

Sandy Hook, Gateway NRA, NPS
An Oral History Interview with Major Arthur Thomas
7th and 52nd Coast Artillery
1928-29, 1931-34
Interviewed by Elaine Harmon, NPS
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Transcribed by Mary Rasa, 2011



Guardhouse at Post Entrance built by Major Thomas in 1934.



Post Theater shortly after its completion in 1933.

Photos courtesy NPS/Gateway NRA

Editor's notes in parenthesis ()

EH: Today is September 13, 1981 and I am Elaine Harmon at the Sandy Hook Museum and I had the pleasure of being here on my day off and greeting a veteran who was here in 1928. We have very little from the 1920s on record either in documents or tape recordings and we would like to take this opportunity to interview Major Arthur R. Thomas who now lives in Inverness, Florida and who is visiting his son, Arthur Richard Thomas of Bricktown, New Jersey. He has just given me a brief summary of his career here at Fort Hancock. He said he arrived in September 9, 1928. (He) Came directly from West Point and was assigned to A Battery, 7th Coast Artillery and worked primarily at Battery Kingman-Mills, then later on he was transferred to D Battery, 7th Coast Artillery and then in October 1929 he went to Panama. Later on in 1931, he was transferred back to Fort Hancock at his request and became part of the 52nd Coast Artillery Railway Regiment which was the first railway regiment incidentally in U.S. Army history. At Fort Hancock he was associated with E Battery. Then in June of 1934, he left Fort Hancock and went onto Fortress Monroe, Coast Artillery School and in 1935 proceeded onto Corregidor in the Philippines. It interests me to happen to walk in here and meet someone from the 1920s, late 1928 to the '30s period. So, I was wondering, what do you recall? You said you lived in the Officers' Club.

AT: No. What had been the old Ordnance Officers' Club. They called it the Brick House.

EH: Okay. Right.

AT: They had the bar they added to that since I got here.

EH: That's right. You are right.

AT: And then there that long chimney in the back. I had that put in there. I had a new furnace put in.

EH: You were doing mostly construction?

AT: No. I was in Artillery but I was just detailed down. See when I was going to high school and college which was Rutgers I was working in the carpenter trade and well working my way, you know, through college and I learned that then. And then having lived on a farm I knew plumbing to a certain extent and so on.

EH: So, your talents were used. (laughter)

AT: So, I just had to learn anywhere I went.

EH: Right.

AT: In addition, to working as an artilleryman I had to be construction officer and then I...

EH: The cornerstone of the theater says 1932, and you recall that.

AT: That is correct. I was there when they made it. Inside there was a little box and there's a list of all who was in command. That was Colonel George Cocheu.

EH: Inside the cornerstone?

AT: Inside the cornerstone.

EH: Inside the cornerstone is a box?

AT: There is a little...

EH: That's very interesting.

AT: There is a little metal box and in there is a list of the construction crew and Colonel George W. Cocheu was in command.

EH: Cocheu, was right. That's correct. What a memory. So, do you remember laying the cornerstone?

AT: Oh yeah.

EH: And putting this metal box in it.

AT: Oh yes, and also they put new coins in there dated 1932. I guess and half a dollar. I don't think we got any silver dollars in there. I know we had the half dollar and quarters and so on. They were put in there too.

EH: Extraordinary. Amazing. What was the incident about one of your children falling out of the Officers' Club because...

AT: Well, he didn't fall out. At that time I had an apartment on the upper floor.

EH: The third floor.

AT: It was in the southeast corner and his mother, was then pregnant with his sister. She was minding another little boy that was living in that, they had that building cut up into apartments. We had three or four second lieutenants' that lived there at one time. And Dick was in there and the window was open and he was climbing on his chair and climbed on the window sill and went out the window and ran down this ledge there is on all mansard roofs...

EH: That's right.

AT: Down to the corner and instead of turning in he turned out and came running back and she almost had her second baby right then.

EH: Did you say he would go through, the greenhouse was right...

AT: Well, that was something later. That was another episode.

EH: Another episode. That tells us where the greenhouse was. That is why I am asking you.

