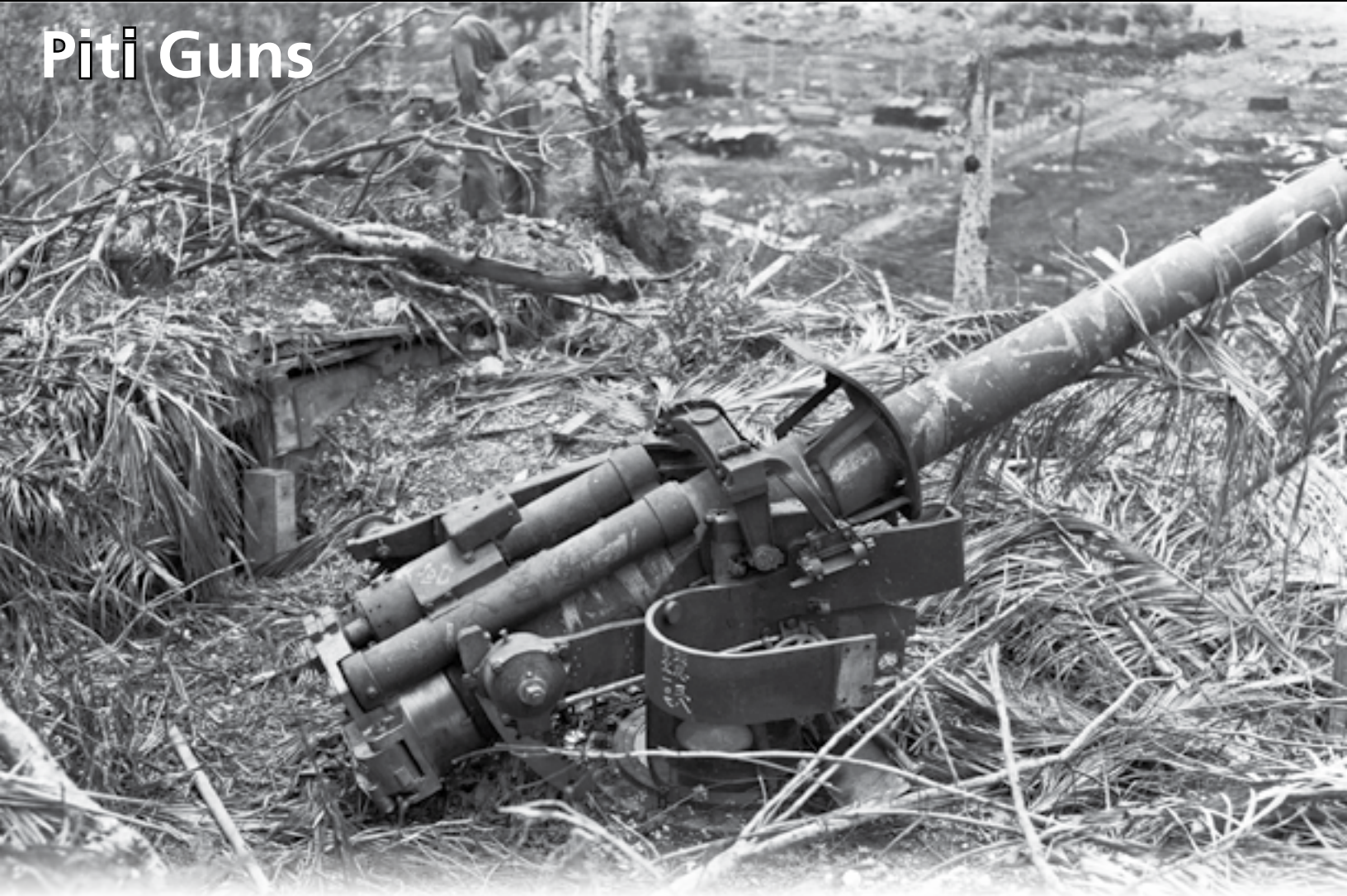




Piti Guns



October 5, 1944: A Japanese Vickers-type Model 3 (1914) 140-mm (5.5 inch) coastal defense gun stands intact over the ruins of Piti.

The Japanese defenders heavily fortified the terrain surrounding Guam's coasts and cliffs, in preparation of America's return to the island. The American landings began on July 21, 1944. Weeks of heavy bombardment and intense fighting took their toll on the island, destroying homes, burning vegetation, and damaging fortifications. But above the hills of Piti, three Japanese coastal defense guns still rest silently within a mahogany forest. They are the only guns War in the Pacific National Historical Park protects that remain in their original emplacements.

