

# Fort Stevens Review

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*Helping to Preserve the History of Oregon's Fort Stevens State Park*

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Battery Freeman, a 6-inch Rifle, Fort Stevens, Oregon

Fort Stevens State Park, OPRD Archives

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Pre World War II Barracks Scene, Fort Stevens, Oregon.  
Summer Training For Battery C, Marshfield, Oregon  
Fort Stevens State Park, OPRD Archives

# Book Review: *The Valor Of Ignorance* by Homer Lea And Its Influence On Pacific Northwest Coast Artillery Strategy

By D. Lindstrom

Homer Lea lived for military strategy with a lifelong devotion to China. Even though he had severe physical handicaps, he managed to present himself to Chinese authorities as an expert in military affairs. During the Boxer Rebellion of 1900 he sought to do his part in rallying the troops to restore the emperor to power and bring honor to China. With the collapse of the restoration project, he escaped from China disguised as a missionary. Somewhere along the way Lea traveled to Japan and there met Dr. Sun Yat-sen, the Chinese revolutionary leader. Apparently, the doctor was impressed with Lea's talent and interest in geopolitics. In time, Lea became one of Sun Yat-sen's most trusted advisors.

By 1901 Lea had returned to his home in southern California. Soon after, with funds from his Chinese friends, he established military training schools in the USA. Their purpose was to train Chinese Americans to return to China and continue the fight to restore the emperor. They were set up east and west all across the country, including Portland, Seattle, and Walla Walla. Even though a number of trainees did travel to China, the over-all effort failed. Lea was undeterred and became deeply involved with Dr. Sun Yat-sen in planning the establishment of a Chinese republic. Lea sought the support of the British and American governments, but they were more interested in keeping the Open Door Policy which allowed them to freely access Chinese markets. While Dr. Sun Yat-sen's efforts bore fruit, for Lea it all came to not. He suffered a major stroke in 1912 and soon died.

Within all this turmoil, Lea managed to write his book, *The Valor Of Ignorance*, which was copyrighted in 1909. At the time, his book created a sensation as he laid out the tactics that Japan might use to gain control of the Western Pacific and occupy the American Pacific Coast. It was avidly read in Japan both by the public and the military. West Point made it required reading, and General McArthur called Lea a genius. In 1941 the book was reprinted. I recall that back in the day when Fort Stevens veterans were still with us, several told me about the discovery of Japanese plans laying out how they would invade and occupy the Pacific Northwest. Then, I knew nothing about Lea's book, but looking back, I'm certain it was the source of their ideas.

The book traces Japan's advance to become a powerful player in the Pacific. There was the victorious war with China in 1894. When the United States annexed Hawaii in 1900, Japan refused to accept its validity. They smoldered under that move for years and years. The real coup was the 1902 bilateral treaty with Great Britain that sidelined their navy in the Pacific.

An often-overlooked aspect of Japanese anger at the USA were the terms of the treaty ending the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905). President Roosevelt negotiated the treaty, but the Japanese viewed the terms as a snub to their rightful place on the world stage. The Russians were not forced to pay reparations. That was a huge sticking point, and riots broke out all over Japan with citizens demanding reparations. Their view was that a European victor would have received huge indemnities and that the USA should be punished: ...and another arrow was added to the quiver.

Furthermore, an overlooked aspect of Japanese anger at the USA were the terms of the treaty ending the Russo-Japanese war (1904-1905). President Roosevelt negotiated the treaty, but the Japanese viewed the terms as a snub to their rightful place on the world stage. The Russians were not forced to pay reparations. That was a huge sticking point, and riots broke out all over Japan with citizens demanding reparations. Their view was that a European victor would have received huge indemnities and that the USA should be punished: ...and another arrow was added to the quiver.

So, what did Lea have to say that caught so much attention? First of all, he was astounded that a nation as wealthy as the United States could be so negligent as to not fund an Army and Navy to adequately defend its shores, especially its western ones. The first half of the book is a harangue about how the sole interest of the American establishment was the conduct of business and to make vast fortunes while hardly giving a notice to the dilapidated state of her armed forces. Lea was saying that isolation by virtue of the Atlantic Pacific Oceans wasn't enough to protect the nation. The lack of protection along the Pacific shores was a particular concern. He recites the development of ships driven by steam turbine engines and the speed at which they could travel. The only problem was that foreign powers, especially Japan, were far ahead of the United States in supplying their navies with such ships and dreadnaughts. Lea pointed out that while the United States Army had fewer than 100,000 troops, Japan was spending half of its national income on the military.

Both in his book and lectures, Lea loved to accuse the American government of placating the public by building harbor defenses. He thought of himself as an expert in such things. They consisted, he noted, of elaborate fortifications without funding for the required manpower to operate them. He cited the number of batteries in the nation's harbor defense system coast to coast and the number of men required to make them fully functional. His conclusion was that in most cases, there was sufficient manpower to fire just one battery per harbor defense site.

These defenses needed an educated corps, and in an emergency there wasn't time to train civilians. As for defending harbors either under siege or from enemy landing parties, the combined strength of the USA Army and Navy, together with the states' militias, made their defense unworkable. The numbers just weren't there. Should the West Coast come under attack, there wasn't a coherent plan to quickly transport, what army troops there was, to the coast. Given the nation's preoccupation with commerce and in Lea's view, ignorance, the last thing anyone wanted to do, civilian and congressmen alike, was to join and finance the Army.

