

**Efforts Towards the Historic Preservation of Harbor Defense Sites:  
The Saga of Fort MacArthur and the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles 1975-1992**  
*by Mark Berhow*

The story of the efforts to preserve the harbor defense remains in Los Angeles is not necessarily unique or even all that successful. Yet, I feel that there are important lessons to be learned from both the successes and failures of historical preservation work spearheaded by a small, diverse group of local volunteers. The main lesson to be learned is the importance of informed local action. The designation of a particular site as "historical" at any level of governmental designation—federal, state or city—carries little impact when there is no action taken to preserve and interpret the site. Here then is the story of the preservation efforts on behalf of Fort MacArthur and the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles. There were a number of fortuitous events which allowed some of the structures to remain intact here in Los Angeles, but ultimately it will be the interest and efforts of the local volunteers and visitors that will keep and preserve Fort MacArthur for future generations.

The development of Fort MacArthur and the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles is a direct result of the growth of the City of Los Angeles as an important manufacturing, port and trade center as well as the development of American political and economic interests in the Pacific rim during the early 1900s. Fort MacArthur's history also reflects the important economic and social ties of American cities to the military establishment during this period. The post was an important economic and social center for the Los Angeles area for over 80 years. It was the only significant Army presence in the area during those years. During the World War II years, the post served as an important and highly visible Army and civil activity center. The post had units and facilities that were responsible for Army induction, training, embarkation and supply processes. Its assigned units were an integral part of the defenses of local industry and civilians during the early part of World War II. Many veterans who passed through Fort MacArthur during the years chose to stay in Los Angeles after they got out of the Army.

The old reservations today hold an important collection of artifacts which are tied to both the Army lifestyle and to the Army's role in the protection of the American coastline from invasion; structures significant to the history of American seacoast artillery defense, an important function of the US Army from its beginnings in the Revolutionary War. The remains on the Fort MacArthur reserves, which are in good condition for the most part, clearly trace the development of American coastal defenses, from the all gun era of the turn of the century to missile era of today, and many of these sites can be restored for interpretive purposes. The site is unique in that it was the only Taft-era construction built in continental United States, as well as the only use of 14" railway mounted guns for harbor defense in the continental United States. Yet, many of these structures face destruction unless efforts are made to preserve them. It is for this purpose that the Fort MacArthur Military Museum was established.

*A Brief History of Fort MacArthur and the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles*

The Spanish government in California informally designated a public landing area at San Pedro Bay around the area of the present day 22nd Avenue to allow free access to the bay for the citizens of the area. Mexican Governor Pio Pico declared an official public reservation of "500 varas square" at San Pedro in 1846. After the United States gained control of California following the Mexican War, the property was surveyed and retained as a government reserve in 1856. It remained undeveloped for the next 50 years. In 1888, as plans were being made for the development of a Los Angeles harbor, an executive order placed the San Pedro government reserve under the control of the Department of War. After a long, heated debate over where the location of the deep water harbor facilities for the city would be located, San Pedro was finally chosen and construction began in 1899 on the first outer breakwater from Point Fermin in the Catalina Channel. It wasn't until 1908 that concern over developments in Europe and East Asia, especially deteriorating relations with Japan, prompted the War Department to officially ask Congress to add Los Angeles to the list of locations to be fortified<sup>1</sup>.

