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### Harbor Forts : Article: Gun Batteries at Peaks Traced to WWII

Portland Evening Express

Frank Sleeper

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# Gun Batteries At Peaks Traced To World War II

By FRANK SLEEPER  
Staff Writer

The Yatata Outing Club, a 40-member neighborhood group from York, Tyng and Tate Sts., has uncovered the history of two gun emplacements on Peaks Island.

Those emplacements, Batteries Steele and Cravens, are now important to the whole area. Battery Steele is the site of the proposed Peaks Island

Conference Center Battery Craven is owned by the Casco Bay Island Development Association.

The club, with Patrick V.J. McDonough of 39 Rear Clark St. as director and Philip Jenkins as advisor, has begun to assist in painting the batteries.

In a letter to Mrs. Beatrice Murray Chapman, president of Peaks Island Conference Center Inc., McDonough tells how the research was done.

The group worked through Edwin Randall, one of U.S. Rep. David Emery's aides. In turn, Randall contacted Charles E. Walker, from the historical division of the Office of the Chief of Engineers, Baltimore, Md.

A four-page summary of the history of the two batteries resulted. That summary has gone to Peter McLaughlin, vice president of Casco Bay Lines, the Maine Historical Society, to

A. Edward Langlois, a director of the Department of Transportation's bureau of waterways who placed it above a model of the proposed Peaks Island Center, to Mrs. Patricia E. Meally, secretary to the Portland corporation counsel, Stanley Williamson, president, Casco Bay Island Development Association and famed author, Edward Rowe Snow.

Here are some of the highlights of what it says:

Just before World War II the War Department planned new coastal defenses because of the threat of attack from long-range and carrier-borne aircraft.

A prototype was built in San Francisco harbor between 1937 and 1940, a reinforced concrete battery housing a pair of 16-inch Navy guns.

In 1940, as the international situation worsened, the War Department prepared a master

harbor defense plan with either 16 or 6-inch guns.

The two kinds of standardized armament were designated for 33 coastal sites in the U.S., Hawaii and the Caribbean. Portland was among the selected sites.

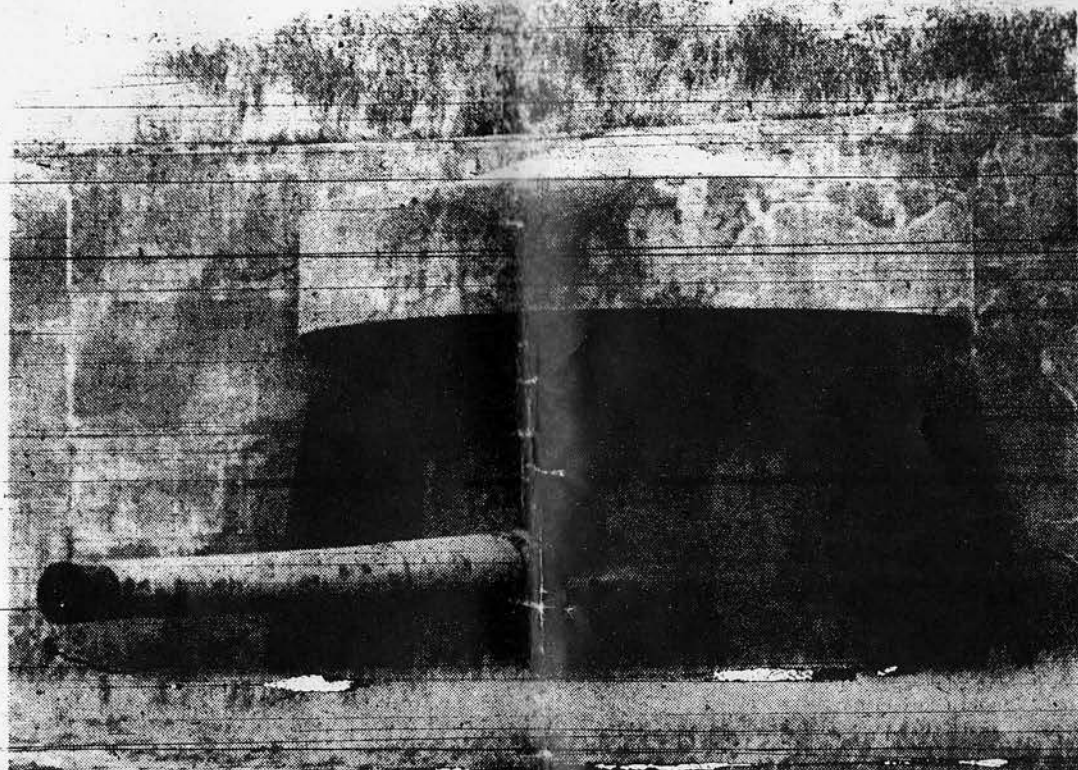
In October, 1940, a board of officers, headed by Maj. Gen. Thomas A. Terry, commanding general, New England sector of the Coast Artillery Corps, met