Following the Spanish American War and the Philippine Insurrection, Oregon National Guardsmen gained the reputation for being among the "best soldiers in America." To maintain their edge, the Oregon National Guard was reorganized into the Third and Fourth Infantry along with several other units. In late 1911 the Fourth Infantry was disbanded to create "eight companies of Coast Artillery, Oregon National Guard."

The reason was clear. Lea wrote that enemy invaders could easily capture Fort Stevens, located on the Oregon side of the Columbia River's mouth; from behind. Consequently, during the summer of that year (1911), observers from the War Department witnessed a war game in which "enemy" forces did capture Fort Stevens from behind. A number of newspapers in Oregon wrote about it, and one officer mused that a gun battery was needed on Coxcomb Hill where the Astoria Column is now located. No doubt there was much discussion about the results. With the creation of an Oregon National Guard Coast Artillery unit, additional trained men could then serve alongside of the regular Coast Artillerymen. However, this still wasn't the whole answer.

The theory of harbor defenses was that they would hold the enemy off shore long enough to give the Navy time to fire up its boilers and head out to sea and meet them. Meanwhile, sufficient army field units were needed to meet a potential land invasion. As noted earlier, these were sorely lacking. What made the harbor defenses even more vulnerable, by his estimate, was that at the time Japan's navy had warships that outranged Pacific Coast harbor defense gun batteries. Furthermore, Lea was concerned about these weaknesses because Japan, in his estimation, had sufficient transport tonnage to rapidly land a sizeable army along the Pacific Coast. (He noted that when the Great White Fleet set sail, the nation had to hire foreign flag ships to carry supplies and fuel.)

To get to the Pacific Coast, the Japanese would have to get passed the Philippines and Hawaii. Lea had an answer for that too. While there were harbor defenses in the Philippines and Hawaii, they lacked sufficient manpower to operate the batteries, possessed rudimentary field artillery and personnel, and the navy was inadequate. The bottom line was that while Japanese naval power was situated in the center of the Pacific, the majority of USA naval resources were anchored in the Atlantic.

Lea went on to say that in the USA the army and navy were "transitory," only to be built up in an emergency. Whereas in Japan, the army and navy were a way of life and a fixed part of the nation's economy and expectations. He wrote that American war ships were poorly designed. The armor belts were improperly positioned while the gun ports were so large that gun crews were exposed to enemy gun fire. Beyond this, Lea went into generous descriptions of how Japan had, and was, in the process of building more war ships and developing naval bases in the Pacific with direct lines of communication to the homeland. *So, what was behind Lea's hand wringing? In part, as an advocate of Anglo-Saxon Darwinism, he was fearful that the USA would miss out on its destiny as a favored nation in China. It's complicated.*

Keeping all this in mind, Lea's other worry was how badly the Japanese were treated by the white majority in the three Pacific Coast states: Washington, Oregon, and California...especially California. He lays out the numerous attempts to send them back to their native country: Immigrants and naturalized citizens alike. The book's appendix lists the actions, laws, and exclusion acts that attempted to do this.

He wrote, "This racial antagonism (toward the Chinese) has now been extended to the Japanese, and, indifferent to the rights and immunities guaranteed them by treaty, the people of the West are proceeding with the same sullen contempt of consequences as, two decades ago, with the Chinese."

Among these efforts was the American Federation of Labor's resolutions to exclude Japanese. A Japanese-Korean Exclusion League was formed, the outgrowth of which was the Asiatic Exclusion League of North America. This organization expressed their fears and desires in a Memorial to Congress. Basically, it asked Congress to order all Asian people to leave not only the nation, but its possessions. The latter effort seems strange considering that the USA possessed Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Philippine Islands. While the Japanese government navigated through this charged atmosphere, they seethed inwardly and bided their time.

Upon taking all this into account, Lea was incredulous that while being aware of Japan's military might and national anger over the treatment of their countrymen, the United States refused to fund an adequate Navy and Army. To build a fire under the nation's policy makers, he provided a blueprint outlining how Japan could occupy and control USA territory. He intimated that while Japanese occupation of the Philippines and Hawaii was a critical part of their thinking, the real target would be the occupation of America's Pacific Coast.

Lea provided maps and a fair amount of detail about strategies and tactics that Japan might use to occupy the Philippines, Hawaii, and lesser islands. Even Alaska came under his pen. However, that story is beyond the scope of this article. Our concern is Lea's outline of tactics the Japanese would use to land troops in the Pacific Northwest and occupy the entire states of Washington and Oregon (the tactics detailing California's Japanese occupation are also beyond the scope of this article).

The phrase, "hit em where they ain't" nicely fits the strategy under discussion here. The phrase was originally coined by the famous Baseball Hall of Famer Willie Keeler who was a marvel to behold when up to bat. He could hit the ball anywhere he wanted to; preferably where there weren't any outfielders. Lea and Keeler were contemporaries. While there is no evidence, could this have been the seed for Homer Lea's ideas regarding the strategies Japan could use to occupy the Pacific Coast?