AT: Yeah.

EH: It was so close to the Officers' Club. We had pictures of the old greenhouses and we knew they were near the Officers' Club but we didn't know they were that near because literally someone could roll off the mansard into the greenhouse that has got to be...

AT: No. No. It was further than that. It was three or four hundred or two hundred feet from the house. It was down... there used to be a line of wooden ,we called engineers stables down there. Incidentally in 1928 and '29, there was a company of First Engineers stationed here, Company A, the rest of their regiment was at Fort DuPont, Delaware.

EH: So, in between the Officers' Club and the greenhouse was a row or a line of...

AT: No. The Officers' Club is where it is now. If you started walking southwest from the center, walking southwest. You are heading back to Post there. You come to the greenhouse. The only thing they ever grew in there that I knew were geraniums.

EH: For what purposes though?

AT: They grew geraniums.

EH: I know but were they actually put in officers houses?

AT: I'll tell you. It was there since the old Ordnance Proving Ground days when they had plenty of money up there. That's when they used that solid walnut trim in that building and those parquet floors and down in front they had that vegetable garden, a big vegetable garden in there. They had the greenhouse there and maybe even grew vegetables in winter. I don't know but the caretaker that we had there at that time the only thing he knew how to propagate was geraniums and that's all he had in there.

EH: Do you remember his name by the way?

AT: No. No.

EH: The post gardener.

AT: No. I don't think...he was so young I don't think he even knew his own name.
(laughter)

EH: How funny because I always wondered what was the purpose to have the greenhouse. I thought actually it was for plantings all over.

AT: Well, probably the original idea.

EH: Right. Because we have the historic photographs that show very elaborate flower beds and that's what I always felt what the greenhouses were for.

AT: Well, that was probably the original reason but it never got that way in our time.

EH: Can you describe Battery Mills as you remember it? Kingman-Mills.

AT: Yes. Of course, you look down there today, that road that comes off the road from what, what do you call that name of road to the gate.

EH: Hartshorne?

AT: The road to the gate. The main road to the gate. There is a road that goes back through those woods in there. At one time that was these huge holly trees in there. I had seen them that big around and all through there and there was also large cedar. I think they were cleared off during the Second World War. I had been going through there and didn't see them. I didn't see them at least. Well, that road went down and then came to a T turn and to the north of the turn and to the south were two large mounds that were covering concrete, what do I want, what's the word...At my age, I am losing my vocabulary. I know what it is, well, outer room and shell room and everything else.

EH: Right.

AT: I haven't got the word yet. Maybe it'll come to me. That was inside and then there was a big plotting room in there. That's where you used the boards and at that time they were using probably the 125 degree plotting boards. That was used but later on when the Coast Artillery Boards were down, oh let me get ahead of myself and on each side of those were a 12-inch barbette gun.

EH: That's right.

AT: I think Mills was the north battery and Kingman was the south battery. Two guns each. A Battery (7th Coast Artillery) was assigned to Battery Mills. D Battery of the 7th to Battery Kingman. All other guns were out of service except (Battery) Gunnison.

EH: What year is this?

AT: This is 1928. Now, later on the Coast Artillery Board made the first of these gun directors. Built eventually by Sperry, the gyrosperry company, and they tried the first one out at Battery Mills.

EH: Sperry Gyroscope was the manufacturer. Incredible.

AT: Incidentally, my first civilian job after I retired with a physical disability I got with Sperry. I wrote the manuals of those new directors. They were 12-inch, 14-inch, 16-inch all these big harbor defense guns.

EH: You wrote manuals that corresponded to the equipment?

AT: Yes. For the, you know, the what are those manuals? What is the name of them?

Son: Oh you mean technical's?

EH: Technical manuals.

AT: Technical manuals, now here we got it. I said I am losing my...

EH: Vocabulary. I don't think so. I think you are pretty sharp.

AT: The words.

EH: What was your particular assignment at the guns? Were you in the plotting room?

AT: I would be in the plotting room.

EH: Right.

