About 8:15 a.m., however, a Japanese bomb struck the Arizona near the battleship's forward gun turrets. The bomb penetrated the ship and detonated, setting off ammunition. The explosion was catastrophic. Hundreds of the Arizona's crew were killed instantly, while others were trapped below decks. The Arizona burned for two days before the fires died.

## Struck from the register

The Navy began salvage work on the Arizona almost immediately after the attack. It became evident within weeks that the ship was damaged beyond repair. The Arizona's bow was demolished, with the forward gun turrets, foremast and funnel collapsed into the hull. On Dec. 1, 1942, after a careful survey of the wreck, the USS Arizona was struck from the Navy's vessel register.

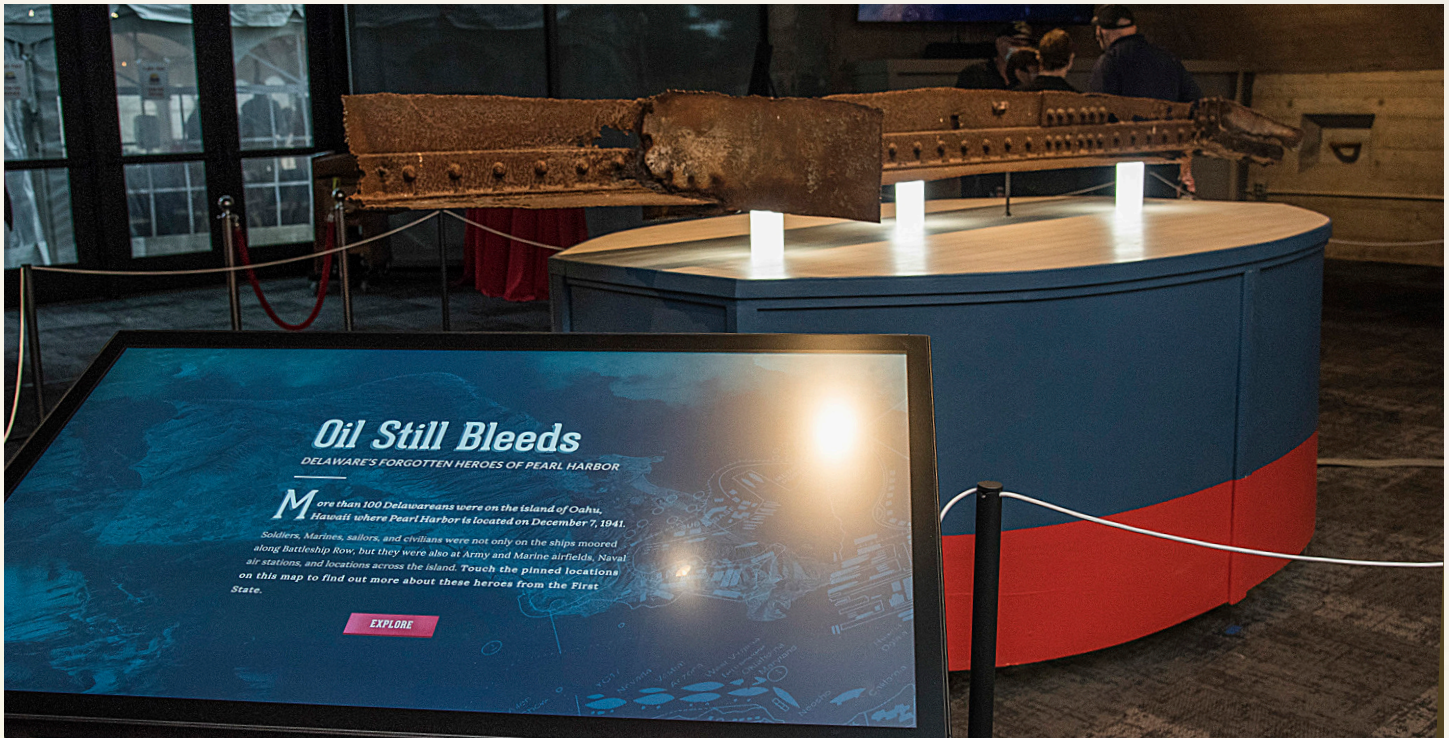
The Arizona sank keel down in fairly shallow water. Although

the vessel's forward portion was shattered by the bomb, the aft part remained relatively intact. Over time, the wreckage that remained above the sunken hull was cut away and dumped at a remote location at Pearl Harbor Naval Base. The men entombed in the ship remain there.