Now enters General Douglas MacArthur, a contemporary of both Keeler and Lea (it is thought that Lea was a football fan). Some thirty years later, here's what he said about his fight with the Japanese in the Pacific: "It was the practical application of this system of warfare—to avoid the frontal attack with its terrible loss of life; to bypass Japanese strong points...isolate their armies and starve them..., as William Keeler used to say, 'hit 'em where they ain't'...that from this time forward guided my movements and operations." (As noted earlier, MacArthur read Lea's book and called him a genius.)

Lea's strategy was rather simple. Once the Western Pacific was under Japanese control (Hawaii and the Philippines), their forces would be ready to "hit 'em where they ain't." In the end, however, the war between the USA and Japan would be a land war. Given Japan's overwhelming sea power, including transport ships, he maintained that in quick order they could "put in the field" over one million men. By comparison, his analysis was that the USA only had eight trans-pacific steamers and it would take two years to transport 100,000 troops to a war zone in the Pacific. By comparison, Lea counted 100 steamers in Japan's possession which could transport two hundred thousand men with their equipment in a single crossing.

As for the Pacific Coast, while there were harbor defenses in all three states, they were undermanned with no Army field units available to hold off landings, and most of the Navy was in the Atlantic (the Panama Canal opened in 1914). Consequently, all the Japanese had to do was land there wasn't a harbor defense installation and move inland. As noted, after a Japanese landing, a problem for the USA was that a coherent method of rapidly transferring troops by railroad from the East Coast to the Pacific Coast didn't exist. The rails were laid in straight lines to either California, Oregon, or Washington. They didn't converge.

In Lea's view, San Francisco was the logical point of concentration for a Japanese invasion of California, while Washington and Oregon "constitute(d) the simplest of problems." Between San Francisco and northwest Washington there were two harbor defense installations. The Harbor Defenses of the Columbia, surrounding the mouth of the Columbia River and the Harbor Defenses of Puget Sound. As an aside, Lea didn't think much of the Columbia Defenses, and even less of the Puget Sound defenses, where the lack of troops was even more severe. "They (were) remote from any possible base for invasion that could be selected by Japan for the debarkation of *her first expedition.*" (Italics supplied by the author).

His strategy called for Japanese armies to land at Washington's Willapa Bay and Gray's Harbor which are located at the "strategic center" of Washington and Oregon ("hit 'em where they ain't"). If the harbors were mined, then Japanese troops would land on the beaches.

With 1909 transportation modes, Lea estimated it would take the Japanese Army three hours to travel forty miles inland to the twin cities of Centralia and Chehalis. From there the army would divide. Some would take three hours to reach Seattle to the north while the rest would take four hours to arrive at Portland to the south. Lea was quick to point out that the twin cities accessed a north and south railway line, which he intimated the Japanese would use. Thereafter, within a few more hours the Japanese would reach the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia (Forts Stevens, Canby, and Columbia). Similarly, Japanese would soon reach the Harbor Defenses of Puget Sound (he refers to three forts, presumably Forts Worden, Casey, and Flagler). With a little glee in his pen, he wrote that these fortifications would surrender without the coastal guns firing a shot.

To develop his strategy of how the Japanese might overrun California, he traveled its remote areas on a mule and slept under the stars. There is no indication that he did the same in Washington and Oregon. His assessment was that opposition to the Japanese could not exist unless USA forces were, "equal in number and efficiency, and occupying the coastal positions in less than 4 weeks subsequent to the declaration of war." Was there a time frame when such things might happen? In several lectures, Lea predicted that that by 1915 Japan would be on the move.

Given Lea's collaboration with the Chinese revolutionary efforts and his Asian contacts, he doubtlessly learned firsthand about the rumblings in Japan demanding retribution and there he found an opportunity. At the time, while Japan may have been successful in the manner outlined by Lea, they chose not to make their move. While they had the military edge, perhaps their desire was to maintain lucrative Western Pacific trade routes. Having said that, right up to Pearl Harbor there was constant talk of how Japan could one day control all of the Western Pacific and do harm to the USA: Much like China's behavior today. China still smolders over the same type of conduct manifested by the western powers in the early days and the consequent humiliation brought upon her. Will China follow the same path as Japan? The world doesn't need another December 7.

Aside from the Columbia River and the Puget Sound region, neither the Endicott (1886) nor the Taft (1906) harbor defense plans included either Grays Harbor or Willapa Bay. Rather, these recommendations concentrated on major trading centers, large cities, and enticing harbors. The Twin Bay's as Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay are sometimes called, were not considered. Only fishing fleets, oyster farms, and saw mills situated around small towns, could be found there. They simply were not on the radar.

The USA declared war on Germany in 1917, thereby entering World War I. The Chief of Coast Artillery Major General Erasmus M. Weaver, declared that because the German Navy was bottled up in its various ports, the USA coast lines were relatively safe from, "attack by capital ships." However, he warned that attack by submarines or surface raiders were possibilities. One follow-up of Weaver's assessment was the dismounting of four 10-inch gun tubes from the West Battery at Fort Stevens for shipment to France. This occurred at other USA harbor defenses as well, but the abrupt end of war cancelled most orders to send them "over there."