AT: Range section. Incidentally, they never fired those guns while I was there. Not mine.

EH: Then you talked about coming back in 1931 as the 52nd Coast Artillery.

AT: That's right, when I came back in 1931 after two years in Panama. I was assigned to E Battery of the 52nd Coast Artillery. That was a railway regiment and we were armed at, E Battery was armed with 8-inch rifles, railway rifles and C Battery was armed with 12-inch railway mortars. We had a Headquarters Battery. That is all.

EH: So, it was actually three units, E, C and Headquarters? Is that correct?

AT: That's right. But they also, they retained the Headquarters of the 7th. They maintained all these out of service batteries. All that long line of disappearing guns that used to be on the seawall down there. And I see them scattered all the way up.

EH: Are you talking about 9-gun Battery? Are you talking about the 9-gun Battery? The line of them that make up an L Shape?

AT: That's right. They are scattered up here and some over on the other side, you know, I never seen them.

EH: That's right. There's three on the (Sandy Hook) Bay.

AT: Three on the Bay?

EH: (Batteries) Kingman, Mills, and Arrowsmith.

AT: Oh, (Battery) Arrowsmith, that was a 6-inch battery wasn't it? (8-inch gun)

EH: I believe so.

AT: It was a small one, a smaller caliber because I don't think I may have been down there, but I turned the car around because I built that bridge across that little creek.

EH: You constructed the bridge?

AT: Yeah.

EH: Over what is the location now?

AT: Well, that's called Arrowsmith but I am not sure of the name. It's over on the bayside.

EH: That's right.

AT: What had happened is that high water had taken out the original bridge. And Colonel Cocheu told me to get a detail of men and move in a side of a barge floating on the beach and put it down there for a bridge so you could drive over it. And there was a lot of driftwood down on that beach. So, I got a detail of men. Sergeant Lee who was the head of my labor force on the Theater handled it and we cut of some of the big 12 x12 timbers and we really built a bridge there. The colonel was very much surprised when he went down to see this side of a barge that floated ashore slung across for a bridge and he actually found an honest to god, bridge.

EH: What did it connect now? Tell me which..?

AT: It was the road, road to the gate to the Battery, I am going to call it Arrowsmith. I got the name from you.

EH: Right.

AT: I had forgotten the name.

EH: What year about, could you imagine?

AT: Yeah. That would be 1934 when I put that bridge in. Spring of 1934. I left here in June of '34.

EH: What other things did you build, roughly? You must have done a million projects.

AT: Well, I built the theater.

EH: Yes.

Son: The Gatehouse.

AT: Oh, yes that little Gatehouse out near Sandlass Beach. I say I built that. I didn't put a hand on it but I stole all those bricks. It was supposed to be an incinerator job. I was told to build an incinerator and I didn't know how and I couldn't find anything about it so I designed an incinerator in my own mind. Ordered the material and always held off on starting and then they needed a new Gatehouse originally they had a little telephone booth down there just about the size of the telephone booth and the man, the gate man on duty said sitting in that Gatehouse on those cold winter nights and he had a little heater. So we took and built that Gatehouse. And at that time we built it we only had one entrance and that was to the east, no to the west, the west side. When I came through here around 1949 or '50 I made a trip down here and I saw they cut a hole and made a, of course they had doubled the road and they had put another door on the other side.

EH: What year were you talking about the construction of that Gatehouse, roughly?

AT: That would be 1934.

EH: Amazing.

AT: Because by that time my theater construction was over.

EH: Where were you living by the way when you were back with the 52nd? What was your residence?

AT: Brick house.

EH: Still, was all of your residential...

AT: Well, I lived in three different apartments in there.

EH: Right.

AT: At the time, I originally had an apartment of two rooms and a kitchen on the second floor on the north side. And then, I moved let's see, I had forgotten the second move and I also lived on the first floor. The first floor is probably where I moved to.

EH: Well, there are main parlors on all of the first floor.

AT: There were two big parlors.

EH: So was there a side room?

AT: No. They didn't have they added to that all along there. That's new construction there.

EH: Right.

