



Two Groups Pledge to "Save The Tower"

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DEWEY BEACH, Del. - A silent reminder of World War Two, eleven concrete towers line Delaware's coast. The towers were put in place so soldiers inside could watch for Nazi boats offshore. But according to Dr. Gary Wray with the [Ft. Miles Historical Association](#), most people don't know that.

"The number one question people coming into Delaware particularly from the Ocean ask is 'What are these things?'" he says.

Wray and Ernie Felici with the [Delaware Seashore Preservation Foundation](#) have teamed up with their prospective groups to help answer that question, and save a piece of Delaware's history.

Felici says his group got involved after restoring the [Indian River Life-Saving Station](#).

"When that project was complete, our group said, 'Okay, maybe there's something else we can do to keep ourselves out of trouble,' he says with a smile. "So we looked down the road and saw the tower, and in conversations with Gary's group, Fort Miles Historic Association and State Parks, we decided to take upon ourselves this undertaking of restoring the tower."

That undertaking includes [restoring Tower 3](#), located off Route 1 just south of Dewey Beach. They plan on lighting up the tower at night, creating a pavilion and listing veterans' names at the tower. They'll also add a spiral staircase so visitors can go to the top of the tower, much like people can currently do in Tower 7 in Cape Henlopen State Park.

"You cannot help, once you enter inside the tower as I did, to get a sense of history," Felici says. "And to get a sense of appreciation for those who have come before us to protect not only this coastline, but the United States."

The eleven towers stretch from Fenwick Island to Lewes. Wray says it was not a glamorous post for the soldiers, as they had to cook food in coal stoves in the sand, and climb ladders to get to the top. The towers range from 39 to 75 feet. Once inside, soldiers had a 270 degree view of the water. Wray says there were observation towers like this across the country, but Delaware's towers are still standing due to the material they were made with-- by a fluke.

"They ran out of steel. Steel was in short supply in 1941-42," he says. "The General in Philly told the Commandant to get them up, he didn't care how he did it."

So they used concrete, which has kept the towers up 50 years past their expiration date, and in almost perfect condition. But to make Tower 3 accessible to the public, spiffed up with extra attractions like the pavilion and compliant with ADA laws, Wray and Felici are trying to raise over \$2 million. They hope to get a third from the state, a third from foundations and a third from private donors. Felici and Wray said they've spent hours telling people the history of the towers, but it's been worth it.

"We want to tell that story. And once we start telling that story, people start to get enthused about it," Wray says. "It's our story to tell and by gosh we're gonna tell it."

Adds Felici, "If it wasn't for the people who maintained these towers and operated and protected our shores, the families wouldn't be here and have the opportunity to enjoy the beach."

To learn more about Tower 3 and the restoration project, visit [SaveTheTower.org](#).