That being said, the Chief's second warning of possible submarine and surface raiders came into play. In 1918 the Army Corps Of Engineers allocated funding for what they called, "Contingent Expenses—Seacoast Fortifications." Included on the Coast Artillery Chief's list was the purchase of land at Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay ostensibly for fortifications. As it turns out, that's why he wanted them. However, the record doesn't specify exactly why the Chief wanted to fortify the Twin Harbors (maybe he was following his own warning). Was he really concerned about raiding parties or mischief perpetrated by German submarines on their way to defend their South Sea Islands or Chinese ports? It's hard to say. He certainly knew of Lea's hypothesis; perhaps was taking no chances and performing his due diligence.

The defenses at Grays Harbor and Willapa Bay had similarities in that the Corps of Engineers constructed a 12-inch mortar emplacement at each site. At the time, mortars were often the go-to weapon. Due to the carriages' capability of a 360-degree traverse and their characteristic high arc, a mortar could "hit any point within its limit of range." However, the emplacements at the Twin Harbors didn't follow the usual configuration. Rather than having the usual pits with two-gun wells each surrounded on three sides with protective parapets, these had four-gun wells constructed in a straight line with no parapets.

Furthermore, while ammunition and shell storage enclosures made of wood and corrugated steel roofs were considered, most likely they were never constructed. This may also be true of range finding facilities. The fact of the

matter was the war ended while the mortars were still under construction, so the need just evaporated. There is no record that mortars were ever shipped to these sites, held in storage, or support facilities built. In other words, they remained unfinished.

Here the similarity between the two sites ends. In this situation, mobile guns with sufficient fire power such as the French 75 and 155mm rifles, were better suited for putting down raiding parties. However, the US Army was short of such things. As it was, even in France the American Army had to rely on European weapons. Writing of this situation, Sara Jameson, in her Master of Arts thesis, writes that while Britain, France, and Germany steadily advanced their weaponry over time, the American Army, "served mainly as a constabulary, fighting guerilla forces before the war..." Consequently, the next best thing was to install Coast Artillery rifles which required permanent concrete emplacements.

The quickest way to press on was to fortify the Twin Harbors with existing armaments from within the region. This was possible because some redundancy was built into the coastal forts. Therefore, it seemed safe to remove guns from a battery at Fort Stevens, at the mouth of the Columbia River, and guns from Fort Flagler, located on Marrowstone Island in Puget Sound.

At Fort Stevens, two 6-inch guns from Battery Freeman were removed and taken by steamship for the relatively short distance to Willapa Bay. Their new site was within Willapa Bay's North Cove lighthouse reservation. Fortunately, someone photographed the arrival of these guns and carriages as they were unloaded and set up. Once the steamer anchored off shore, a barge was maneuvered to its side while the guns and carriages were lowered down by deck cranes. As for Fort Flagler, two 5-inch guns from Battery Lee were decided upon. Their destination was Westport at the entrance of Grays Harbor. Doubtlessly the same transport and unloading process took place as what occurred at Willapa Bay.

Originally, the 6-inch guns from Fort Stevens were emplaced on top of a two-level, reinforced concrete structure with shell and powder storage rooms on the first level. As these guns were mounted on barbette carriages, the barrels did not rise above a parapet as those on disappearing carriages. Consequently, the crews were more in the open. In addition to parapets, a broad and somewhat wraparound 4.5-inch thick steel shield straddled the barrel at a steep angle.

Their individual, side by side emplacements at Willapa Bay were quite a comedown from their original emplacement. Each gun had an 18-foot square concrete platform. As they were 180 feet apart, the guns would have to act individually rather than as a battery. There is no indication that any effort was made to construct a protective parapet around the emplacements. As an aside, by 1940 both the Willapa Bay lighthouse and the 6-inch gun emplacements were washed away by heavy wave action called "rollers." Before all that happened however, the 6-inch guns gained new life. In late 1936 they were transported to the Puget Sound region and re-re-emplaced at Fort Worden's Battery Tolles.

The 5-inch guns taken from Battery Lee at Fort Flagler had a much different setup. The theory was that relatively powerful guns could be hidden behind reinforced concrete parapets concealed with earthen berms. Thus, the enemy would be taken by surprise when an artillery piece suddenly popped out of nowhere and began firing on them. The 5-guns and their carriages were atop of what was called a "balanced pillar mount." In other words, the gun and carriage were mounted on top of an iron cylinder inside of an outer cylinder. When in rest position, the gun and carriage were parallel to the parapet with the tip of the barrel resting in a niche. For use, a set of lead weights, attached to chains inside the inner cylinder, were dropped and up came the cylinder and gun some three and a half feet. From there, the gun was swung into firing position. I have wondered what it was like to be standing on the carriage's operating platform while it rose (or popped) into firing position....or how stable the affair was when firing...or if the chains ever got tangled..

As with the 6-inch battery, the concrete platforms for the 5-inch guns at Westport were modest compared with their two-level emplacement at Fort Flagler. For Westport, as at other defenses, the balanced pillar mounts were modified into barbette mounts. This meant the carriage was now bolted to the platform and no longer rose into firing position atop of a cylinder. These platforms were also 18 feet square. Unlike Willapa Bay, they were separated by 120 feet. Yet again, with that distance from each other, these guns would also need to operate singly rather than as a battery. Except for a sparse gun shield, there is no evidence that anything else was done to protect the gun crew from incoming fire. Although for some conversions there is evidence that a shield similar to the one for the 6-inch guns was provided.

