
GUARDIAN PARK: A HISTORY 1970-2003

SANDY HOOK
GATEWAY NATIONAL RECREATION AREA
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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History

Guardian Park, located on Sandy Hook, New Jersey at the entrance to Fort Hancock, was the last monument added to Fort Hancock by the U.S. Army. It is named for the Nike Air Defense Missiles, which were the last “guardians” of the New York Metropolitan Area. Ed Karnowski, a reporter for the “Red Bank Daily Register,” described the layout of the park in this way:

“In the park...are actual but unarmed models of two NIKE missiles, one a Hercules, the other a version of the earlier Ajax variety. Beside them is a small howitzer, signifying the early use of conventional artillery as coastal defense guns. Across from the model armaments is a gray marble memorial stone. On it are the names of six Army enlisted men and four Ordinance Corps civilians killed in a 1958 explosion at a missile site in the Chapel Hill section of Middletown.”

The thought behind constructing Guardian Park, according to Col. Victor J. Hugo, Commander of the New York-Philadelphia missile defenses, was to “provide future generations, especially the visitors to the Gateway Recreation Area, with the opportunity to pause and reflect on the contributions that the 16th Air Defense Artillery (ADA) and its predecessors have made to this area and to the defense of the United States.” On August 15, 1974 ceremonies deactivating three of the Nike missile battalions, 3d Battalion, 43d ADA-a regular Army Unit; the 1st Battalion, 244th ADA- a New York National Guard Unit; 1st Battalion, 254th ADA- a New Jersey National unit, as well as the headquarters of the 16th Air Defense Artillery Group were followed by the dedication of Guardian Park “to the men and women of the New York-Philadelphia Defense.”¹

The effort of this report is to reconstruct the history of the two main building periods of Guardian Park as well as document its current state, allowing for recommendations for the restoration of the park. A previous study by Sandy Hook Unit Park Rangers Thomas Hoffman and Michael Thomas of the southern portion of Fort Hancock, as well as photographs and textural documentation from the Gateway National Recreation Area Museum Collection and the Monmouth County Historical Association, were the main sources used to create this report.

I. Nike Ajax Missile

The Nike Ajax Missile erected circa 1970², pre-dates Guardian Park. The Nike Ajax, the smaller of the two missiles located at the south end of the cruciform walk in Guardian Park, was the first Nike missile used between 1954 and 1959. The Nike Ajax was mounted vertically atop a concrete, dirt-filled, square base by placing an I-beam in the dirt and sliding the missile over the I-beam. The mounted portion of the Ajax was what is referred to as the 2nd stage of the missile (the first stage being a booster rocket that was affixed underneath the 2nd stage for launching).

¹ Quotes taken from “The Daily Register”, August 16, 1974.

² According to Army Veteran Don Wood, who was stationed at Fort Hancock from 1970-1972.

The missile was painted several times between 1975 and 1990, during which time the original black “U.S. Army” stenciling was painted over. It can still be seen under white paint. The Nike Ajax’s rusted I beam bent and caused the missile to fall during the blizzard of March 1993 and is now located in museum storage awaiting conservation work for its corroded body, (Catalog number GATE 12876). The Ajax’s concrete base remains but without its original decorations. Each side of the base displayed a different mounted, metal, painted insignia. Due to vandalism and environmental conditions, all of the remaining movable items were removed and entered into the museum collection. At the foot of the base on the north side, a brass plaque atop a concrete base explained the history of the Nike missiles, removed in November 1983 by rangers Fred Harmon and Jack Freeman and entered into the museum collection, (Catalog number GATE 1664).

The insignia on the west side of the base was the Army Air Defense Command (ARADCOM) Insignia. It consists of a red and yellow shield with a Nike missile and lightening bolts. This was removed in 1983, by rangers Harmon and Freeman, entered the museum collection and currently displayed in the Fort Hancock Museum, (Catalog number GATE 1659).

The south side insignia was that of the 52nd ADA Brigade. Their motto “Vigilant and Ready” is displayed on a metal square with symbols similar to the ARADCOM insignia and is also displayed in the Fort Hancock Museum (Catalog number GATE 1658)

The north side bore the insignia of the Army Ground Forces. This insignia was a red, white and blue circle. The insignia was found bent into a “u” shape, lying on top of the base. Park rangers believe that vandals were trying to pull the insignia off the base but were unsuccessful. Park Historian, Tom Hoffman retrieved the insignia and it is now located in museum storage, (Catalog number GATE 1665).

The east side insignia was that of the 51st ADA. Their motto was “Fire for Effect” with a caterpillar on the crest. This sign was removed by vandals.

II. 1974 Fort Hancock Deactivation Plan

Planning for the deactivation of Fort Hancock led the army to build the rest of the major parts of Guardian Park. The first portion of the plan created two sidewalks: one oriented north-south and the other east-west, forming a cross (LCS 41291).³ At each end of the sidewalks a different piece of the park was constructed. They are as follows:

1. A Nike Hercules Missile, 2nd stage section, is mounted vertically at the center of the cruciform-walks (LCS 41289, Catalog number GATE 12921). This type of missile was used from 1959-1974. On the north ground near the missile was a low concrete base with a brass plaque explaining the history of the Nike Hercules missile. Rangers Harmon and Freeman removed the plaque in November 1983 (catalog number GATE 1663).

³ According to Lou Hansen, a civilian employee of the Fort Hancock Post Engineers Office Maintenance Staff, the late Steve Fowler, made the concrete sidewalks. His initials are in the sidewalk.

Between 1975 and 1990 the Nike Hercules Missile was painted several times by the Sandy Hook Maintenance Division. During this time the Maintenance Division painted over the original black “U.S. Army” stenciling. The stencil can still be seen underneath the white paint.

The nose cone of the Nike Hercules Missile fell in a severe thunderstorm on August 10, 1979. A replacement nose cone was put on the missile c. 1980-1981 through the efforts of the 54th Explosive Ordnance Detachment, Fort Monmouth, NJ. The original nose cone is currently in museum storage (Catalog number GATE 12940).

2. At the north tip of the cruciform sidewalk, between the Hercules Missile and the entrance to Guardian Park, the Army erected a large metal flagpole. On its north side a low concrete base with a brass plaque affixed explained the history of Guardian Park (Catalog number GATE 634). The plaque reads:

“Dedicated to the Men and Women of the New York-Philadelphia Defense. The New York-Philadelphia defense, initially established as separate defenses, provided terminal air defense for the metropolitan areas as an integral part of the Army Air Defense Command and the North American Air Defense Command. Upon its activation in 1950, the defense was armed with 90mm and 120 mm anti-aircraft guns and the 75mm “Skysweeper”, the Nike-Ajax missile, the first generation of surface to air missiles entered on the U.S. inventory and was deployed throughout the defense in 1953. In 1959, the second-generation missile, the Nike-Hercules, replaced the Nike-Ajax. The separate defenses were combined in 1961, and remained the “Vigilant Guardians” of the Northeast. The New York-Philadelphia defense, the last defense in the Army Air Defense Command, was inactivated in August 1974.”

The flagpole was removed c.1976-1979 by Sandy Hook Maintenance Division and believed to have been remounted somewhere else on Sandy Hook. Rangers Harmon and Freeman removed the plaque in 1983 and it entered the museum collection and is currently missing. The plaque’s concrete base is now missing.