AT: But they done in 19-, well I moved into that first floor apartment on the other side. It was right across from the dance hall, you know, the dance hall. We used to hold our dances there. Then when I came back from the Philippines then I was on the third floor.

EH: When you came back from Panama?

AT: That's right. When I came back from Panama.

EH: I am following you. So, all of your living, I am essentially saying is all of your living at the time was spent at the Officers' Club at the Brick house.

AT: That's right.

EH: Right.

AT: You had to rank enough to get one of these houses.

EH: What was the interior of the Officers' Club on the first floor? Were there chandeliers and very, you know, very fancy furniture?

AT: There was in this respect, Colonel Cocheu had a brother who did something, those people who would chase those rum runners down. And when they raided the big places in New York, they confiscated the furniture. They confiscated an awful lot and resent...

EH: And it ended up here. Very interesting. The question we want to know is where did all of that stuff disappear to?

AT: Well, that I don't know.

EH: It is a crime because you know I am sure it was bit by bit.

AT: The National Guard were over here and during 1940, I don't know when 1941 and..

EH: What was your position on the railway regiment? I didn't ask you that. What was your assignment?

AT: Well, there, first I just doing officer actually I did the plotting car, you know, the range and that but I was later in command of that, that was during the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) days when I had all the jobs. Now, do you want to take a list of all the jobs I had with the CCC?

EH: Sure, if you can rattle them off.

AT: When the CCC broke...

EH: Do you know when they established Company 288? Do you remember what year?

AT: I wouldn't know what 288 was.

EH: That was Camp Lowe, Horseshoe Cove, CCC.

AT: Oh, no. In fact, I don't recall any camp on the Post. (The Camp was built in 1935.)

EH: That's how they referred to it because we have the menus and the newspaper of the Civilian Conservation Corps in the collection and it says Camp Lowe, L-O-W-E Company 288.

AT: I am going to say after 1934 because...

EH: That's about right.

AT: I am not aware of any CCC Camp on the Post. But originally they brought all these kids over from New York slums and they companied them and they raised hell. They went up into the band barracks and there were pianos in there upstairs and they took them and ripped out all the inner works of those pianos because some of them were banging on them when they wanted to sleep. And to keep them in line I got them out on the Parade Ground right in front here and I kept them out there. When they got in they were too tired to raise hell. And we weren't supposed to give them any drills but there was no one there to check on me so I just kept them out there.

EH: Drilling them.

AT: And then I would get one of the kids to run the company. They didn't know how so I said, "Okay, I'll stand alongside and tell you what to say." We got some awfully good men out of those CCC's.

EH: That's right.

AT: I met some good ones.

EH: What were all of these jobs you were saying you would rattle off?

AT: Now, remember when the CCC, officers were ordered out with these companies. The noncoms (non-commissioned officers) were ordered out and even cooks were promoted to mess sergeants and ordered out and we came down and one time we had seven officers on the Post and during that time I was first in command of E Battery of the 52nd. And then the officer in charge of C Battery was out and I had C Battery too. I was theater construction officer. I was utilities officer. I was in charge of all repairs and everything on Post. I had 770 WPA (Works Project Administration) workers who repaired the railroads and road and repaint the houses to take the paint off the fireplace mantles.

EH: On the Officers' Row...

AT: Put new copper pipe in from the old rusty stuff we had.

EH: Amazing.

AT: I was fire marshal. I was police and prison officer. I was in charge of this particular building and I never walked in. I couldn't, I couldn't do all those things. Did I say I was in charge of the library?

EH: Where was it? Was it that white building right on that field now? Was the library then in those days?

AT: No. The library was down here in one of those...

EH: In one of the barracks.

AT: On of the mess halls.

EH: In the mess halls, that is unusual.

AT: I think in about the second one. I am not certain. About the second one. And then, oh, I was chaplain. They made me chaplain. Actually, all I had to do as chaplain was take care of the funds. But I told all my friends that on Sunday, on Sunday service we were going to serve the sacramental wine. I didn't know. I wasn't Catholic. I didn't know what they did. If they didn't like wine we would have shots of rye and a highball they had to bring up the mixing part of it. (laughter) and what else was it? Of course, I had my guard tours. I don't know if I had my guard tours.