The Los Angeles fortification construction came under the modern American re-fortification plan initiated in 1886 by the Endicott Board Report and revised by the Taft Board Report of 1906. The Taft Board Report only recommended a few new construction projects that were begun at sites in the United States' new overseas possessions. Only at Los Angeles were defenses built under this program in the continental United States. It was soon determined that the San Pedro reserve was not sufficiently seaward for the effective location of seacoast artillery, so in 1910 an additional tract of land was purchased at Point Fermin. Construction was finally authorized in 1914 and the reservation was named Fort MacArthur after Lt. General Arthur MacArthur. Gun emplacements for four 14" rifles on disappearing carriages (Batteries Osgood, Farley, Leary and Merriam) and eight 12" mortars (Batteries John Barlow and Saxton) were built during the years 1915-1919 on the Upper Reservation, while barracks, administrative offices, officers quarters, the hospital and other post buildings were built during the years 1916-1919 on the Lower Reservation. A battery of four 3" guns was on the sandspit at the tip of Terminal Island in 1919 (Battery Lodor—removed in 1927) to protect a planned mine field that was never actually deployed. An Artillery Training Center was also established on the Upper Reservation during 1917-1918, and trained over 5,000 soldiers for action in Europe.

The Army used Fort MacArthur for training purposes during the 1920s and 1930s for the National Guard, the Civilian Military Training Corps (CMTC), the Organized Reserve and the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units in the area. Fort MacArthur's meager fire power was of continued concern to the Army. In October 1925, a 14" rifled gun mounted on a railway car arrived at the post. A second gun arrived 4 years later. Firing practice raised such a havoc with the local population, however, that it ceased altogether at all batteries at the post in 1928 and not revived until 1941.

After America entered the Second World War on December 7, 1941, Los Angeles was considered to be a primary target for Japanese attack, and new defenses, both temporary and permanent, were rushed to completion. Japanese submarines did in fact prowl the California coast during the early months of the war and torpedoed several freighters, including one just off of Point Fermin. Another submarine shelled an oil field near Santa Barbara in February 1942. Plans were made to turn Fort MacArthur into an underground fortress in preparation for a Japanese invasion. While a few of the planned tunnels were built on the Upper Reservation, these efforts were halted well short of completion.

Fort MacArthur served as an Induction and Training Center and, later, as a Separation Center during the war. The harbor defense command at the post oversaw the defenses of Southern California from Santa Barbara to Laguna Beach. Several new gun batteries, including two batteries of two 16" guns in casemates and three batteries of two 6" shielded guns, were built during the war years at four locations—Pt. Vicente, White Point (misspelled by the Army as "White's Point"), the Upper Reservation and Bolsa Chica (Huntington Beach). Additional batteries of 90mm, 155mm, and antiaircraft guns as well as a significant number of searchlights were deployed. In the years following the war, the Los Angeles guns were removed and/or scrapped along with most of the rest of existing American seacoast artillery pieces.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, Fort MacArthur continued to function as a reserve training center before being returned to use for the national defense as the headquarters post for the Los Angeles basin Nike missile command. The Nike antiaircraft missile had replaced the big artillery guns as coastal defense weapons by the early 1950s. Launch facilities were built at several locations around the Los Angeles metropolitan area during the years 1954-1958. In San Pedro the Group Headquarters and Missile Master were located on the Middle Reservation (Site LA 45). Nike site LA 43 was also located on the San Pedro reserves; the launch site at White Point and the control site on the Upper Reservation. Fort MacArthur eventually oversaw some 18 combination launch and radar control sites at the programs height in 1962. The original Nike-Ajax missiles were replaced by the larger, more powerful and nuclear warhead capable Nike-Hercules in 1963, and the number of launch sites were reduced. The Nike program was phased out of the national defense program beginning in the early 1970s, and the remaining Los Angeles launch complexes were shut

down by 1974. The end of the Nike-era also brought about the end of the Army's active use of Fort MacArthur<sup>2,3</sup>.

### *Army Closure of Fort MacArthur and Early Preservation Efforts*

In 1974, the Army decided to inactivate a large portion of Fort MacArthur. Several sections of the reservations were declared surplus and local governments were asked to prepare site use plans to receive control of these properties. Eventually, the City of Los Angeles received the lease for the "Bottomside" section, the old filled tideland section that contained the reception center buildings, the Upper Reservation and the White Point Reservation. The City of Rancho Palos Verdes received a large section of the old Long Point/Point Vicente Reservation, while other parts were sold to private concerns. The city leases stipulated that the lands were to be used for the public or else they would return to the federal government. The Army made the Middle Reservation a subpost of Fort Ord. Finally in 1982, the Army closed the post altogether, turning over the Middle Reservation to the US Air Force for use as a housing facility, formally ending the Fort MacArthur's service as a U.S. Army post<sup>2</sup>.