3. A 75mm Pack Howitzer was mounted on the east slab of the east-west sidewalk. The Pack Howitzer, placed on site in 1974 remained until c.1977-78 when Army personnel from Fort Monmouth removed the gun.⁴
4. At the west end of the walks the Army re-erected the upright granite monument, dedicated to the men killed in the May 22, 1958 Nike Ajax explosion at Nike Base NY 53, located in the Chapel Hill Section of Middletown, NJ. Two concrete missiles accompanied the monument, and were approximately 5 feet in height (LCS41290). The concrete missiles were both were vandalized, one was broken off its base and the other was removed

⁴ This information is taken from the 1993 study of the southern portion of Fort Hancock by Thomas Hoffman and Michael Thomas. Park Ranger Hoffman writes, “according to Park Ranger Fred Harmon, Army Personnel showed up in a jeep from Fort Monmouth, hitched up the gun and drove off with it”.

by Sandy Hook Maintenance staff, but its location is currently unknown. The monument was privately commissioned and paid for by the men who worked with the victims of the explosion. The missiles were crafted by a stonemason who worked at Fort Wadsworth, New York. This stonemason formerly worked with the four civilians killed in the explosion.⁵ The monument originally stood in front of the Headquarters Building at the Missile Launch Area in Middletown, New Jersey, where eight Nike Ajax Missiles exploded in 1958. The memorial was dedicated later that year. The Middletown missile site closed in 1963, and the monument was then moved to a site in front of the headquarters building located near the entrance on Portland Road at the U.S. Army Highlands Air Defense Site in Highlands, New Jersey.⁶

With the closing of the Nike Air Defense System nationwide and the deactivation of the Highlands Air Defense Site in 1974, the Army decided to move the monument to Guardian Park since Fort Hancock would be open to the public as part of Gateway National Recreation Area.

The monument reads:

In Memoriam

22nd May 1958

Sgt. Daniel J. Lavengood
Sgt. Jerome W. Mould
SP 3 Walter E. Berry
SP 3 William I. Cochran
PFC. Donald L. Marsh
PVT. Nicklos J. Composino

ORD. Corps Civilians

Joseph Arciere
Joseph F. Brokos
Lee A. Parker
Charles Romanow

Affixed to the base of this monument was a very heavy, possibly bronze, rectangular plaque, removed by Joe Boyle, Sandy Hook Maintenance Division Building and Utilities Foreman, c.1983 and placed in the museum collection (Catalog number GATE 907.10). The inscription on the plaque is as follows, "Nike Ajax Explosion/Battery B 526th Missile Battalion/ Leonardo, New Jersey".

⁵ This information given by Jean Parker Maxson, eldest daughter of Lee A. Parker, civilian corps member killed in May 22, 1958 Nike Ajax explosion at Leonardo base NY 53 in Middletown, NJ.

⁶ Ibid.

Evolution of Guardian Park Plantings

Pictures taken on the day of the deactivation ceremony show original landscaping in which ornamental shrubs can clearly be seen, the type of shrub is currently unknown. The Army introduced a placement of the shrubs but did not regulate the size of each individual shrub. Sandy Hook Maintenance Division later removed these plantings between 1976-1980. Around 1982-1984, the Sandy Hook Maintenance Division planted eight Autumn Olive Bushes along the west side of Guardian Park, which was a largely open, grassy lawn area. Shortly thereafter, Maintenance planted seven wild rosebushes; five currently remain.⁷

Recommendations for Rehabilitation and Restoration of Guardian Park

About a quarter of Guardian Park's original design remains. The necessary items for a restoration to the 1974 Guardian Park are as follows:

- Restoration of the corroded Nike Ajax Missile currently in museum storage and a better system for mounting the missile.
- Replacement of the Pack Howitzer Gun that was removed by the Army.
- Replacement of the Flagpole.
- Replace concrete missiles to flank the memorial.
- Replicas of the original sheet metal insignias for the base of the Ajax planter.
- New concrete bases for descriptive plaques to rest on.
- Replicas of the brass descriptive plaques to be placed on the tops of the bases.
- Removal of the current plantings and plant appropriate shrubbery in historically accurate sites.
- Repainting the Nike Hercules Missile and priming the inside to prevent further corrosion and replacing the black "U.S. Army" stenciling.
- Reseeding the lawn to refresh the park.

Findings

The original intentions of Guardian Park, "to provide future generations, especially the visitors to the Gateway Recreation Area, with the opportunity to pause and reflect on the contributions that the 16th ADA and its predecessors have made to this area and to the defense of the United States," in conjunction with recent park efforts to interpret the importance of the Nike Missile era, lend support to the restoration of Guardian Park. Visitors currently overlook this memorial due to a lack of visual appeal and the absence of interpretation. Visitors that do take the time to look are met with a loss of significance created by viewing parts of a whole. It is the final recommendation of this report that Guardian Park's restoration becomes a priority. The area is perhaps one of the most important locations in Fort Hancock for a number of reasons. It is located at one of the most trafficked intersections in the park, and serves as the current entrance to Fort Hancock. In the near future, Guardian Park will become more of a focal point with the

⁷ See maps and photographs in appendix.

completion of the Multiuse Path, the movement of the Visitor Center (to Barracks 25), and the implementation of the Historic Leasing Program. The Guardian Park area is slated to be a major interchange for the Multiuse Path and will serve as an orientation site with a map and directory for the organizations that occupy the buildings in Fort Hancock after the completion of the Historic Leasing Plan. Guardian Park should be representative of the historic efforts at Fort Hancock as well the National Park Service's efforts in interpreting and maintaining its resources.

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- Red Bank Register. "Nike Blast Brings Changes in Handling Procedure," "Probe Seeks to Bar Recurrence," "Residents Take Blast in Stride," May 28, 1958.
- Red Bank Register. "Army Leaves Sandy Hook With a Flourish." August 16, 1974.
- Washington Post. "Nine Die in Missiles Blast," "NJ Hit By 21 Warheads," Nine Killed by Explosion of 7 Nike Missiles," May 23, 1958.

Oral Sources

- Boyle, Joe. Personal Interview by Thomas Hoffman, 1994.
- Hansen, Lou. Sandy Hook Chief of Maintenance. Interview by Thomas Hoffman, 1994.
- Maxson, Jean Parker. Daughter of Lee A. Parker. Personal Interview, by Erin Biddinger, July 30, 2003.
- Wood, Donald. Fort Hancock Veteran. Personal Interview by Mary Rasa, July 25, 2003.

Photographs and Maps

- Gateway NRA Museum Collection:
Catalog numbers: Gate 5709, 5713, 5924-5938, 6283, 6359-6360, 8069, 8070-8078.
NPS Photographs by Erin Biddinger, June-July 2003.
U.S. Army Photographs of Nike Memorial Dedication at Chapel Hill Base.

Appendix A-Photographs, Maps, Drawings



Top: Aerial view of Guardian Park Area c. 1970-1974. Photo Shows the Nike Ajax missile pre-dates the rest of Guardian Park.

Left: A close up view of the Nike Ajax missile and the Hercules missile show their original "U.S. Army" stenciling as well as give a close up view of the South facing insignia of the 52nd Air Defense Artillery Brigade on the Ajax base c. 1975-77.