Army Corps of Engineers records give some insight into the time line for setting up both gun battery's. Work began in July 1918 and by January 1, 1919 the guns were mounted. As World War I abruptly ended with the November 11, 1918 armistice, there was no reason to station troops there. As with the mortars, the 6-inch and 5-inch emplacements were seemingly left unfinished, causing one to think that this project was no longer considered of strategic importance.

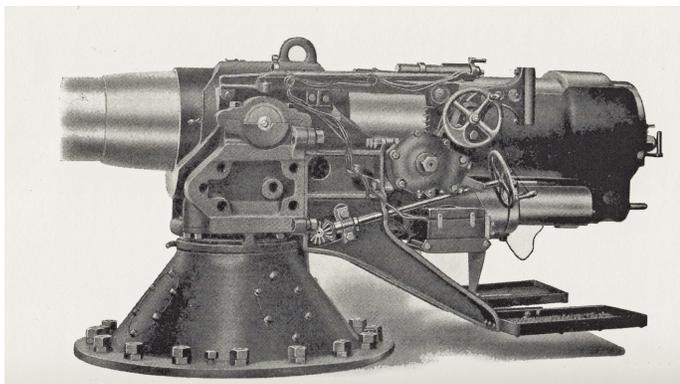
As an aside, right after the Armistice, the Coast Artillery Corps decided to discontinue all 5-inch guns and their interesting mounts. Orders to scrap those at Westport came in 1919, but the deed wasn't done until 1926. The barrels were shipped to the Benicia Arsenal, California and the carriages were scrapped. For a time, this ended the Army's efforts to fortify the Twin Harbors.

As the Willapa Bay and Grays Harbor defenses were under the jurisdiction of the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia headquartered at Fort Stevens, it fell on them to manage their "caretaker status following the cessation of hostilities." By 1922 the caretaking detachment was designated as the 34<sup>th</sup> Company, Coast Artillery Corps. Six men were given caretaker duties for the Harbor Defenses of the Columbia installations on the Washington side of the river. These included Fort Columbia, Fort Canby, and Willapa Bay. The man on duty at Willapa Bay was there for a few years, and twice a month he checked up on government property at Westport. It is difficult to stay whether or not the Army built permanent structures, or if the caretaker actually stayed in such a structure.

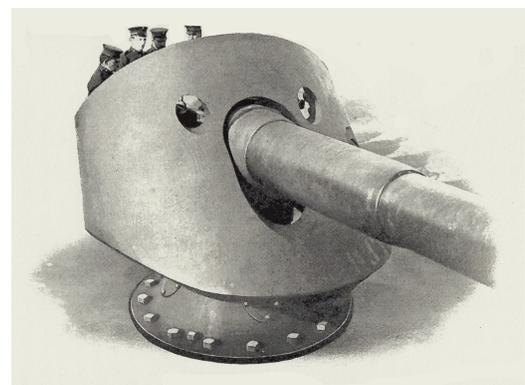
Well, there you have it...for now. We've briefly covered Homer Lea, a fascinating individual, who attempted epic things in China while admonishing USA policy makers about the danger of Japan's aggressiveness and among other hot spots, the strategic importance of the Twin Harbors. To a certain point, the War Department took heed during World War I, but the effort was token, and in real war the defenses wouldn't have lasted long. So why bother? In that war, Japan wasn't an enemy, but not really trusted either: Questions remain. A future article will take up the Nation's response to the defenses of the Twin Harbors as World War II approached.



Installation of 6-inch guns shipped from Battery Freeman, Fort Stevens to Willapa Bay's North Cove lighthouse reservation, 1918-1919. Fort Stevens State Park, OPRD archives, Original from the Pacific County Historical Society collection, South Bend, WA.



Drawing of a 6-inch rifle without its shield



Drawing of the shield for a 6-inch gun. It was said to be of Krupp steel and 4.5 inches thick.

Drawings taken from *Ordnance and gunnery*, 1915 by Ormond Lissak (A reprint by University of California Libraries).

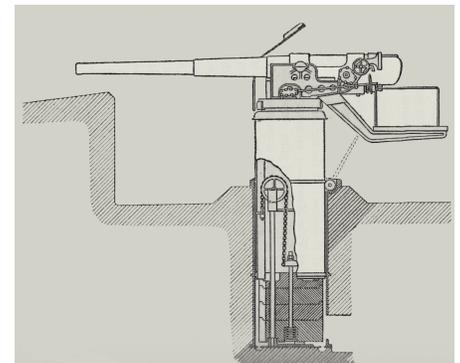


Battery Boutelle (1900-1917), a 5-inch Battery on Balanced Pillar Mounts. Photo, GOGA. This battery, located in San Francisco, nicely illustrates the guns in their resting position with the barrel tips in specialized nitches. On the other hand, Battery Lee, at Fort Flagler, was similar

in that it also had two levels but with two guns. Photo, NPS Golden Gate.