Efforts to memorialize the sailors and Marines lost on the Arizona reached fruition in the early 1960s with the construction of the USS Arizona Memorial, a structure that sits above and astride the wreck.







The memorial, administered by the U.S. Park Service, is visited by thousands every year.

### Wreckage fragments

The disposition of the wreckage removed from the Arizona remained in question until 1995, when Congress authorized the Navy to donate fragments to museums, war memorials and other nonprofit organizations for public display.

Efforts to obtain the Arizona relic in the possession of the Fort Miles Museum began in 2018 when the board of directors, Fort Miles Historical Association petitioned the Navy for a piece of the wreckage. After nearly two years, the Fort Miles Museum received a 650-pound fragment of steel removed from the ship's aft.

The Arizona relic went on public display in Fort Miles Museum on Sept. 23, 2021. The exhibit, called Oil Still Bleeds, includes stories of Delawareans who were present at Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941.

### Outside display

In 1996, the Navy selected Pearl Harbor as the final home of the USS Missouri, the American battleship where the Japanese surrendered in September 1945. The Missouri, now a museum ship, is a few hundred yards from the Arizona Memorial. The historical symmetry is unmistakable. The ship where World War II ended was retired near the USS Arizona, a ship lost the day the war began.

Our Arizona relic will be placed near the 16-inch gun barrel on display outside the Fort Miles Museum. That barrel, taken from one of the USS Missouri's forward turrets, was aboard the battleship when Japan surrendered on her foredeck. World War II ended, almost literally, in the shadow of the 16-inch gun outside our museum. With the addition of the USS Arizona relic to its collection, the Fort Miles Museum will create, on a smaller scale, the historical bookends that exist at Pearl Harbor.

# Thank you for considering a Fort Miles Historical Association **membership.**

Building on our core base of over 400 members is critical to continue to enhance and expand the operations of the Fort Miles Museum. Our goal is to help create the finest World War II museum located at an authentic World War II coastal defense facility.

Yes, I would like to support the ongoing development of the Fort Miles Museum and Fort Miles Historical Area by joining FMHA.

To join/upgrade membership online and pay by credit card, **visit [fortmiles.org](http://fortmiles.org).**

To join/upgrade membership by mail, **fill out this form.**

**One name per membership. Thanks!**

Membership Level \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Mail this form with your check to:**

Fort Miles Historical Association, PO Box 52, Lewes DE 19958

## Select Membership Level

**Student - \$15.00 (USD) Subscription period:** 1 year. Receives 10% Museum Gift Shop discount and newsletters. Applies to individuals ages 17 and under. Students 18 & older must apply for other levels of membership.

**Captain 2021 - \$30.00 (USD) Subscription period:** 1 year. Receives 10% Gift Shop discount and FMHA newsletters.

**Major 2021 - \$100.00 (USD) Subscription period:** 1 year. Receives Captain benefits + a Museum challenge coin upon joining or upgrading an existing membership.

**Colonel 2021 - \$250.00 (USD) Subscription period:** 1 year. Receives Captain benefits + a Museum challenge coin and a \$25 gift certificate for use in the Museum Gift Shop upon joining or upgrading an existing membership.

**General Level, (Life Member) - \$1,000.00 (USD) Subscription period:** Unlimited. Receives Captain benefits + 2 Museum challenge coins and a \$50 gift certificate upon joining or upgrading an existing membership. No further renewals are required to maintain this level.





# Order Your Engraved Paver

## For the Wall of Honor at the Fort Myles Museum

Now you can support the new Fort Myles Museum, receive a tax deduction and see your name or that of a loved one honored on a handsome brick paver. Each engraved paver will be displayed in Battery 519, America's first WWII museum at an actual military site. More than 10,000 visitors annually will see your paver. We will send a tribute card to whom you designate, telling them of this special honor.

The tax-deductible cost for each paver is \$200, including delivery and installation.

### Engraving Instructions

Limit 3 lines of 16 characters per line. Spaces, punctuation and symbols count as characters

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**YES**, I want to purchase a paver at the Fort Myles Museum. All donations are tax deductible. Enclosed is my check made payable to the Fort Myles Historical Association.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ paver/s. \_\_\_\_\_

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