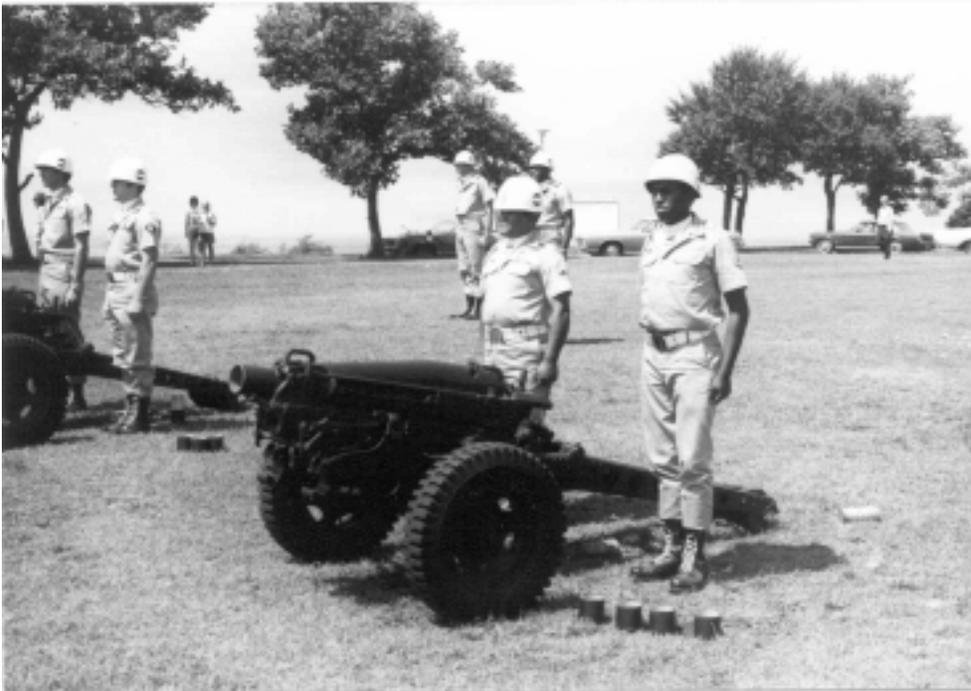


Top: View of the 1974 Deactivation Ceremony, taken from the north, shows four of the five main elements that make up Guardian Park. Visible are the two missiles, the flagpole and the memorial to the Nike Ajax Explosion of 1958. The Bay can be seen in the background and provides orientation for the photograph.
Bottom: View of the 1974 Deactivation Ceremony, taken from the north, shows the flagpole in detail and also the fifth main element, the Pack Howitzer, can be seen in part.



Top: View of Guardian Park at the 1974 Deactivation Ceremony. The significance of this picture is the view of the Nike Ajax base which shows the east side and the insignia of the 51st ADA.

Bottom: Photograph from the 1958 dedication of the Nike Ajax explosion memorial at the Chapel Hill site in Middletown, NJ and the concrete missiles that flanked it.



Top: View of wreath being laid in front of monument for the 1958 Nike Ajax explosion at the Highlands Air Force Base in Highlands, NJ. This is the monument's second site. The concrete missiles still flank the monument but more closely than at its Leonardo site.
Bottom: A view of one of the five Pack Howitzers fired at the Deactivation Ceremony in 1974. The Army placed an identical gun at the east end of the cruciform sidewalk in Guardian Park to represent the significance of conventional artillery as coastal defense.



Top: View of Guardian Park from the east shows the Nike Hercules without its nose cone, and the monument without the concrete missiles, dating the picture to c. 1979-1981. The flagpole and the howitzer have been removed. Also notable in this photograph is the lack of any plantings other than grass.

Bottom: 2003 Photograph of Guardian Park from the south. The Nike Ajax no longer stands in this photograph and the insignias have been removed from its base. Repainting of the Nike Hercules conceals its "U.S. Army" stenciling. The flagpole, the concrete missiles and the howitzer are absent at this date. Five wild rosebushes can be seen in the picture these were planted by the Sandy Hook Maintenance Division, c1982-84.





Top: 2003 Photograph of the Nike Hercules missile. Photograph shows the deterioration of the missile due to weathering.
Bottom: Rust on the Nike Hercules, 2003.





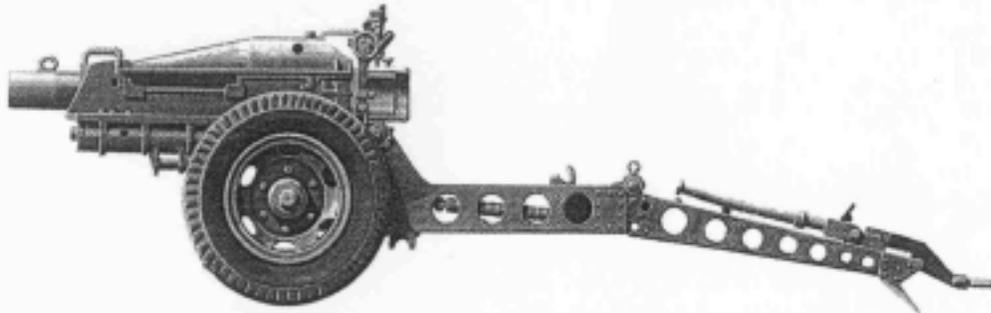
Top: 2003 photograph of the cruciform sidewalk from center of Guardian Park toward the north. The sidewalks remain in good condition other than some encroachment by vegetation.

Bottom: 2003 Photograph of the Nike Ajax planter. The planter has some cracking and loss of paint due to weathering.