Even at the time the base closure was initiated in 1974, the Army recognized the historical importance of Fort MacArthur and even moved to preserve a few of the remains of the post's role in American harbor defense. Times had changed and historical preservation had made big strides during the previous two decades. During 1946-1949 most of the big guns had been scrapped, their metal more valuable than the historic significance. But by the 1970s the Army was more aware of preserving its historical heritage. For example, excess Army properties in the San Francisco area, which once was used for harbor defense, were added to a new national park that was created in 1972. But in Los Angeles, the excess Army property was going to be used for a variety of functions, so the Army tried to save what it felt was the most significant historical structure on the site— Battery Osgood-Farley. The Army nominated the battery to the National Register of Historic Places<sup>4</sup> and it was officially added to the list in 1974 (Site #7400526). Interestingly, the nomination form is dated December 4, 1975! Thus the Army left a small legacy so that the military history of Fort MacArthur would not be forgotten.

While the guns and some of the electrical equipment have been removed from Battery Osgood-Farley, much of the rest of the hardware—such as the doors, gates, windows, electrical wiring, power board, transformers, and plumbing, were left intact. This is in marked contrast to most of the other post 1890 gun emplacements around the nation, which have been gutted of most metal, wiring, and plumbing by Army scrappers, humidity and vandals. Battery Osgood-Farley may be the best preserved example of a modern-era concrete gun emplacement and the only unmodified one of its type and vintage in the United States today.

While Battery Osgood-Farley had been placed on the National Register in 1974, little else was done to insure that the site would be preserved as a historical site. At that time, much of the history the fort and the batteries represented seemed to be a little too recent to warrant much public attention. Yet, there were a few dedicated people who worked diligently to insure that Fort MacArthur would not be forgotten. At the time the Army was getting ready to close the Middle Reservation in the late 1970s, Major David Gustafson of the California Army Reserve and National Guard, who was based at Fort MacArthur, was working hard to lobby the Army into keeping Fort MacArthur active. At the same time, he was supported and encouraged by the San Pedro Bay Historical Society, the local historical group. Together with the help of Flora Baker and other members of the Society as well as other interested local residents, Major Gustafson staged a valiant effort to forestall the closure of the base, but to no avail. The headquarters of the California National Guard detachment was moved to Los Alamitos and the Middle Reservation was turned over to the Air Force in 1982. Still, their efforts were not without some fruit. The Society and Major Gustafson worked to get additional sections of Fort MacArthur recognized as historical sites. The Society ran several articles on the Fort's history in their publication, The Shoreline, including two full issues dedicated to Fort MacArthur<sup>6,7</sup>. They were successful in getting the mortar battery complex, Batteries John Barlow and Saxton added to the National Register in 1982

(Site # 8200220), and the area of the original 500 Vara Square Reservation added in 1986 (Site #86000326). In addition, the site of the first structure built on the property in 1823, the old Spanish hide warehouse, was made a State Historical Landmark in 1982 (State Site #920) and is marked by a bronze plaque located near the Middle Reservation parade ground.

### *The Fort MacArthur Military Museum*

While the efforts of Major Gustafson and the San Pedro Bay Historical Society kept the memory of Fort MacArthur alive in spirit, there was little visible historical interpretation at the site that could be seen. The Middle Reservation was off limits to the public and none of those sites, including a small museum, could be visited by the casual visitor. The City of Los Angeles had control of much of the property but little or no money to develop the sites. On the Upper Reservation, many of the buildings and structures were put to other uses or locked up. There were no signs or explanation of the myriad of structures that remained. Many were considered hazards by the city and needed to be buried or removed if they could not be secured.