here for preliminary selection of fortification sites.

The 16-inch batteries had to be a minimum of 600 feet from public highways, inhabited buildings and railway rights-of-way.

This board first recommended that the 16-inch gun battery be placed on Peaks Island with a 6-inch battery at Fort

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**HOW IT WAS**—One of the big 16-inch guns at Battery Steele on Peaks Island peeks out of its emplacement. The battery wasn't completed until after the

end of World War II. Its two guns were never fired in hostility and were scrapped in the late 1940s.

# Peaks Gun Batteries Traced To WWII

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McKinley. But it soon decided to move the smaller battery to Peaks Island also because that allowed greatly increased range of fire.

The two batteries were to cover 175 acres which the government bought for an estimated \$35,000. By September, 1941 construction was underway. In August, 1942, both batteries were named in honor of "distinguished officers of the Coast Artillery corps."

Battery 102, the large one, was named for Harry Lee Steele, who enlisted in Arkansas as a private in 1895 and rose to become a major general in the corps.

Battery 203, the smaller one, was named for Richard Kerr Cravens, an Arkansas native, who was a captain in the corps and saw duty in the Portland area before World War I.

Work on the two batteries continued the rest of World War II. In an April, 1945 list of 24 Portland harbor defenses in order of tactical importance, Cravens appeared as fifth and Steele as eight, even though Steele's two guns had a maximum range of 44,680 yards

compared to the 26,250 range of the Cravens guns.

World War II ended without completion of the batteries. After the war, both were to be retained in a modernization program. A report noted that Steele

## None Of 20 Mentioned Was Indicted

(Continued from Page One)

M. Connolly, David Cpte, Al Smith, Bruce E. Dare, Michael Toohar, Anthony Campbell, George Sanborn, Maurice W. Carter, Bruce D. Powell, William J. Garland Sr., Michael L. Dow, Dennis J. Gillis, Joseph H.D. Isaac, Larry Ervin and Joseph Havener.

The incorrect account was the result of clerical and reporting mistakes made by the Express in transcribing information from Superior Court criminal case records.

This correction is published to retract the inaccuracies contained in the previous Express article.

was completed in October, 1945.

In the late 1940's, the guns and those of other coastal batteries were scrapped because rapid changes in military technology and strategy had made such defenses obsolete.

In January, 1950, General Order No. 1 of the Army "deactivated the harbor defenses of Portland." A few months later the Coast Artillery Corps was abolished as a separate branch of the Army. Coastal fortifications and the organization primarily associated with them in the 20th century passed into history.

While uncovering the history of the batteries, the Yatata Club has been covering up the offensive words, racial slurs and other graffiti which have found their way onto the fortifications since World War II's end—covering them with paint. The group has visited other Casco Bay islands on outings, discovered the batteries while visiting the back side of Peaks Island, believed they belonged to the city, did a little painting, and then discovered the real owners.

The club is now a dues paying member of the Casco Bay Island Development Association.

## 33 Students Suspended In South Boston

**BOSTON (UPI)** — Thirty-three black students were suspended today for refusing to attend classes atracially tense South Boston High School and the Tactical Patrol Force was called into the building, school officials said.

Attendance by white students was reported light and a group of about 200 gathered a couple of blocks down a hill from the school.

They issued a series of 16 demands, including increased police protection. They also demanded a meeting between headmaster William Reid and representatives of the Home and School Association, through which the students voiced their demands. "There is apparently an effective white boycott in