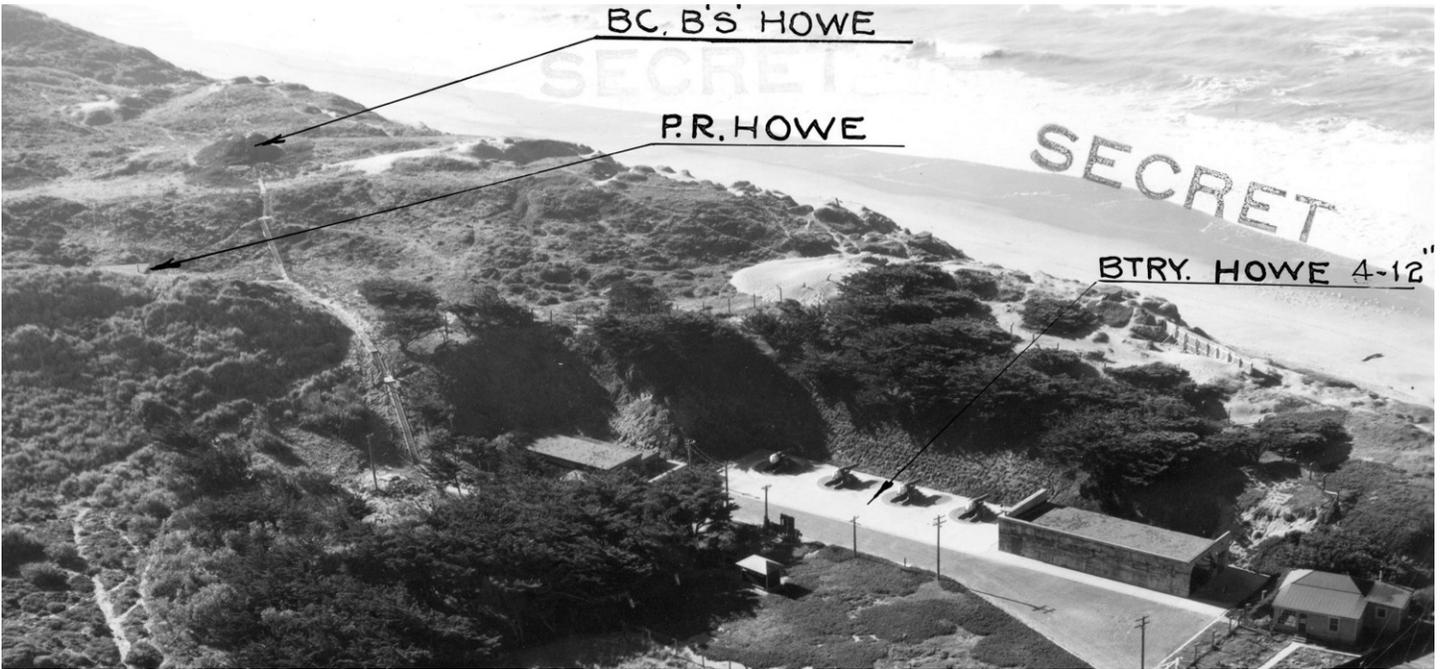
Battery Lee, Fort Flagler. The photo reveals its balanced pillar mounts. Its guns were removed and shipped to Westport. Here, the balanced pillar mount was abandoned in favor of a barbette carriage, much like that for the 6-inch guns. Photo, FortWiki Historic US and Canadian Forts.



The drawing of a 5-inch balanced pillar mount reveals the inner cylinder raised up to firing position. It was elevated by a system of chains and lead weights. *Ordnance and Gunnery, 1915*



The 5-inch gun has been raised on its balanced pillar mount into firing position. Upon closer inspection, crew members can be seen handing up cartridges to the gunners on the platform. It appears to be an awkward set up, and it's easy to understand why the Army converted many of them to barbette carriages. The name of the battery is unknown and the photo is in the public domain.



Battery Howe, a 12-inch mortar battery, was constructed at Fort Funston with four gun wells side by side. More often than not, batteries for this type of weapon were divided into pits with two mortars each. Had the 12-inch mortar batteries at Willapa Bay and Westport been completed, they would have looked similar. In the case Battery Howe, the support structures were designed to be sturdier than what was planned for the Twin Harbors.