Light Support Weapons

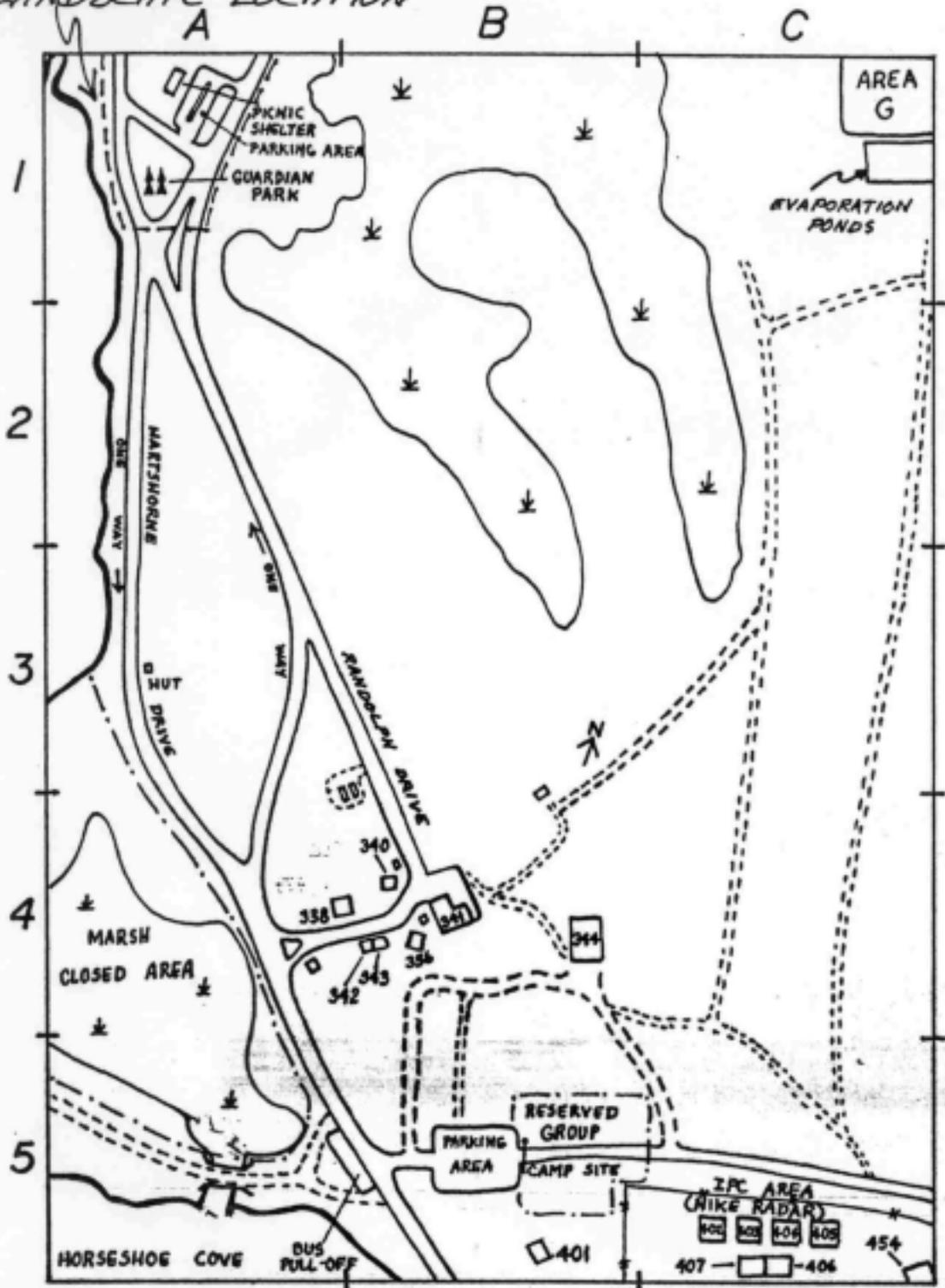
75mm Pack Howitzer M1A1



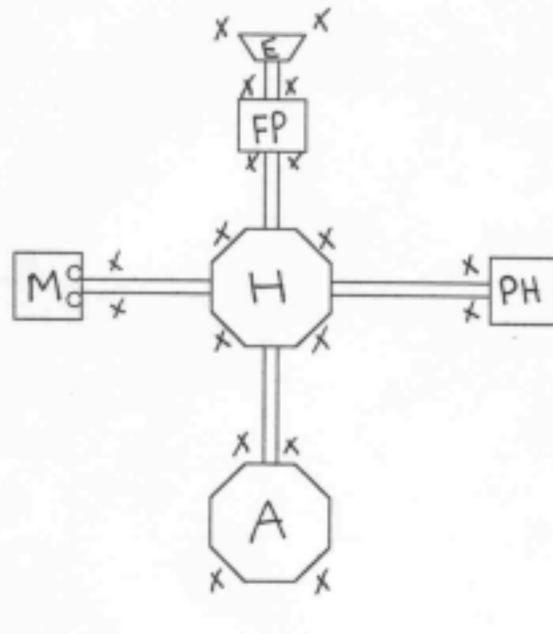
This was developed in the 1920s as a result of World War I experience and was an ingenious design of howitzer which could be rapidly stripped down into four mule loads. The gun barrel locked into the breech by an interrupted thread, and was retained on the cradle by means of a 'top sleigh' of cast steel and lead. The carriage trail could be removed complete, or split into pieces, or folded and fitted with shafts for animal draught. A notable feature of the design were the lightening holes in the trail sides. In World War II when the US Airborne troops required an artillery piece which could be parachute-dropped, the Carriage M8 was developed, which was simply the standard M1 carriage with pneumatic tyres and steel wheels. The 75mm (2.95in) was used by US and British airborne troops until the mid-1960s.

Country of origin: USA

GUARDIAN PARK PICNIC AREA
LANDSCAPE LOCATION

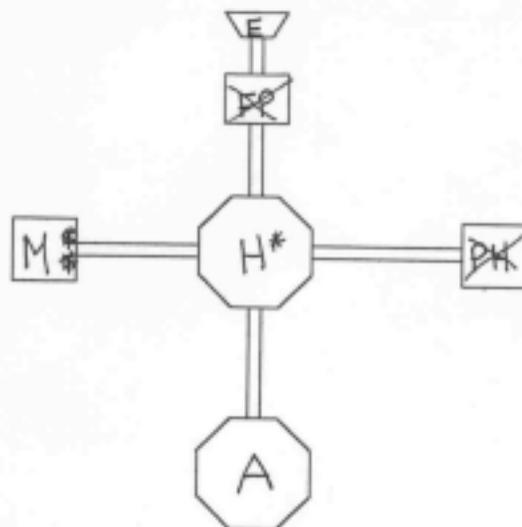


1974



- E = entrance
- FP = flagpole
- H = Hercules Missile
- M = Memorial
- PH = Pack Howitzer
- A = Ajax
- o = concrete missile
- X = plantings

c. 1979-1981



M = memorial

E = entrance

H = Hercules

A = Ajax

~~PR~~ = flagpole removed

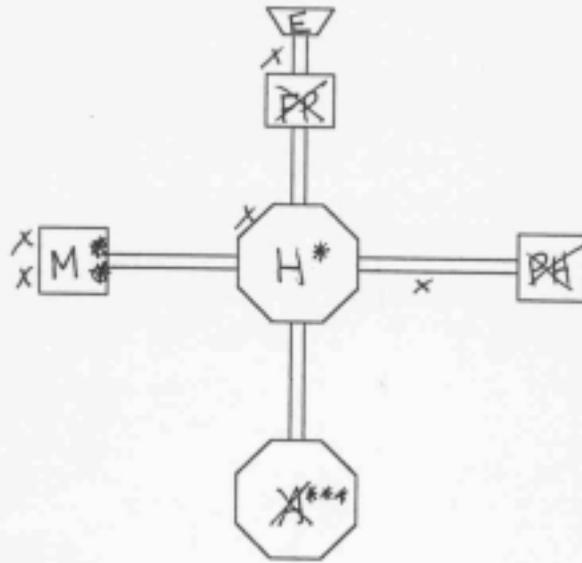
~~PH~~ = Pack Howitzer removed

* = Hercules missing nosecone at this time.