Some changes have occurred on the old Army reserves. The Air Force has extensively rebuilt the western portions of the Middle Reservation for new housing, but has left much of area around the old parade ground intact. The post hospital area, across Pacific Avenue from the parade ground, has been cleared of all the old buildings and is currently vacant. The City of Los Angeles developed a public marina out of the old Bottomside reserve (resulting in the destruction and removal of nearly all the Army buildings and structures there). The Upper Reservation was divided in half, one section is being used by the Los Angeles Unified School District for a number of different purposes, the other half administered by the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. The White Point Reserve remains an undeveloped City park to this day. The City of Rancho Palos Verdes used their lands for their City Hall facilities and also as a park.

The City of Los Angeles began the process of drawing up park master plans to outline the development of the sites under its jurisdiction. The plans for the "Bottomside" reservation proceeded at a fairly quick pace. The site was soon cleared of the old buildings as well as most of the fill and the marina was completed by the early 1980s. The area off of 22nd Street is now a bustling commercial zone. The master plans for the Upper Reservation and White Point areas were slower in developing.

To mark the event of the United States Bicentennial celebration, the Republic of South Korea gave the City of Los Angeles a large Oriental bell symbolizing the ties of friendship between South Korea and the United States. A pavilion to house the Friendship Bell was built on the Upper Reservation, directly atop Battery 241. The Friendship Bell was dedicated on Oct. 3, 1976. After the land was officially transferred to the city in 1978, the area around the Friendship Bell was landscaped and it is a beautiful ridge-top public park area today.

The Angels Gate Cultural Center was also started during the mid-1970s and soon moved into some of the old WWII barracks. This organization was formed to encourage and develop the local artists. They hold classes, workshop and have festivals, exhibitions and plays. The old gun pit of Battery Merriam has been transformed into an amphitheater and has been a host to a number of outdoor events.

With the arrival of the Friendship Bell, the Cultural Center and other tenants, such as the Youth Hostel, the Belmont Shores Model Railroad Club and the California Conservation Corps, a trend was established for the use of Angels Gate Park, as the area was now called. The Park Master Plan was finished in the mid 1980s after long rounds of public hearings<sup>8</sup>. The site would be a multi-use area, whose facilities would be used and developed by various public entities, such as the Cultural Center, the Youth Hostile and other groups. The Parks and Recreation Department would maintain the open space, and develop picnicking areas, and soccer fields. Included in the plan was the designation of Battery Osgood-Farley, then an undeveloped entity, as a "historic site". The Los Angeles Unified School District used its parcel for the development of some school facilities, maintenance and storage facilities and, just recently, a Marine Mammal Rescue and Study Center. White Point is to remain open space, with a few developed picnic sites<sup>9</sup>.

Battery Osgood-Farley was initially used as storage and studio space by the Cultural Center. However, they were charged with the development of the historic site. All that was needed was someone to start the ball rolling. Don Young, a local high school teacher, had been actively involved in the planning processes for both the park and the cultural center. He had a strong interest in local history, especially during the WWII years. With David Gustafson, he explored many of the old bunkers and old tunnels on the reservation. For a number of years he taught an adult continuing education class at local schools and community colleges on the subject. Don and the Angels Gate Cultural Center worked to start a museum that would be housed in part of Battery Osgood Farley. Don began with enthusiasm, organized some of his personal collection for displays, cleaned up the inside of the structure and began the slow process of restoration. The Museum opened its doors in the fall of 1985, under the administration of the Angels Gate Cultural Center.