EH: I was going to ask you did you have walking posts?

AT: Well, an officer wouldn't, see. They had walking posts, oh yeah.

EH: Right. Did you know in all of your engineering projects did you know a man named Johnny Simpson?

AT: Yes.

EH: Who was a living legend who worked here for 52 years.

AT: I know Johnny Simpson and I had a standing order in my warehouses when I was utilities officer that Johnny Simpson could have anything in that warehouse unless it was earmarked for a certain job. They had stuff in their warehouses when they were building that theater. That was the only theater built within the money. We had \$29.28 left over and we bought the urinals in the men's lavatory, black to match the walls with 29 dollars left over.

EH: You mentioned something to me about the theater. You said around the seventh or eight row there are seats that have attachments for people who are hard of hearing.

AT: That's right.

EH: I will definitely look for them.

AT: Down alongside the legs in two places, there are two sets of them. I think that four people who could sit there and put the earphones on and hear everything. My mother being deaf I had something similar done in Panama.

EH: That's great. That's wonderful.

AT: We had maybe a half a dozen sets of earphones that they would be in the projection room or the ticket booth and people if they wanted could ask for them and they could get a set and go in. There were people at the Lighthouse. They were at least two or three that were deaf and hadn't seen a movie since the talkies came and they started going to the movies. Of course, my mother did.

EH: Do you remember the names of these people? Were they lighthouse keeper's family?

AT: Yes. Yes. The keeper, I don't know. I wouldn't know him if I saw him on the street today.

EH: we are talking about Johnny Simpson, though, did you have much contact with him?

AT: Quite a lot. For instance he also had a lot of construction work on this WPA.

EH: Right.

AT: I had ordered railroad ties for construction and I had forty pound pressure treated 40 pounds treated and he ordered 60 pound treated. I think that is how much pressure they could get in. He had men in to put in railroad ties in his part and I didn't. So I loaned him my railroad ties while he ordered them, see, 40 pound so when his 60 pound came in he repaid me with 60 pounds. He loaned you a five dollar bill and you paid me back a ten dollar bill. And all those other things and anything he wanted if I had it ordinary things construction material that I had unless it was for a certain job he could have it.

EH: He was quite an extraordinary man from what I hear.

AT: His son was my partner when I was building the theater.

EH: John Simpson Jr.?

AT: Well, I don't know his name but I understood he died. I understand he died, oh five or ten years after. In other words but 1940 he was dead but I don't know that. See he had other children too. Oh, I was also scoutmaster.

EH: Oh, that's right. Your list of, your encyclopedia of tasks here. I have one last question to ask you and that is you described to me the mine cables. You were talking about certain technical terminology. You were talking about single cables and all that. Could you just repeat that for me?

AT: Right. Alright originally submarine mines controlled, they had 19 on them. 19 mines in a small field and they were connected to each to one single line which went to a distribution box and at a distribution box these 19 terminals were connected to a 19 conductor table. One each, see, and that was back to your casemate. So, as you tracked a ship, in our case it was just a target pulling across the minefield, we tracked that and say it got over #6 mine, we could fire #6 mine. Then they got a new system out it was probably through the telephone, probably bell telephone had something to do with it. What they call a single conductor. It was one single conductor that went from the casemate out to that distribution box, just one line, one wire and then that was connected to a little round thing that looked like a clock or almost like a dial on a telephone and then you could then dial say # 6 mine you dialed it and indicated it in the casemate and a little finger came around when you hit #6 mine.

EH: Amazing were the original 19, in other words when they were replaced with a single line do you suppose they were all miniaturized into the single cable? Like everything is now a transistor, a miniature version of a giant thing.

AT: Well, when we got to the transistor stage...

EH: Well, what I am saying is that it originally began as 19 cables, 19 terminals.

AT: Well, you know why they had 19 terminals, 19 conductors, I will do it right here.

