

NYSAA NEWSLETTER



Contact Information:

Sherene Baugher
NYSAA President
Co-Editor, Newsletter
sbb8@cornell.edu

Sissie Pipes
NYSAA Vice-President
Co-Editor, Newsletter
Pipesml@aol.com

Lisa Marie Anselmi
Associate Editor
Anselmlm@buffalostate.edu

The NYSAA Website is
<http://nysaaweb.bfn.org/>

The editors encourage any NYSAA member who would like to submit an article, letter, editorial or news items to submit it electronically to Sissie or Lisa at the addresses listed above.

Historic fort "not forgotten" on website

By JoAnne Castagna, Ed.D.

It's 1943 and the United States is in the throes of World War II. Gladys "Woodie" Borkowski, a young woman, is leading the first detachment of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) to Fort Slocum on Davids Island in New Rochelle, New York. The WAC allowed women to receive equal rank and pay to men for the first time.

At first, Woodie and the rest of her female detachment are laughed at and even ignored by their male officers, but soon they are seen as equals.

Woodie was a pioneer for women in the military and symbolized a maturing na-

tion that was trying to foster equality.

Woodie's story is one of several that can be read on a website named - The Army's Century on Davids Island -



Gladys "Woodie"
Borkowski

<http://davidsisland.westchesterarchives.com>

The website was created by a team of agencies and individuals as a way to preserve the rich history of Fort Slocum after the military installation's abandoned remains were removed from the island.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District performed the demolition and also collaborated on the creation of this website along with the Westchester County Historical Society, City of New Rochelle Public Library, Army Corps contractor, TetraTech, and the Fort Slocum Alumni & Friends Organization that included Woodie.

The PALT-1 Precontact Site in Orangetown

Historical Perspectives, Inc. recently undertook the archaeological survey of a proposed residential development in Orangetown, Rockland County. The Pointe at Lake Tappan (PALT) project will impact about 25 acres of land between the west side of Blue Hill Road South and County

Highway Route 20. Most prominent on the site is an extant Dutch farm house, known historically as the Isaac Perry-Blauvelt House and now known as the Seth House. The house has three periods of construction dating to ca. 1752, ca. 1776, and ca. 1830. An earlier house, dating to ca. 1728, once

stood in the same general location but was demolished in years past. Little archaeological evidence of the historical occupation of the site was found due to extensive 20th century disturbance.

Phase IB testing in May 2009 identified several
Continued on page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Historic Fort	1-3
Palt-1 Site	1, 4-5
Etc.	8

FORT SLOCUM CONTINUED:



Website Homepage -- The Army's Century on Davids Island. Credit: Army Corps, New York District.

"Fort Slocum is gone, but not forgotten. The virtual archive is etched into the internet, and will be a lasting memorial to those who served at Fort Slocum, and to the contribution of Davids Island to the history of the United States and the local community," said Gregory J. Goepfert, Project Manager, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District.

Davids Island is an uninhabited 80-acre piece of property located in the Long Island Sound, one half a mile off of the shore of New Rochelle, New York.

The island has had a rich military history. In 1867 Fort Slocum was established on the island on the site of a former Civil War hospital and in over a century served in various military incarnations. The active post has served as a military hospital, an artillery mortar battery and a training post. During World War II

the fort was the most active recruitment center in the United States and served as a staging area for troops heading overseas during the two world wars. In addition, for several years the fort was used by the U.S. Air Force.

The fort's last military incarnation was in the 1960's, as a missile command base. Since then the island has laid dormant.

The island has been eyed as a possible location for luxury condos, a power plant and a public park and nature preserve. The City of New Rochelle is contemplating the island's future use.

They asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District to remove the decaying structures on the island because they posed a serious safety hazard and impeded the renewal of the island. In 2005, the Army Corps began the demolition



Oblique aerial photograph of Fort Slocum, November 15, 1961: Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends Collection, Michael J. Cavanaugh, Los Angeles, CA, custodian.



Gladys "Woodie" Borkowski (on right), c. 1944. Credit: Gladys "Woodie" Borkowski.

and completed their work in 2009, removing 93 decaying structures from the former Fort Slocum.

With all Army Corps projects, there is always an effort to determine if there are significant historic resources to preserve within a project site. After doing initial research, the New York District determined Fort Slocum was historically significant.

Removal of the buildings meant there is a need to document and preserve these resources,

so the agency came up with a variety of solutions for doing this.

The project team performed extensive historical research on each of the 93 structures on the island, many of which were of various military architectural styles. A significant amount of this research came from the Fort Slocum Alumni & Friends organization, the New Rochelle Historian and the Westchester County Historical Society.

FORT SLOCUM CONTINUED:



Fort Slocum, February 1963. Credit: Unknown.



WAC Gladys Woodard SSgt at typewriter. Credit: Fort Slocum Alumni and Friends Collection, Michael J. Cavanaugh, Los Angeles, CA, custodian.

This research included digging up historical data, taking photos and performing archaeological investigations. Most of the structures were historically significant as the Fort Slocum Historic and Archaeological District.

Nancy Brighton, Lead Archaeologist, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District said that out of the structures, about one third were identified as having historical or archaeological significance and, if desired, could be restored or partially restored.

After the documentation was completed on each of the buildings, the structures were demolished if they were determined not restorable. So demolition and historical preservation efforts

were working in tandem in order to move the project forward and not waste time and money.

The Army Corps worked with a number of interested parties to determine what should be done with those historic structures that could be preserved. Since the future of the island hasn't been determined, the City of New Rochelle decided to not restore any of the island's structures. Understandably the City didn't want to fund the maintenance of structures, a requirement of restoration, as the use of the island is still unknown.

However, some of the remnants of the former fort are being kept on the island for the public to view including the fort's overall landscaped vegetation, a seawall, the flagpole, mortar pits from the

late 19th century, tennis courts, walkways, and a cannon used during the Spanish-American War.

As an alternative solution to preserving the fort's

rich military history, the Army Corps, its partnering agencies and former residents of the island worked together to create an archival and educational website.

The website includes all of the extensive research the Army Corps gathered during this project including the historical data on each of the fort's structures, photos, maps, videos, and oral histories, in both print and audio formats, from over two dozen individuals who used to live and work at Fort Slocum. In addition, various museums will include the Corps reports in their archives.

At the website's roll out ceremony, former fort residents, politicians and the project team were present for this sentimental gathering, including Congresswoman Nita Lowey, who sponsored legislation to fund the project.

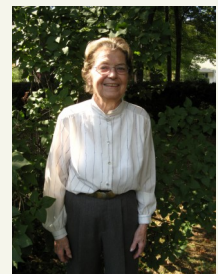
One of the individuals present was Woodie. During her time at the fort, one of her many roles as a Staff Sergeant

was a Drillmaster and in this capacity she composed and recorded several military chants that were played in the background during the roll out ceremony.

"Everyone was very happy that she was able to come as she was quite frail. Woodie was a bit of a rock star among the alumni in attendance and all of us involved with the project," said Brighton.

Unfortunately, just a few days after the ceremony, Woodie passed away. "The roll out ceremony was her last living opportunity to share a reunion with folks that were stationed at the former Fort," said Goepfert. One of her fellow fort alumni added, "We are all glad that she was present at the ceremony and received recognition for her part in the history of our island."

Dr. JoAnne Castagna is a technical writer-editor for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York District. She can be contacted at joanne.castagna@usace.army.mil



Gladys "Woodie" Borkowski in 2007. Credit: Rob Jacoby.