The process of creating a museum was a slow one. Don worked with a small group of dedicated volunteers who came down and put in the man hours to build the museum's displays, maintain the area and begin to restore the Battery. The museum labored under a small budget and non-existent publicity, yet the word did get around and the number of visitors slowly increased. Many visitors that found their way to the museum were ex-service men who had spend some time at Fort MacArthur. Some came to relive old memories, others to tell old tales, and some to give their memorabilia to the museum. The museum's collection grew as more and more material was donated to the museum. It wasn't long before the museum outgrew the cramped confines of both the space given by the Cultural Center and small financial support. The Cultural Center was renting out space in Battery Farley to musicians and artists, which often conflicted with museum restoration efforts. Finally after three years, the administration of the Museum was transferred from the Cultural Center directly to the Department of Recreation and Parks, becoming an official part of Angels Gate Park in July of 1988. The move was a momentous one resulting in the museum receiving control of all of the rooms of Battery Osgood-Farley. The museum had taken its first steps towards the complete preservation and restoration of the battery. But there still remained a lot to do, especially if the museum was to have any influence on the preservation of the other remains of the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles. Don Young left the museum in 1991 soon after the new City Department of Recreation & Parks Director, Robert Garcia, came in charge of the park. The museum would not have come into existence without Don's almost single-handed effort to get it started.

#### *Fort MacArthur Military Museum Redux: The City and the Association*

While the administrative transfer of the museum from the Cultural Center to the City held a lot of promise, little actually had changed in the way the museum was run. While the museum had a number of enthusiastic and capable volunteers, it had no one who had any sort of formal training in how to run a museum. Though a great deal of restoration work was done and a number of interesting and informative displays were built, the lack of experience in museum curation left much of the artifacts uncataloged and not properly cared for. In short, while it was a museum in name, it was a long way from being a properly certified museum like the Los Angeles Maritime Museum. The City was of little help in this regard. Short on funds, they could only support the museum as a part of Angels Gate Park. Progress towards developing the museum would have to be done with volunteers.

At the time of the administrative transfer in 1988, several volunteers began to map out a plan to build the museum's support, credibility and administration. The first step was to create a legal non-profit corporation which would support the museum and handle the fund-raising activities for the many projects planned to improve the museum and its displays. The next two years were a struggle with forms, application fees and waiting periods. The volunteers started a newsletter, began a membership drive and began to watch over some of yearly fundraising events such as the Bunker Ball and the Fort MacArthur Artillery Show (now named the "Old Fort MacArthur Days"). By 1990, the Fort MacArthur Military Museum Association was an official California Non-Profit Corporation with over 100 members.

The Fort MacArthur Military Museum Association is a group of interested individuals who are working to support and maintain the museum. The goals of the Association are to preserve and interpret the history of Fort MacArthur and the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles, to preserve and protect the remaining physical elements of the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles and to collect, preserve and interpret related historical material concerning military activities on the American west coast, especially that concerning military coastal defenses.

These goals are served in several ways. First in importance is the continued maintenance of the museum and its displays for the public, so that it will interest a wide variety of visitors. Second in importance is to serve as a repository for documents concerning coast artillery and west coast military history. And finally, it is important to interpret and promote interest in this historical subject area through exhibits, classes, lectures, periodicals and other publications.

The Association was founded to help raise funds and provide volunteers for projects to benefit the museum. A number of projects have been accomplished over the years, through work by the volunteers and other organizations such as the Boy Scouts, the Izaak Walton League and others. Much of the battery has been cleaned, painted and opened to the public. The Association now runs a Museum shop which raises money through the sales of books and Fort MacArthur items. The Association has published a number of historical pamphlets and booklets on the history of the Los Angeles Harbor Defenses. The volunteers have retrieved a M1918 155 mm GPF gun from a park in Lynwood and are in the process of restoring it for display. Other projects include the restoration of a Nike-Ajax missile received from the California National Guard, and the retrieval of a number of artifacts from surplus military stores at military installations including some captured Japanese artillery pieces. One of the more outlandish projects is the plan to bring back one of two remaining 14" disappearing guns and carriage from tiny Caballo Island in Manila Bay, the Philippines. While this project remains only a dream at the moment, we have gone ahead with an alternate plan to build an actual size replica of Battery Osgood's 14" gun, a project that will be completed by the end of 1993.