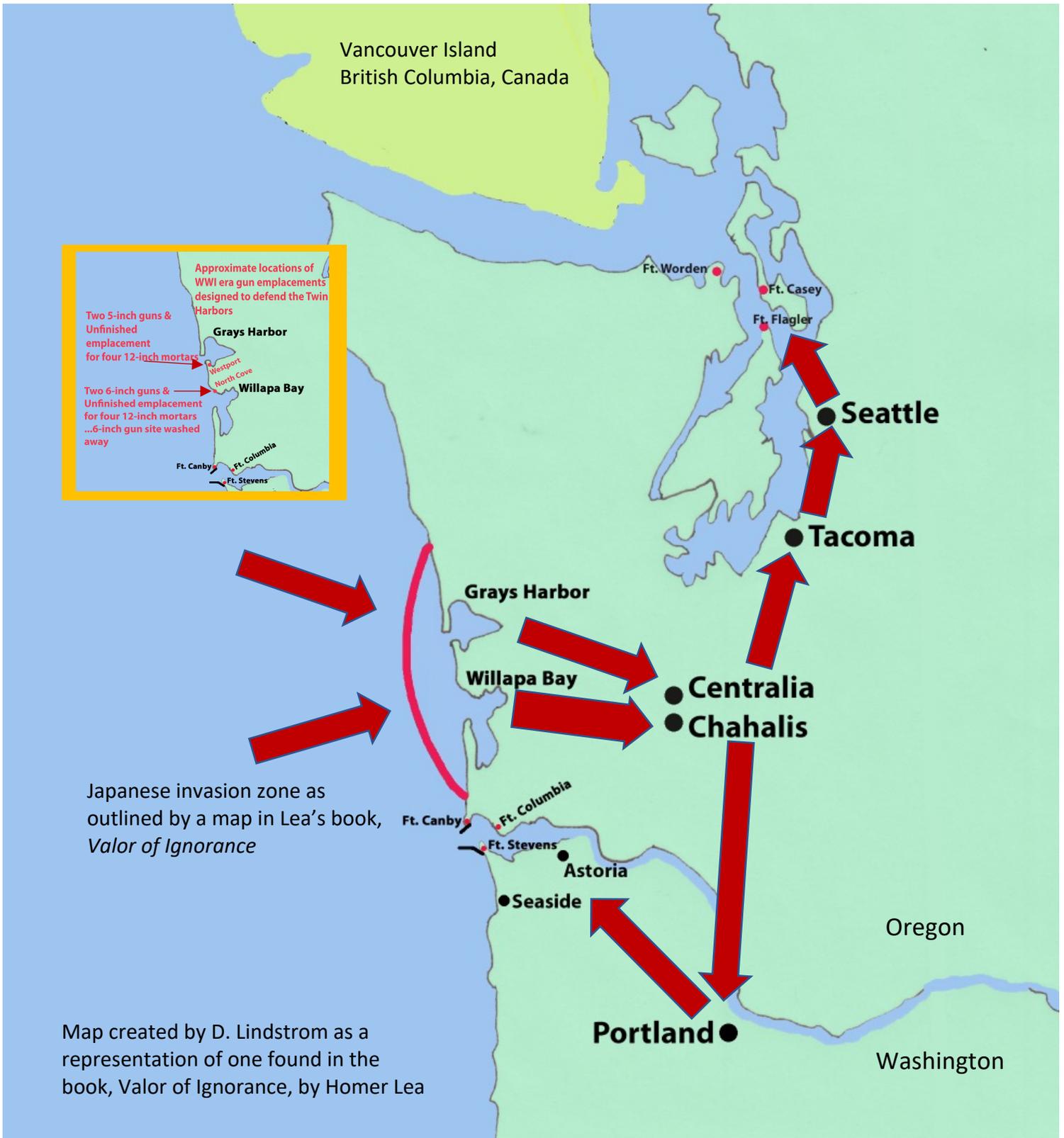
A few remnants remain from the Army Coast Artillery Corps World War I efforts at Willapa Bay. While the 6-inch guns were being emplaced near the lighthouse, behind them a mortar battery was under construction against a hillside. The four gun wells were set side by side rather than divided into pits surrounded on three sides by parapets (see above photo). As World War I abruptly ended with the Armistice, so did work on the emplacement. The mortars were never mounted. The photo of gun well #4, was taken in 1999 by Roger Davis, a CDSG member.

Similar efforts were made at Westport, the entrance to Grays Harbor. However it is thought that this mortar emplacement was paved over.



As for the World War I rifle emplacements at Willapa Bay's North Cove, and Westport, one 5-inch gun platform remains at Westport as seen here. As noted, this platform conforms to the exchange of the balanced pillar mount for a barbette mount. As such, the gun could traverse and elevate within the confines of its carriage, but it was unable to "disappear" as it did when mounted on the balanced pillar mount.

Photo provided by CDSG member and museum curator Greg Hagge.



(Sources: *The Valor of Ignorance*, by Homer Lea, 1909; *Homer Lea, Soldier of Fortune*, by L.M. Kaplan, 2010; *Ordnance and gunnery*, by Ormond M. Lissak, 1915, A reprint: *American Seacoast Defenses*, Edited by Mark Berhow, 2004; *Fort Flagler, over 100 years of history*, Friends of Fort Flagler, 2005; *Historical Annual National Guard of the State of Oregon*, 1939; Record of Completed Works, Willapa Bay and Westport: Chronological History of the Artillery Defenses of Gray's Harbor, Washington, unpublished document, Fort Stevens/ORPD archives: Advice and information provided by Coast Defense Study Group members, Greg Hagge and Aaron Buda. All conclusions, right or wrong, are solely those of the author.)

# An inside view of how the pandemic is playing out at Fort Stevens State Park

## By Laura Neal, FOOFS store manager and FOOFS board clerk

The Covid-19 pandemic has made for a vastly different summer at the park. Although we are disappointed that we have not been able to provide the levels of educational services that we are accustomed to, we understand the importance of making adjustments to ensure that everyone stays safe and healthy. We have also seen this as an opportunity to reevaluate how we provide these services, and come up with new and inventive ideas that we may use even during normal times. Visitation to the Historic Area continues to be about normal as people are looking for socially distanced outdoor activities to enjoy during the summer and fall.

The Friends typically rely on OPRD hosts to help out with our many functions, but since that is not an option this year, we have found new ways to provide services. During a normal year, hosts will drive one of FOOFS' Toro Twister carts around the campground selling firewood and kindling. This summer wood sales have been completely self-serve at the 3 wood bins located within the campground. Visitors collect their own firewood/kindling and deposit their fee into the iron ranger. The woodbins being open all day has proven to be very popular with the campers as it provides more convenience in when they are able to purchase firewood.