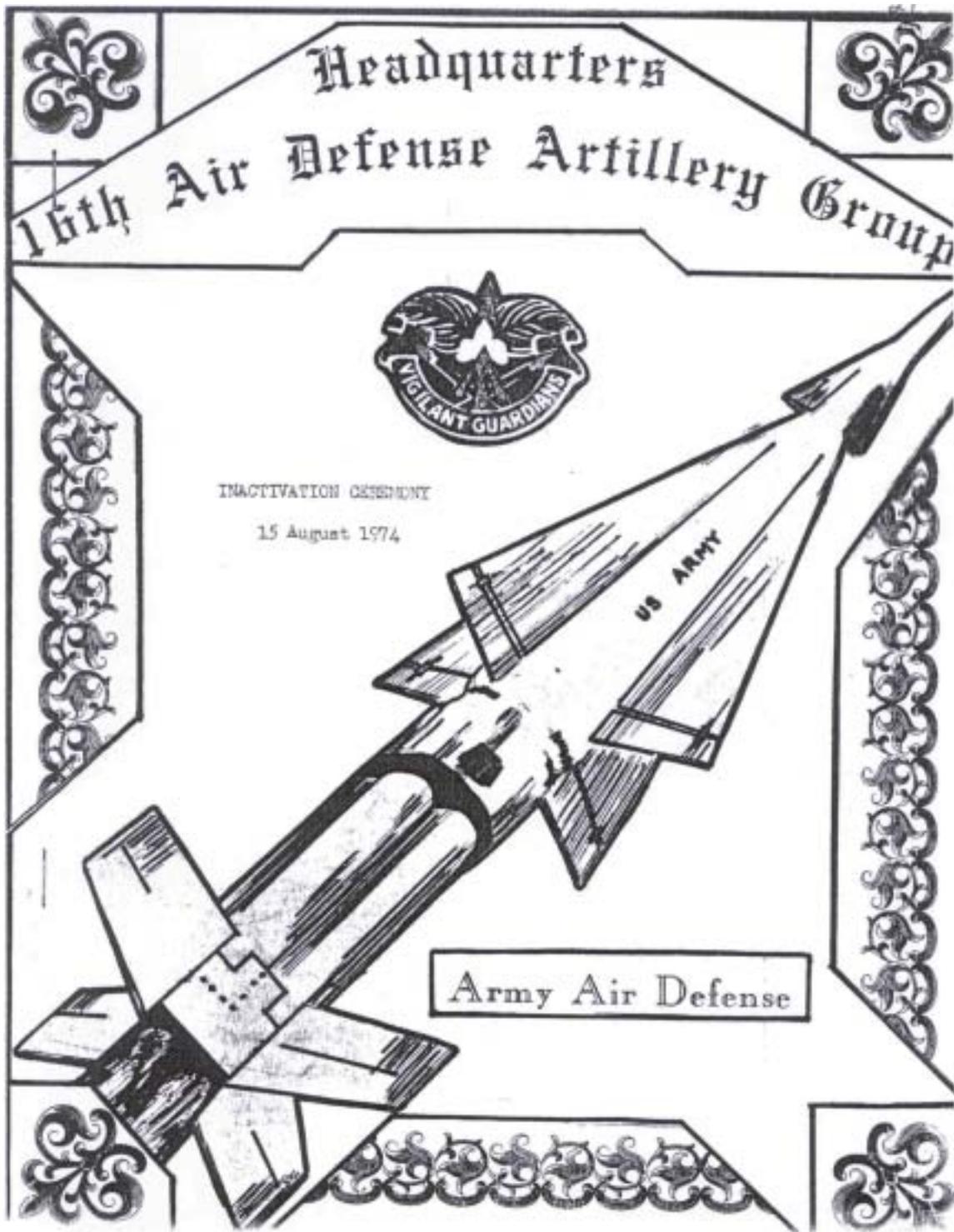
** = concrete missiles removed

note: No plantings other than grass.

2003



- E = entrance
- ~~PR~~ = flagpole removed
- ~~PH~~ = Pack Howitzer removed
- H = Hercules
- ~~X~~ = Ajax removed
- M = Memorial
- X = wild rosebushes
- * = Hercules has replacement nosecone
- ** = concrete missiles removed
- *** = Apex blown over in March 1993 blizzard



Sequence of Events

1. Formation of Troops
2. Adjutant's Call
- *3. Ruffles and Flourishes, Battery Fires Salute
4. Inspection of Troops
5. Colors Front and Center
- *6. Honors to this Nation
7. Presentation of Awards
8. Reading of the 16th ADA Group History
- *9. Reading of Inactivation Order
- *10. Casing of the Colors
- *11. Band Plays Auld Lang Syne
12. Posting of Colors
13. Remarks
14. Dedication of Guardian Park
- *15. Band plays Army Song
16. Cutting of Ribbon
17. Ceremony Concludes
18. Reception

* Guests are requested to stand

HISTORY AND LINEAGE, 16TH AIR DEFENSE ARTILLERY GROUP

The mission of the 16th Air Defense Artillery Group was to provide combat ready NIKE-Hercules missile units for the defense of the New York-Philadelphia metropolitan and industrial area.

The 16th Air Defense Artillery Group history began in Honolulu on 11 July 1924 as the 16th Artillery Regiment and assigned the mission of coastal defense of Honolulu.

During World War II the 16th Coast Artillery Regiment defended the east sector of Omaha Beach, Normandy; later the regiment participated in the defense of Luxembourg, Belgium, France and Germany. The regiment was ordered to halt their advance at the Iren River in Austria during May 1945, and assigned occupational duties. In September 1945, the regiment was inactivated.

In February 1955, Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 16th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group was once again activated and directed to move from Camp Stewart, Georgia, to the Fifth Regional Command, Fort Sheridan, Illinois.

After a brief stay at Fort Sheridan the 16th Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group was assigned to the 22d Anti-Aircraft Artillery Group, Chicago, Illinois where it was inactivated in 1961.

In June 1973, the 16th Air Defense Artillery Group was activated at Highlands, New Jersey as the New York-Philadelphia Defense with three Battalions and ten firing Batteries.

Campaign Streamers displayed on the 16th Group colors are:

- Central Pacific
- Normandy (w/arrowhead)
- Northern France
- Rhineland
- Ardenes-Alsace and
- Central Europe

The Group is currently commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Harold L. Ford.

The Battalions which make up the Group are, first, the 3d Battalion, 16th Air Defense Artillery with firing units located at Clementon, New Jersey.

Headquarters, 16th Air Defense Artillery Group, New Jersey
Lieutenant Colonel Harold L. Ford, Commanding

3d Battalion, 43d ADA - LTC John S. Edge, Commanding

Battery A - CPT Larry M. Fettis

Battery B - CPT William M. Leaman

Battery C - MAJ Robert W. Szymczak

Battery D - CPT Samuel Hughes

1st Battalion, 244th ADA - LTC Francis J. Morgan

Battery A - CPT James F. Olsakovsky

Battery B - CPT Vernon A. Jones

Battery C - CPT Noel R. Pettit

1st Battalion, 254th ADA - LTC Alfred V. Busicchia

Battery A - LT Albert Burr

The Battalion is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel John Edge and has its Headquarters located at Pedricktown, New Jersey.

The next Battalion comprising the Group is the 1st Battalion, 244th Air Defense Artillery, New York Army National Guard, located at Huntington Station, New York. The Battalion has firing units at Amityville, New York, Rocky Point, New York, and Orangeburg, New York. The 244th is the oldest Battalion in the 16th Air Defense Artillery Group. Its origin is traced to 1799 as the New York Militia. The Battalion participated in the War of 1812, the Civil War, including the famous campaigns of Antietam, Fredricksburg, Gettysburg, and later in its history saw action in France during World War I and the Pacific Theater in World War II.

The Battalion is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Francis J. Horgan.

The third Battalion that completes the make up of the 16th Air Defense Artillery Group is the 1st Battalion, 254th Air Defense Artillery, New Jersey Army National Guard, located at Livingston, New Jersey and Lumberton, New Jersey.

The 254th Battalion was federally recognized on 15 June 1954 as the 109th Anti-Aircraft Battalion with Headquarters at Vailsburg Park, Newark, New Jersey. It was intergrated into the Operation Air Defense Mission of New York in 1955 and in 1971 reorganized as a two battery battalion.

The Battalion is commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Alfred V. Busicchia.

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS

ARADCOM

LTC R. L. Shoemaker, Commanding
(Reviewing Officer for Ceremony)

1st Region

MG O. D. Street, III, Commanding

National Guard

MG W. C. Menard Jr., Chief of Staff, New Jersey

COL S. R. Probasco, Air Defense Officer, New Jersey

MG J. C. Baker, Chief of Staff, New York

COL F. M. White, Air Defense Officer, New York

Civilians

Mr. J. Antosca, Superintendent of Gateway National
Recreation Area

Mr. D. Engquist, Sandy Hook Area Manager

Appendix B-Cultural Resource Assessment of Guardian Park

Oct. 1993

ATTACHMENT # B

Excerpts related to Guardian Park Triangle

GUARDIAN PARK CULTURAL RESOURCES INVENTORY

GUARDIAN PARK: The Historical Landscape 1778/81 to 1940.