The Association has also been keeping up on its paperwork as well. Battery Osgood-Farley has been added to the City of Los Angeles Cultural Heritage List, an important safeguard for the preservation of the site<sup>10</sup>. The Preservation Committee is working on ways to preserve some of the other harbor defense structures in the area which are detailed below. Currently charged by the city with the development of the overall plan for the museum's future, the volunteers of the Association are learning what it is like to run a museum.

### *Current Status, Future Plans and Dreams*

For all that has been accomplished, much remains to be done. While significant progress has been made towards the preservation and restoration of Battery Osgood-Farley itself, preservation issues for the other important structures that remain of the Harbor Defenses of Los Angeles has just been initiated. The problem is not necessarily a negative attitude but simply one of lack of understanding—the government agencies in charge of the various properties do not have any idea of the historical value of these structures. Often, the old structures seem to be a safety hazard or place for the gathering of juvenile delinquents. With no money and no apparent interest in the old concrete, it is an easy solution just to get rid of them. Future preservation efforts must be focused on pointing out the historical value of these structures and providing good plans to maintain and/or use them. Another important consideration is to decide which structures are the most important to save for interpretation. The museum continues to change and develop, but staff growth has been slow. The Museum is still run largely through the efforts of a few volunteers. These volunteers come and go but little growth in the number of active volunteers has happened over the last 3 years.

The San Pedro area contains the old Fort MacArthur reservations and the most significant number of structural remains. The Lower Reservation buildings and historical sites have been amply documented and will be preserved by the Air Force<sup>2</sup>. Currently, the Air Force mounting brass plaques on all the remaining historical structures in the parade ground area of the Middle

Reservation. The historical structures on the old Upper Reservation and at the White Point Reservation have not been as well documented and some are in danger of being destroyed.

The park and interpretive facilities developed here have the potential of becoming an important historic and cultural landmark. Angels Gate Park and White Point Park are accessible to the public and have unique ties to both the gun-eras and missile eras of American harbor defenses. Several different phases of American defenses can be viewed all within a short distance of one another. A fully integrated explanation of the early twentieth century American seacoast gun fortification program can be developed here. An early cultural resources study commissioned by the Corps of Engineers recommended that the Osgood-Farley National Register Nomination be expanded to include Batteries Leary and Merriam and Batteries John Barlow and Saxton. It would be nice to expand the nomination even further to include all the remaining historical structures of Fort MacArthur, to create a "Fort MacArthur Historical District" that will tie together the Middle Reservation, the Upper Reservation and the White Point Reservation as they were once before. I even once suggested that these three reservations be transferred to the National Park Service as a part of the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area as a way to preserve them, which I still think is be a great idea.

These historic structures can be used to interpret three phases of American coastal defenses, easily viewed by walking tours through Angels Gate Park and White Point Park: the Taft-era (1906-1919), represented by Battery Osgood-Farley and Battery Barlow-Saxton; the 1940 Program-era (1940-1948), represented by Harbor Entrance Command Post (ex-Battery Leary-Merriam), Battery 241 (which still has all three of its Worthington built engine-powered generators in place), Battery Bunker (at White Point) and Gaffey Bulge 90 mm battery mounts; and the Nike Missile Era (1954-1974), represented by the Nike site 43 launch site (at White Point) and control site (ex-Battery Leary-Merriam).