New disc golf basket overlooking Trestle Bay

The Visitor Center/Museum has been closed since late March and will remain closed for the time being. The popular Army Truck Tours, Underground Battery Mishler tours, and Guardhouse tours have also been canceled this year. One of the main goals of FOOFS is to educate the public about Fort Stevens. We have continued to do this by creating a socially distanced "outdoor museum". We have set up displays in the courtyard describing the history of Fort Stevens paired with historic photographs that aren't currently displayed inside. We have found that our outdoor displays have captured a large audience, and we look forward to creating similar, more permanent displays in the future.



New disc golf basket at Battery

The gift shop, typically located in the Visitor Center, has also been closed this summer. The funds from the gift shop support the mission of FOOFS to preserve, interpret, and restore Old Fort Stevens. In an effort to recover some funds lost by not having a fully functioning gift shop, we have added items to our online store as well as host an outdoor info booth/pop up gift shop on the weekends on the deck of the Museum. This has been a neat way to connect with visitors, answer questions about the park, and sell some Fort Stevens souvenirs.

Throughout the challenges of the pandemic, the Friends have still been able to accomplish some crucial projects at the fort. Last year the Friends received a matching grant from the State Historic Preservation Office of Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. In collaboration with OPRD, the Friends were able to restore the main entrance doors

and 5 main floor windows of the Guardhouse.

The FOOFS Board of Directors have been meeting far less frequently, but were able to hold their annual meeting to elect directors and officers for the coming year.

The Fort Stevens State Park staff have also been adapting how they provide services throughout the pandemic. Below are some statements about how the park has adjusted to this new environment.



This year has been a unique and challenging one for the staff and visitors at Fort Stevens State Park. The park was closed to visitors from mid-March to early June due to the COVID-19 pandemic and related executive orders from the Governor. Staff kept working on projects and catching up on maintenance. We were very excited to open back up. The resulting revenue impact to park operations was severe, resulting in us operating for the summer season with around 50% of our normal staff. The good news is the staff that were here handled the situation with professionalism and grace. I'm very proud of the Fort Stevens team.

Moving into the Fall, agency operations at the field level are beginning to return to near normal. We expect to see strong camping numbers through the winter. Hopefully, we can get back to the historic preservation and stewardship activities we enjoy as funding returns. As always, we appreciate the support and partnership of FOOFS and all of our dedicated volunteers and community members.

**-Justin Parker, North Coast District Manager**



With the operational limitations due to COVID-19, Fort Stevens has had to adapt and change to serve our visitors in new and creative ways. The Fort Stevens Historic Area is a unique area for interpretation and recreation. This year the park along with the help of the Friends of Old Fort Stevens gave our trail guide a much-needed overhaul and facelift. The new brochure, titled the Fort Stevens Guide to Military Sites, combines Battery Russell and the main Fort information with a refined walking route complete with historic information and photographs. One of the goals with the brochure was to bridge the gap between the two areas...visitors often think that Battery Russell IS the Fort and have no idea there is so much more just a short distance away. The brochure also allows people to get an interpretive experience on their own in a safe manner until we can resume in person tours and programs.

Another new recreational opportunity is the expanded Columbia Shore Disc Golf Course. The baskets set in concrete blend in with the surrounding batteries and foundation, and prevent any ground disturbance in archaeological sensitive areas. Much of the land that the disc golf course sits on was until recently, overgrown scotch broom fields and blackberry patches. Now the area is cleared and open to spectacular views of the Columbia River and Washington's Willapa Hills. Disc Golfers aren't the only ones to benefit from the new course, hikers and people exploring the grounds now have expanded river views and a more enjoyable park experience. Even the elk seem to approve! Look for improved tee pads and interpretive signs along the route in the future.

**-Dane Osis, Park Ranger 3 at Fort Stevens State Park**



The pandemic has affected the attendance of visitors to Fort Stevens SP and consequently the revenue the park relies on.

Daily operations were altered by limiting the number of host/volunteers the park normally managed, keeping host/volunteer duties limited, and cutting back on the number of seasonal staff. The effects of the nationwide lockdown took a heavy financial toll on the state parks. The loss of the spring/summer camping revenue meant that when camping was reopened we couldn't hire back the normal number of seasonal staff. Service levels were modified to ensure the campground facilities were maintain while sacrificing other park operations, i.e., mowing, interpretation, information booths, etc. The largest loss to our annual budgets was the lottery funds. Because people couldn't visitor bars for several months they weren't playing the gambling machines. This meant that statewide revenue for gambling/lottery play was dramatically less than anticipated. But the people came out in near record numbers despite everything going on.

People love their state parks. This is clearly seen by the large numbers of visitors and their willingness to overlook the necessary cutbacks in services. We receive comments and feedback that support this on a daily basis. It will take a year or more to begin to build ourselves back to what life was like prior to the pandemic. We're off to a great start.

**-John Koch, Park Ranger 3 at Fort Stevens State Park**

## South Jetty Update

In case you haven't heard, the South Jetty is undergoing a 5-year rehabilitation project. If you have the opportunity, you can watch the workmen and their equipment from the Parking Lot C visitors observation tower.