LOCATION: The triangular area known as "Guardian Park," is bordered by Hartshorne Drive on the west, an unnamed road running east-west on the north side of the memorial area, and Magruder Road on the east. The south end is an intersection between Hartshorne and Magruder.

DATA REFERENCES:

1. Maps drawn by British Army Engineer Lieutenant John Hills in 1778 and 1781 of Sandy Hook.
2. Map 1819, LaConte.
3. Map, June/July 1889, Surveyed and drawn under the direction of Lieut. Col. G. L. Gillespie, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
4. Map, topographical, 1896, by Civil Engineer W. H. Stair and his rodman Alfred Farley. (depicts area before it was filled in and landscaped)

DESCRIPTION:

Prelandscaped:

A low shallow salt marsh tidal delta inlet adjacent to Sandy Hook Bay and flooded over with bay water at each high tide, flooding the large marsh area that extended eastward and then southward into the middle portion of Sandy Hook. The tidal delta inlet was flanked on its north and south sides by high ground that sloped down to the inlet's level. This high ground was bordered at the north and south ends by high sand dunes fronting the west bayshore of Sandy Hook.

Early use:

The area, probably the high ground, was certainly used by the British during the American Revolution as a site for gun batteries, possibly constructed using timbers, gabions, etc. In addition, American troops probably used the area during the War of 1812 in a similar manner, if not adaptively reusing the original British earthworks. This was to guard the southern bayside approach to the Sandy Hook Lighthouse against naval attack and amphibious landings.

This "high ground" is probably now located in the area around the site of the non-extant garage (S-336) curving over to SHU-020 (former Hospital Stewards Qtrs) and to SHU-335 (Sandy Hook Childcare Center). Other suspect high grounds are the heavily wooded area south of the intersection of Hartshorne and Magruder Drives. This area appears to be undisturbed by development. (NOTE: two cannonballs were recovered near this area, i.e. one a 32 pdr. a quarter mile offshore to the west and the second an 8 inch or 64 pdr. on the beach known as "Sod Banks" at the north side of Horseshoe Cove).

Later use:

The area known as Guardian Park is located on the site of the tidal delta inlet. When the Army contracted to construct the first buildings of Fort Hancock, c. 1898-99, workman apparently filled in the tidal delta inlet with sand and earth that was borrowed from the high dune ridge area north of what is now Guardian Park. According to a veteran of Sandy Hook, this area was filled in with "old and new touring cars," all types of surplus army property and wooden packing cases of Civil War era Springfield muskets. Atop this fill was constructed the Hartshorne Drive roadbed. The marsh no longer floods at high tide due to this action.

The old salt marsh east of Guardian Park has changed from salt water to fresh water due to this damming and the marsh is now fed by rain water. Some time between 1900 and 1943 a seawall was constructed, extending from just south of SHU-020 down to the north shore of Horseshoe Cove (now known as "sod banks"). At this time, the area northeast of what is now Guardian Park was generally a gently sloping hillside of sand, covered with wild grasses, poison ivy, bayberry and beachplum bushes and various trees, and was criss-crossed by several sandy footpaths and an unimproved road that ran south to the Post Water Pumping Station.

1. Guardian Park Historic Scene:

Guardian Park was the last monument area added to the Fort Hancock Area by the U.S. Army. It was built in "two stages:"

- A. The Nike Ajax Missile was erected in either 1972 or 1973, according to Lou Hansen, SHU Chief of Maintenance, who came to work at Fort Hancock for the army in 1969.
- B. With the deactivation of Fort Hancock planned for 1974 the U.S. Army decided to build the following:
 1. Two narrow concrete sidewalks: One oriented north-south, the other east-west, forming a cross. Located on each were the following:
 - A. North-South Sidewalk: From north to south are:
 1. Entrance into "Guardian Park," so named because Nike Air Defense Missiles were the last "guardians" of the New York Metropolitan Area.
 2. Flagpole Site: Here was a metal flagpole mounted into the ground. On its north side was a low concrete base with a sheet brass plaque affixed explaining the history of "Guardian Park." The flagpole was removed c.1976-1979 by SHU Maintenance Division and believed to have been re-mounted somewhere else on Sandy Hook. The sheet brass plaque is believed to have been removed by Park Rangers Fred Harmon & Jack Freeman late in 1983 and put into the SHU Museum Collection for safekeeping. Concrete base for mounting plaque is now missing.
 3. Nike Hercules Missile, 2nd Stage Section, mounted vertically: This type was used at Sandy Hook from 1959 to 1974. On north side on ground was low concrete base with a sheet brass plaque affixed explaining the history of the Nike Hercules Missile. Plaque was removed in November, 1983, by Park Rangers Fred Harmon & Jack Freeman for safekeeping in the SHU Museum Collection. The Nike Hercules Missile has been painted several times between 1975 and 1990 by SHU Main. Div. The original black "U.S. ARMY" stenciling was painted over but can still be seen under the white paint. A severe thunderstorm blew off the nose cone of this Nike Hercules Missile on August 10, 1979. A replacement nose cone was put on the missile c. 1980-81 through the efforts of the 54th Explosive Ordnance Detachment, Fort Monmouth, N.J.
 4. Nike Ajax Missile (the "skinny" missile at the south end of north-south sidewalk): This missile pre-dates Guardian Park, being erected c.1972-73. On the north side on ground was low concrete base with a sheet brass plaque affixed explaining the history of the Nike Ajax Missile. Plaque was

5. removed in November, 1983, by rangers Harmon and Freeman for safekeeping in the SHU Museum Collection.

The Nike Ajax Missile displayed at Guardian Park is the 2nd stage of the missile (booster rockets were the 1st stage mounted below the 2nd stage, just like the Nike Hercules Missile). The Nike Ajax Missile has been painted several times between 1975 and 1990 by SHU Main. Div. The original black "U.S. ARMY" stenciling was painted over but can still be seen under the white paint.

The Nike Ajax was blown over during the March, 1993, blizzard. The missile was retrieved and carried by the SHU Main. Div. to Building 47 for storage, and awaits needed conservation work for it's corroded body.

The Nike Ajax Missile was mounted vertically atop a concrete, dirt-filled, square base. One each side of the base the army had mounted the following metal painted insignia:

West Side: Army Air Defense (ARADCOM) Insignia:

A red & yellow shield with Nike Missile and lightening bolts. Removed for safekeeping in November, 1983, by rangers Harmon and Freeman for safekeeping in the SHU Museum Collection. Displayed in the SHU Museum Bld. 28.

South Side: 52nd Air Defense Artillery (ADA) -

Brigade Insignia: Motto "Vigilant and Ready" Removed for safekeeping like insignia above and displayed in the SHU Museum.

North Side: Army Field Forces Insignia (A Red, white, and blue circle). This insignia was bent into a "U" shape by vandals while pulling it off the concrete base. It was left at the site and retrieved by Park Historian Tom Hoffman and put into the SHU Museum Collection for safekeeping.

East Side: Vandals removed this insignia sometime between 1975 and 1983. It was a yellow & black insignia. Park Historian Hoffman currently researching identity of insignia from a color slide taken c.1974-75.