EH: I wish the tape recorder could see this drawing. (laughter) Let's pretend this is a video.

AT: Here is your first wire. That is in the center.

EH: Okay.

AT: Alright, if you put wires around that that are touching all the way around you will get seven around. You put another ring of wires around you will get enough well, 6 in one, 7, you get 12, you get to 19. in other words they are all touching, compact you get 19 and that is what they were trying to do.

EH: SO they refined it.

AT: They refined it and they probably would have done more. Now they probably wouldn't have many any wires going in.

EH: That is probably true.

AT: They would do it electronically, send the pulse down there.

EH: Right. I have one last question for you and we usually ask this. Do you recall any outstanding events like a bomb threat or a severe storm? Anything outstanding while you were here that raised a tremendous amount of concern or was considered you know an unbelievable event because people have told us about enormous storms or the World War I submarine incident. What were the rumors in fact that you had heard of?

AT: I never heard any. I wasn't here during war time.

EH: Right. Because so many things are legends but we always ask do you know for sure that that happened. Did anything of a great calamity happen?

AT: No.

EH: Or enormous storms or blizzards.

AT: We had one of those. I think I told you about locking up a civilian in here.

EH: A civilian in jail. (laughter)

AT: Well, he committed about forty robberies around here.

EH: Amazing.

AT: Burglaries you know.

EH: Right.

AT: As a scoutmaster going to these various scoutmaster gatherings I got wind of one man who had been seen trying to enter an apartment with a skeleton key. I got his name and also someone had gotten into one of these Officers' Row houses named Beverly and Beverly woke up he was sleeping up in the attic woke up and there was a man in his room.

EH: That is quite a surprise.

AT: So...

EH: If he was up in the attic was he a servant?

AT: No. No. He was just a stranger and well one time I was sitting up in my quarters up in the Brick house and a cop, a civilian and a cop from around Keyport section, somewhere around there. I had forgotten. It was on that road there going off the Post. He came over and they had wind that there was someone, a man had a gas station that had been burglarized and radio had been stolen and this gas station owner had done a favor for some soldiers here. They ran out of gas and he gave them some. They told him that the radio that had been stolen from him was about to be sold here on the Post by a man who was getting discharged. I had him stay up in the quarters up there and my wife entertained him and I came down here and went into (inaudible) and I think it was in one of these mess halls at the time. I went in there and oh, first thing I did I came down and I got the sergeant major on the Post and asked him who was about to get discharged. And he went over and looked in his records.

EH: Oh, that is one way of tracking a person down. That is excellent.

AT: He looked in his records and says here, Morgan got discharged today. Morgan was the one I was looking for, who I had suspected. And they wouldn't reenlist him on the Post here because of what I had told them. See, I didn't have enough to, you know, catch him but I did have that. They wouldn't reenlist him. So he was going, then I went over to the Post Exchange bar and I picked out a soldier out of Headquarters Battery of the 7th. I got talking about radios. I said, "Yeah I would like to have one like that," but I mentioned the one about the size that had been stolen and this fella says, "Oh, I wish I had known that Lieutenant, there was one sold in the battery today."

EH: What a coincidence. (laughter)

AT: He said, "yeah." I said, "Who bought it?" He said, "One of the cooks there." "Who did he buy it from, you know." He said, "Yeah, Morgan." So, then I go back and get the cop and we go back and look at the radio and he didn't know then he had to go home and get his number. So, he went back and got the number and called me back. It was payday

night and they had the payday guard on and when they got this corporal who was working in the PX. He was on payday guard. I said, "If Morgan comes in..." I knew he was going to re enlist. Morgan was going to re enlist for Fort Niagara the next day and I knew that he wasn't going to go to Red Bank and take the train over when he could go down and get on the harbor boat and go to the battery. That's how he was going over. I said, "When Morgan comes in you grab him and lock him up." Remember he is a civilian now. He was a civilian. Well, they did that and well I took Ned Beverly and his son and brought them.

EH: Caught him red handed.