There are excellent examples of barracks and other buildings from the period 1918-1950 which can be utilized to interpret the life in Coast Artillery Corps and the Army in general during this period. In addition, the buildings of the Upper Reservation could hold displays dedicated to themes that have not yet been adequately interpreted including: home front activities in the Greater Los Angeles area during the First and Second World Wars, Civil Defense (1940-1970), Japanese-American Internment, Japanese attacks on the American Mainland, World War II Pacific Campaigns, American Army life and training (1917-1970) and the important role of Los Angeles as a military port, both for the Army and the Navy. The fire control system (range finding), not adequately demonstrated at other seacoast artillery parks, can be fully interpreted here (at Battery Osgood-Farley, Base End Station (BES) B'4 and other sites. The possible restoration of both Nike Site 43 IFC and Site 43 L can give a complete overview of a functional Nike facility and the interpretation of early American antiaircraft missile defenses.

When the Angels Gate Master Plan was developed and approved<sup>9</sup>, neither the museum nor the Association were in existence. There was a great deal of interest in the preservation of Battery Osgood-Farley as a historic site, which was so designated in the plan. However, very little consideration was made of the many other historical structures on the LADRP property. Hence, many of these structures are scheduled for demolition and removal, or a great deal of modification. As currently planned, the park will have two soccer fields, a number of picnic areas, a new youth hostel, the Korean War Memorial, a maintenance yard and new cultural center. Most of the Army buildings are slated to be destroyed— maybe only 7 buildings out of the existing 56 buildings will remain. Some changes in the master plan will be necessary to preserve some of these structures both as historic artifacts and for general community use. The "essence" of Fort MacArthur should be guarded on the old Upper Reservation, saving the existing Army buildings at Angels Gate Park to retain the look, feel and appearance of those old military days. The structures could be used for a variety of community uses, such as meeting and conference rooms and other civic and for community groups who are in need of facilities, and especially to encourage the movie industry to use the site.

The White Point Master Plan<sup>10</sup> was specifically amended to include the preservation of all Nike related structures. Battery Bunker is also to be preserved and the area in front of the bunker is to be

the location of a number of interpretive signs. In 1987, the US Air Force commissioned a study on the site which determined that the site was "of exceptional importance" and should be included on the National Register of Historic Places<sup>3</sup>. Even though the White Point Master Plan notes that the Nike structures should be preserved, no details or specifics are given. This site represents the last major development phase in coastal defenses and is an important interpretive site as it contains both a gun emplacement and a Nike site which allows for a direct visual tie between the use of guns and missiles for coastal defense. It is also important because of its park setting, as most other US Nike sites have been either destroyed, buried, modified or are not generally accessible. Again, we will need to list the structures we wish to preserve, describe their significance and propose how we will preserve, use and interpret them. Currently, the site is in a state of neglect, with extensive damage by vandalism to all the structures.

The complete restoration of Battery Osgood-Farley, along with the planned restoration of Battery 241, Nike Launch site LA 43 at White Point and the interpretation of the other structures in the area, would give Los Angeles one of the finest visual interpretations of American coastal defenses in the nation.

Other efforts must be made to preserve those HDLA structures outside the San Pedro area as well. The overriding consideration must be to preserve, restore and interpret those sites that remain in public parks. Private sites like Bolsa Chica and the old Seabench base end stations will most likely be destroyed or buried like many other sites and can easily be interpreted at the museum. It is important to concentrate on preserved sites such as the Ventura Panama mounts near the mouth of the Ventura River, the Bolsa Chica Panama mounts, and Pt. Vicente Park's old base end stations and Battery 240 in the City of Rancho Palos Verdes. A little bit of letter writing and a few weekend work parties may make the difference between a preserved historic site and a buried one.

