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Lockwood Co. workers guide the 16-inch gun to a 90,000-pound concrete base for permanent display at Fort Miles.

Special to Delaware State News/
Gary Emleigh



'Mighty Mo' gun a perfect fit at Fort Miles

One of the USS Missouri's 16-inch guns goes on permanent display at Cape Henlopen State Park

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State Park.

LEWES — After wartime

service in the Pacific aboard the storied "Mighty Mo" — the battleship USS Missouri — one of the ship's nine original 16-inch guns that shook the enemy fleet with 2,700-pound shells found a land home Friday, the Lockwood Co., subcontractor for the site contractor Kent Construction Co., lowered the freshly polished

On Friday, the Lockwood Co., subcontractor for the site

It was moved to a permanent display within historic Fort M at Cape Henlopen day.

— was th of the ceremony accepting the Japanese sun er that ended World War II in 1945.

The historic battleship USS Missouri — Mighty Mo — was th of the ceremony accepting the Japanese sun er that ended World War II in 1945.



Bing Photo

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ished barrel onto a concrete pad using a 500-ton crane. The total weight of the permanent display is more than 300 tons.

The gun takes its place among other big guns already nestled among the sand dunes at Battery 519.

"The USS Missouri's gun is an important piece of American history that will draw families and tourists to Fort Miles and the beautiful shores of Cape Henlopen State Park," said Gov. Jack Markell.

Gov. Markell went on to say that adding amenities and historical treasures is one reason why Delaware State Parks was recognized nationally this year with the Gold Award as the best park system in the nation.

Among the largest pieces of U.S. Naval artillery ever made, the 16-inch gun was saved just days before it was to be cut up for scrap when the Fort Miles Historical Association was able to raise \$113,500 in private donations and secure grants from the G.M. Foundation, Sussex County Council and the Delaware Department of Economic Development's Division of Tourism.

The association then transported the 116-ton, 66-foot-long gun barrel to Delaware by barge and rail from a naval yard in Norfolk to the park.

"The spirit and dedication of the volunteers of the Fort Miles Historical Association is reminiscent of this country's 'Greatest Generation' that built and manned Fort Miles and protected the region during World War II," said DNREC Secretary David Small. "We are incredibly appreciative of the association's efforts to save one of the Missouri's big guns and bring it to Cape, along with all of the other great things the group has done to restore the fort.

"The gun is representative of those who were stationed at Fort Miles for coastal defense."

Secretary Small said students, veterans, families, visitors and history buffs will be able to relive Delaware history.

Association President Gary Wray said it was honored to partner with Delaware State Parks to create the final resting place for the Missouri barrel No. 371.

"The barrel is the centerpiece of our Fort Miles Museum which, when completed, will be the best World War II museum inside a World War II facility in the U.S.," he said.

A 90,000-pound concrete base, a 70,000-pound slide, a 38,500-pound yoke and other parts have been assembled in order to create a safe and appropriate gun emplacement for the historic barrel. Funding for placement of the barrel came from state



With the precision of a surgeon, a crane operator from the Virginia-based Lockwood Co., lowers the 16-inch gun onto the concrete base at Fort Miles.



Gary Wray, president of the Fort Miles Historical Association (right), watches as one of Mighty Mo's 16-inch guns is hoisted into place at Fort Miles Friday.

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equipped with heavy guns, mine fields and searchlights for in-depth defense.

However, the growing use of long-range missiles brought an end to harbor defenses in the United States and by 1958 Fort Miles was no longer needed for the defense of the region. In 1964, 543 acres of the base were

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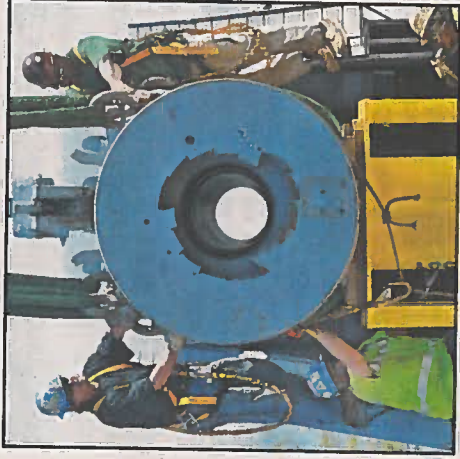
Several dozen spectators watch as one of the original guns from the World War II battleship USS Missouri is placed on a permanent mount at historic Fort Miles in Cape Henlopen State Park.

appropriations through DNRREC's Division of Parks & Recreation.

Fort Miles was a major operational center for U.S. coastal defenses during World War II. The Delaware

River was a chief priority for defense planners because of the access it afforded to the large trade centers of Wilmington and Philadelphia.

During the war, the fort was



The big gun is carefully fitted into place on the permanent concrete base at Fort Miles on Friday.

Gun

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returned to the state of Delaware, forming the heart of Cape Henlopen State Park.

In April 2005, Fort Miles was added to the National Register of Historic Places.

The new Artillery Park at Fort Miles, which is scheduled to open this summer, will feature more big guns and include a central pathway that will display wayside exhibits that tell the story behind each gun. The park will also feature amenities commemorating the role of the fort during wartime.

The Fort Miles Historical Association is a nonprofit group whose mission is to preserve, protect and defend all aspects of Fort Miles working with community and state stakeholders and other interested parties.

For information on Fort Miles, visit www.destatoparks.com/park/cape-henlopen/fort-miles/ or call (302) 644-5007.