AT: I called the police to take him over and pick him up. I went down with the state troopers and the local police somewhere down the line here in Monmouth Beach I believe at his girlfriend's house. I come up with all kinds of stolen things. Well, they put our friend Morgan over in the county jail over in Freehold and I got a letter from Morgan wanting me to be his defense counsel. He never knew I was the one who got him.

EH: (laughter) That's ironic.

AT: Well, I used to do that.

Son: Did you tell her about the rum runners?

AT: The rum would come in these burlap packages down along the beach. And the soldiers would be out there and find it and take it back in and open up the packages and start drinking it and then they would dig it in the sand somewhere and hid it but it was so tight they never would find it. Now, I never saw any of that but I did see one rumrunner that the Coast Guard had down at the dock here and they had these big burlap packages that I wanted. I was around to see if I could grab one of those packages to get in my car. If I had, I would have been in Freehold.

EH: (laughter) Yeah with your friend.

AT: One other thing, cemeteries.

EH: Yes. I was just going to ask you. Could you tell me about the gravesites and cemeteries?

AT: Well, I told you about first the legend of the British soldiers they found right here at the lighthouse, three or four.

EH: You said around 1848?

AT: Now this was in 17- what was that the battle of Freehold, Monmouth.

EH: Battle of Monmouth, okay.

AT: 1777 or 8 around there because they came this way when they left the battlefield.

EH: And how many do you think it amounted to, how many people?

AT: The graves?

EH: Yeah.

AT: As I recall, they said three or four. I saw it in person somewhere. That was one and I told you about as you were going to the pumping station is it, not the pumping station or the power plant now?

EH: The pumping station it is referred to as. He is drawing a map of the pumping station area. Because he mentioned to me a place that was leveled off and he commented that it was leveled for the balloon hangers particularly as a way of landing the balloons and he was talking that he thought that there were gravesites in that area. Okay, if you could see through the tape recorder the map says to the main road and he's got two structures which would be the pumping station and the balloon hanger which is no longer standing today but had been. We have it documented that there was a balloon hanger right in that location.

AT: The pumping plant. Now this part in here told that when they leveled it off they found all these skeletons and they had been buried there. They were victims of the cholera, which happened a lot of it about 1848.

EH: Any other grave sites that you knew of?

AT: Just one.

EH: Besides these.

AT: Just one. I don't know how many, you see but 1917 well, Johnny Simpson would have remembered that.

EH: I wish he were here today because he could tell you every inch of Sandy Hook.

Son: Weren't you telling me about a Sims grave?

AT: Yeah. That is what I am going to do?

EH: That's the Halyburton monument.

AT: No. No. This is a different one. It's on the way to the, there used to be a railroad down here and the railroad used to come close and came to a point in here and...

EH: Is this still the area of the pumping station?

AT: No. This is down about...

EH: More south of it.

AT: More south of it. And then there is a road that goes back from here. There is a road that goes back along the beach. It used to be just a sand road. Right in here just below that maybe one hundred feet there was a grave in there and when I remember that there were four posts in there that was a thin one by two. Well, like a board like this around it but it had been there for years. It was ready to fall down then.

EH: A seaman's grave?

AT: Yeah. He was evidently a body that was picked up probably in the Bay.

EH: And how far south of the pumping station? Could you give me bearings?

AT: Only from this room that goes in the back here. Let's go and look at the map here.

EH: Okay, you were remarking that the area was marked off with four posts and a railing.

AT: A very simple wooden railing. 1 x 2. About that size.

EH: And it sounds like the location is around Horseshoe Cove to me. Sounds like Horseshoe Cove.

AT: The road and the railroad almost came to a point there.

EH: Almost converging.

AT: Beyond that road came to a point between two ponds.

EH: You mentioned something about the ponds, you actually mentioned you went hunting at the ponds.

AT: Oh yes. Hunting duck there.

EH: Duck?

AT: Yeah.

EH: Well, was there anything else at the time besides rabbits that you would hunt?

AT: Oh yeah well, rabbits, duck.

EH: Do you remember deer? People tell us deer was actually here at one time.