### *Lessons learned*

We have been most fortunate in having preservation and interpretation efforts for the remains of seacoast fortification not only here in Los Angeles, but also in San Diego, San Francisco, at the mouth of the Columbia River and on the Puget Sound. Much of the land that was used for those harbor defense fortifications is being used as public park land today. Because these parks are at prime seacoast locations, they receive a high number of visitors, and there is a growing national interest in this historical subject. The old coastal fortification sites have been turned over to all levels of ownership, federal, state, county, city and private. In the Northwest, there are 6 magnificent "fort" state parks around the Puget Sound and at the mouth of the Columbia River. California has the Golden Gate National Recreation Area, comprised of lands from the seacoast defense reservations that guarded the entrance to San Francisco Bay, the Los Angeles City parks in San Pedro, and Cabrillo National Monument at San Diego. However, the structures that have been the most successfully preserved and interpreted are not necessarily those that have been recognized as "historic" by nomination to the National Register. It is those sites that have an organized local group of volunteers that have made the most successful strides.

The efforts made over the years by the State of Oregon is particularly striking. Fort Stevens was Oregon's only seacoast fortification. The State created Fort Stevens State Park on land that originally included none of the old military reservation lands. Because of strong interest in the historic site both at the local level and the state level, the park has grown to acquire a great deal of the old reserve. Through efforts by a local group, the Friends of Old Fort Stevens and a good relationship with the State Department of Parks and Recreation, Fort Stevens now has quite possibly one of the best interpretation programs in the nation on American coastal defense. Future projects include the reconstruction of the 1863 earthwork which was the original Fort Stevens. The park has thrived through this combination of local involvement and directed government efforts.

In contrast, the State of Washington has had difficulty interpreting its fine collection of harbor defense remains. The State has no less than seven old Coast Artillery posts which are now state parks—Fort Canby and Fort Columbia at the mouth of the Columbia River and Fort Worden, Fort Flagler, Fort Casey, Fort Ward and Fort Ebey in the Puget Sound area. However, the dilution of



interpretive and preservation efforts, along with budget constraints and no strong organized local interest group, has left some of the sites with little prospect for improvement in the future. The interpretive centers at Fort Casey, Fort Columbia and Fort Canby are in danger of being closed, while interpretive facilities at Fort Flagler and Fort Ward are non-existent. Only at Fort Worden, with its volunteer operated Puget Sound Coast Artillery Museum, is there any significant interpretive effort. Without a strong local organization to support it, it is hard for government agencies to have a good interpretive program.

Here in Los Angeles, we were doubly fortunate in that the military land was specifically set aside for public use and that some of the historical features were already recognized. But it took local effort to put together and maintain the museum and "enlighten" the City Department of Recreation and Parks as to its historic significance.

Here is a short list of important steps that might be considered when trying gain support for the preservation of an historic structure or site.

- Determine which structures would be the best representative structures to be saved and interpreted, then document their importance.
- Place sites on historical registers at all levels: National, State and Local.
- Develop strong cooperative ties with the governing agency or agencies.
- Create a viable non-profit organization with strong local membership.
- Define goals and projects that can be completed with the volunteers and resources at hand.
- Establish an interpretive program at the site to get more people interested. At the very least good informative signs should be built. Better yet would be to have a manned information booth or gift shop.

We still have much to do, preserve and interpret some of the other significant structures in the area, learn how to raise funds for our projects and increase the number of active volunteers in our group. I hope that these lessons can be applied to other seacoast defense sites around the nation.

#### Endnotes

1. "Seacoast Fortifications. San Pedro, California", Message from the President of the United States, 60th Cong., 2nd Sess., Doc. No. 256, Jan. 14, 1909.
2. "Fort MacArthur, San Pedro, Los Angeles, California . . . Public Report", prepared by David Gebhart, Lauren Bricker and David Bricker for the Dept. of the Air Force, Headquarters Space Division (AFSC) DE Los Angeles, Calif. 1982
3. "Historical Cultural Resources Survey and Evaluation of the Nike Missile Site at Fort MacArthur, White Point, Los Angeles County, California", prepared by Roger Hathaway for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Los Angeles District, Feb. 1987
4. "Battery Osgood-Farley" National Register of Historic Places Inventory. Nomination Form, Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, prepared by Col. Charels L. McNeill, Dec. 4, 1975
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