B. East-West Sidewalk: From East to west were/are:

1. Concrete slab at east end of sidewalk: Here the army left mounted a 75mm Pack Howitzer. It was on site 1974 to about c.1977-78, when, according to Park Ranger Fred Harmon, Army Personnel showed up in a jeep from Fort Monmouth, hitched up the gun, and drove off with it.

2. Concrete slab at west end of sidewalk: Here the army erected the upright granite monument flanked in front to the left and to the right by upright concrete missiles that were about 4-feet tall.

It is believed that this monument originally stood in front of the Headquarters Building at the Missile Launch Area at Leonardo (actually Middletown), N.J., where 8 Nike Ajax Missiles blew up May 22, 1958. This missile site was closed around 1962-63, and it is believed that the monument was then moved to in front of the Headquarters Building (Located just south of the main gate on Portland Road) at the U.S. Army Highlands Air Defense Site in Highlands, N.J. It is known that the monument was on this site on Memorial Day, 1969.

With the closing of the Nike Air Defense System nationwide and the deactivation of the Highlands Air Defense Site in 1974, the army decided to move the monument for display at Guardian Park since Fort Hancock was going to become open to the public as part of Gateway National Recreation Area.

On the granite monument are the following:

Upper left-hand corner: 526th AAA Missile Battalion Insign

Upper Right-hand corner: Army Air Defense Command Shield
Insignia.

IN MEMORIAM

22 MAY 1958

Sgt. Daniel J. Lavengood

Sgt. Jerome W. Mould

SP 3 Walter E. Berry

SP William I. Cochran

PFC. Donald L. Marsh

PVT. Nicklos J. Composino

ORD. CORPS CIVILIANS

Joseph Arciere

Joseph F. Brokos

Lee A. Parker

Charles Romanow

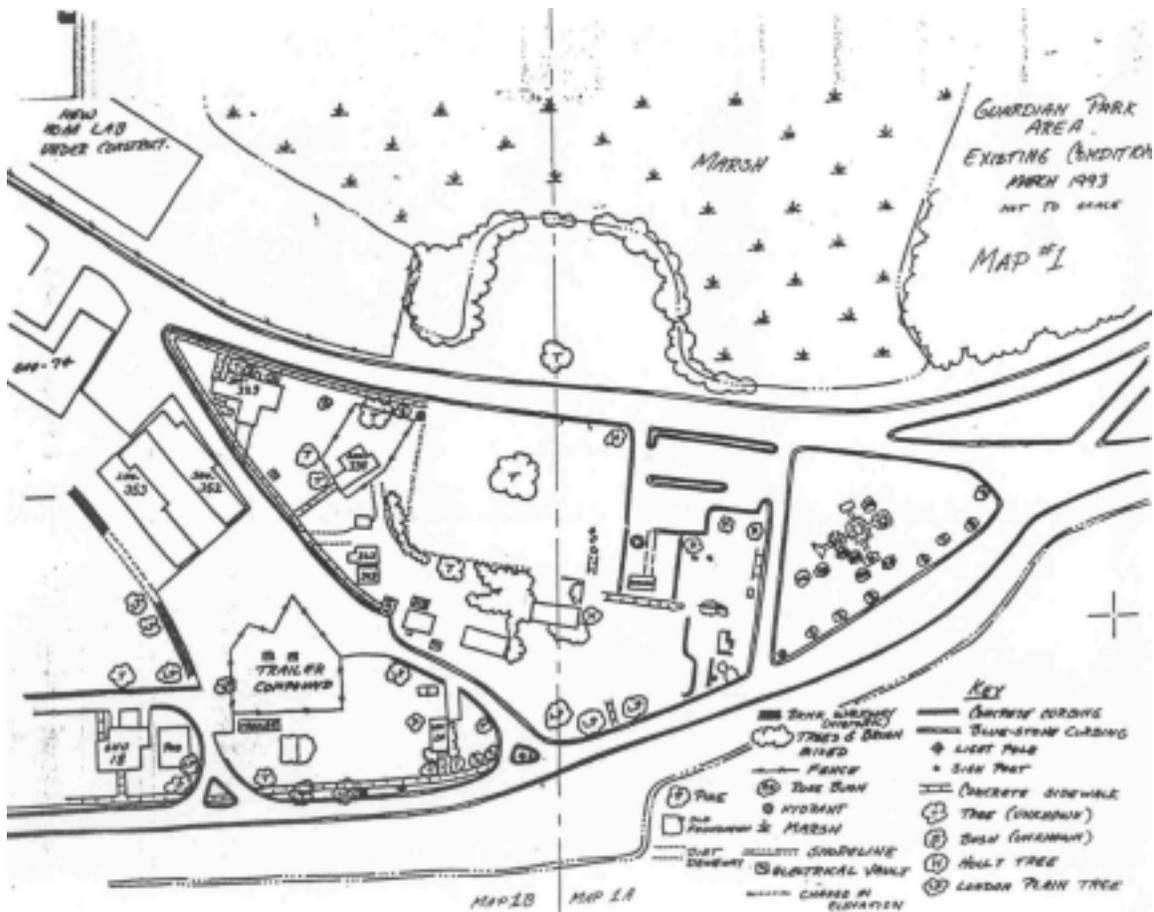
Affixed to the base of this monument was a very heavy, bronze(?) rectangular plaque, which was retrieved for safekeeping in the SHU Museum Collection by Joe Boyle, SHU Maintenance Division Buildings & Utilities Foreman. Joe retrieved this plaque c.1981-83. It is SHU Museum Catalog # 907.10. Inscribed as follows:

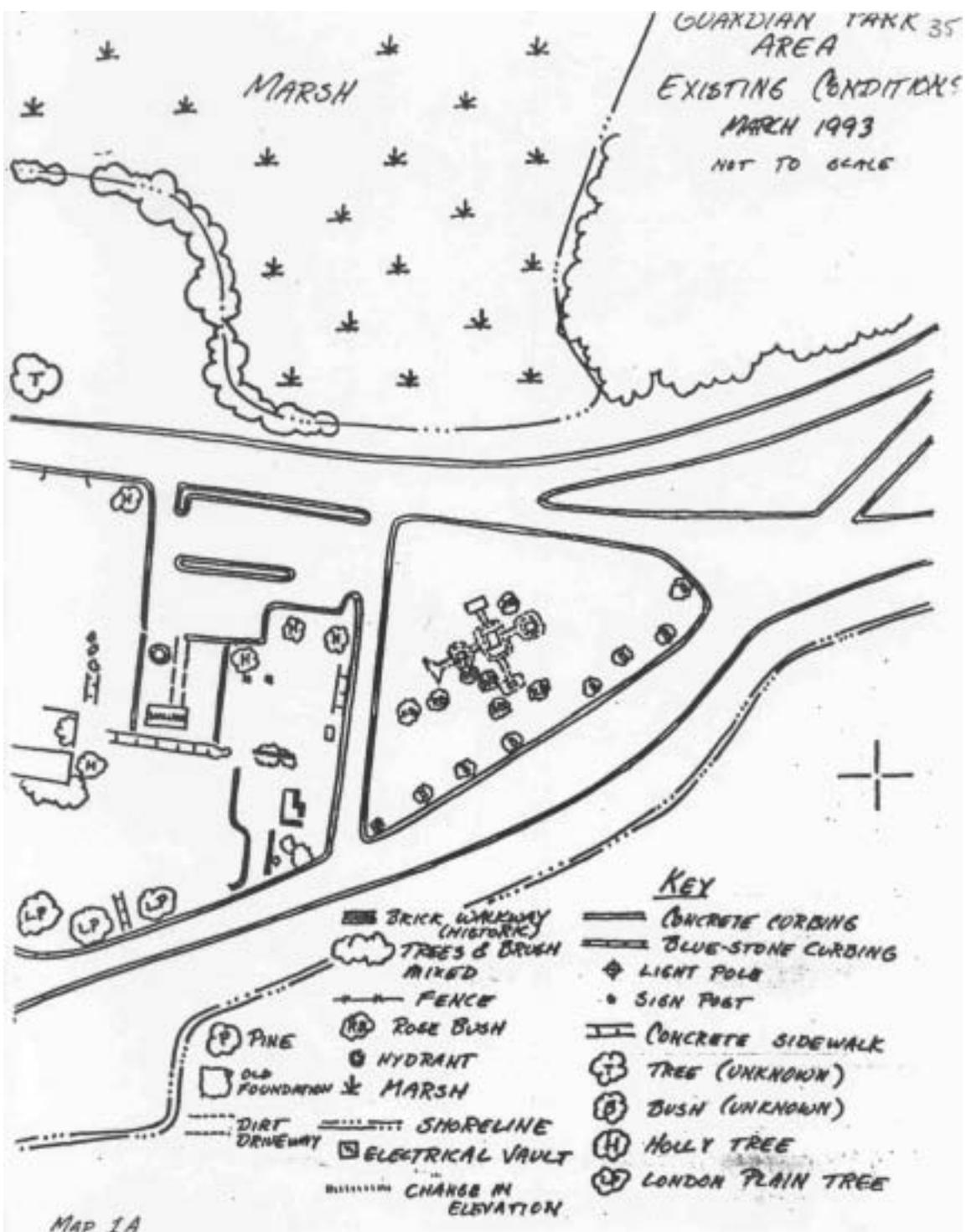
"NIKE AJAX EXPLOSION
BATTERY B 526TH MISSILE BATTALION
LEONARDO, NEW JERSEY"

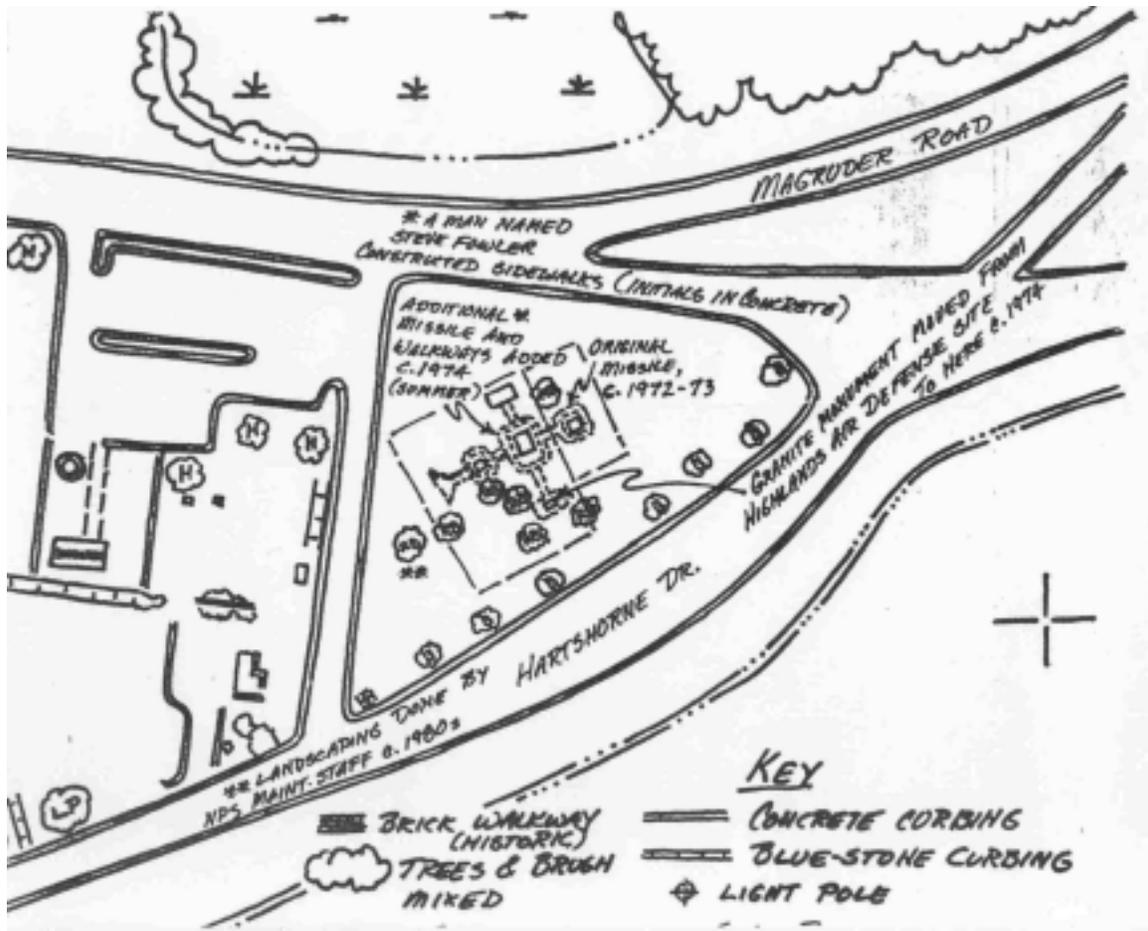
Flanking the granite monument were two concrete missiles. Sometime during circa 1975-1980 vandals tried to take these missiles. The Park Historian remembers that one missile was broken off at its base and was apparently removed from the scene. The Park Historian also recalls that the other missile was broken off at its base, left on site, and is believed to have been removed by the SHU Maintenance Division. Whereabouts of both missiles is currently not known. These concrete missiles had accompanied the monument from its display site at the Highlands Air Defense Site to Guardian Park in the summer of 1974.

According to Lou Hansen, the concrete sidewalks at Guardian Park were made by the late Steve Fowler, a civilian employee of the Fort Hancock Post Engineers Office Maintenance Staff. Fowlers initials are in the concrete sidewalk. He lived in Highlands, N.J., at the corner of Bay and Atlantic Avenues, He was the Post Mason, and was an ex-commander of the VFW Post in Highlands.

Guardian Park was made during the spring & summer of 1974. The formal Fort Hancock Deactivation Ceremony was held here on August 15, 1974. In pictures taken that day ornamental shrubs can clearly be seen around the missiles, the monument, and sidewalks. These ornamental shrubs were later removed by the SHU Main. Div. circa 1976-1980. Around c.1982-84, the SHU Main. Div. planted 8 Autumn Olive Bushes along the west side of Guardian Park along Hartshorne Drive from north to south. At least 7 rose bushes were also planted during this time by the SHU Main. Div. This vegetation is not original to the historic scene of Guardian Park, which was largely just a open, grassy lawn area, and should be removed to restore the historic 1974 Guardian Park Landscape.







SITE PLAN OF
FORT HANCOCK
HIGHLANDS, NEW JERSEY
REPRINTED MARCH 1967
DESIGNED UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE
FIRST ARMY ENGINEER
BY THE
ENGINEER WILLIAM W. GARDNER
WASHINGTON, D.C.
MAY 1961 27

**HISTORIC
MAP -
U.S. ARMY
C. 1967**