AT: No. I used to go out a lot by myself and about five o'clock and hunt until dark and do out the beach and go down the beach and pick up light bulbs. I used to give them to the quartermaster who would make up a shortage.

EH: Where were you finding light bulbs?

AT: You know, along the beach line. I put them in my hunting coat. Sometimes they would break. (inaudible) I used to give them to the quartermaster. The quartermaster we had when he was taking the property over he was looking for an ice breaker. His idea of an ice breaker was a little gadget that you put in the ice box and you turned the crank in there and you crushed the ice and it was ready. Well, he can't find the ice breaker anywhere. I said, "Have you gone behind the steamroller shed." He said, "No, why?" I said, "You find the steamroller shed, you find the icebreakers." It was a thing that you could just about get in this room it was a metal thing to hang over the bow of the boat and crush the ice when the bay was frozen. (laughter)

EH: That is quite a cheerful antidote. I want to thank you for your time and for all of your very accurately described recollections and I hope to see you again sometime. Thanks very much. (tape ends.)

EH: We were just recalling one last antidote calling the post surgeon the highest ranking doctor even if he couldn't as you said.

AT: He couldn't even lance a boil.

EH: He was still the post surgeon and his residence was building #20 right next to the hospital.

AT: And right next to him was Captain Bailey.

EH: Who has been a visitor here. Captain Kincheon Bailey. He was one of the most outstanding people I have ever interviewed last October with his children. I could not believe they had the whole family here. I don't want to interrupt you. He named every officer on Officers' Row all of the 19 buildings. I was astounded. I have written him too. So I know the whole family.

AT: Where are they?

EH: They are in the south. They are all in Arlington, Virginia. I have his address. It's such a coincidence you mentioned him. Kincheon Bailey is a great person to tape record.

AT: I have a couple on Kincheon Bailey I have two or three on him. This was in the Post Exchange they had to have it tested see the beer to make sure it was only 3.2 so they take two cold bottles and send it over to the hospital.

EH: For analysis?

AT: For analysis. And Major Beverly and Captain Bailey would sit down at the table and they would each get a glass and they would pour it and drink it.

EH: That's a great way to test it.

AT: Major Beverly would say, "Well, I think its 3.2. What do you think Captain?" He would say, "Now, Major I think its 3.2 myself." Darn if its 3.2. (laughter)

EH: Well, if Bailey and Beverly would agree then that was it. Do you have any memories of Captain Bailey?

AT: You know, he one time we were up at the club and we were having a masquerade. We used to have masquerade parties. Fancy dress and you got everybody in in a hurry and the commanding officers' wife was Jacob Johnson.

EH: Was he black?

AT: No.

EH: Oh, because we don't hear much about black people.

AT: No. He was very dark skinned.

EH: Major Johnson.

AT: No. That was Colonel Johnson. And Mrs. Johnson and she would like these masquerade parties and she would have these Paul Jones, you know, Paul Jones would get mixed up so well everybody enters in front. I went up to my quarters one time during it and Captain Bailey he was dressed as Colonel Chapman with a great big cane. And we had an officer here, Hopkins, he was the class of '25 down at the Point.

EH: Out of West Point.

AT: And he was up to my apartments and Hopkins was jumping around and clomping and Captain Bailey had his cane and said, "Get up and fight. Get up and fight. I'm a fighter." He said, "You don't call me a quack doctor." Well, with that I had him sitting down. You know his wife was very straight laced. She never did that. She hung her head for a couple of weeks.

EH: You didn't play any pranks on her. Do you have any friends that you still keep in touch with from Fort Hancock?

AT: Do I have any friends, period? (laughter)

EH: I am sure you do. But do you, really, a number of people kind of gravitate to each other because of their connection here. Do you really know of other people? Where they have all drifted to?

AT: No. No.

EH: That is the nice thing about the veterans reunion is what we had yesterday which is really representative of people getting together and enjoying themselves and talking about the things that happened here good things and bad things. It is really a nice thing. I wish you had been there.

AT: Can you find out Captain Bailey's?

EH: Sure. Be glad to give it to you.

END OF INTERVIEW