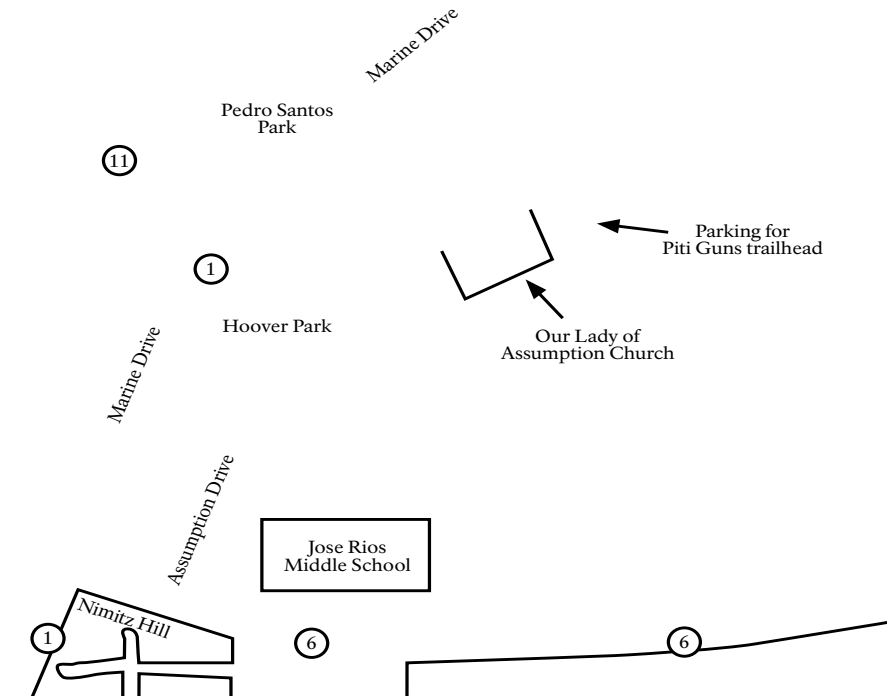
The Trail to Piti Guns

Access to Piti Guns today is by way of a short, steep trail (¼ mile) that begins in the village of Piti. Drive on Route 1, Marine Corps Drive, 2.7 miles north of the park's visitor center. Turn right at the traffic light onto Route 6, Spruance Drive. Take the immediate left turn onto Assumption Drive, just before the school.

Follow the road for approximately half a mile, and park on the far side of the church social hall. The trailhead is just behind the wayside exhibit panel at the base of the hill. The trail ascends steeply through thick coastal jungle, reminiscent of the challenging terrain negotiated by both Japanese and U.S. troops.



Your hike begins behind the church social hall. Please use caution as the trail and stairs may be slippery.



A Silent Secret?

As you stroll along this trail, imagine what it must have felt like to lift and drag these huge guns up this steep hill. Under Japanese orders, Chamorros were used as labor gangs and forced to install the guns at this site. The first two guns were sited in earthen revetments; the third gun sits in a low-walled concrete emplacement. Weapons like these were placed overlooking many of Guam's beaches and were intended for use primarily against ships and landing craft. They are typical of those used throughout the Pacific during World War II.

The hasty efforts by the Japanese military to fortify the island were never fully completed. These guns have never fired a shot, as they were not ready when the Americans returned to liberate Guam.

The trail continues along the left fork. You will find the second gun lying on its side, dislodged from its base following the war.

View From the Top

The third gun occupies the most dramatic site. From this high ground the Japanese had a clear view of the beaches below. During the pre-war years, the coast was covered with thick stands of coconut palms. By July 1944, however, most of the vegetation had been destroyed by heavy bombardment from U.S. ships offshore preparing for the amphibious landings.

The assault on Asan Beach on W-Day, July 21, was made by the three regiments of the 3rd Marine Division under intense fire. One of these regiments, the 9th Marines, captured this area on July 22, 1944, but regimental reports make no mention of taking the battery of guns.

Mahogany Forest

The vegetation here has changed since 1944. Along the lower portion of the trail, large African tulip trees and Chinese or betel nut palms can be found amongst the vegetation. Some of the African tulip trees are over a hundred years old. Prominent shrubs along the trail include croton, with dark green variegated leaves, and hibiscus. Spider lilies grow in profusion on the forest floor, as do several different ferns.

The mahogany forest stands as a tangible reminder of the rich history of this site. In 1928, mahogany trees were planted to encourage agriculture on the island. These trees are all that remain of the former Guam Agricultural Experiment Station (1909-1932) and agricultural school (1932-1940). The broad-leafed mahogany trees are native to Central and South America. The largest of

these trees, some distance off the trail, are up to three feet in diameter and 75 years old; a few may be older. Mahogany is grown for timber throughout the tropics and is valued for its hard wood and handsome grain.

The large tree with small leaves that towers over the third gun is a kamachile. Native to Central America as well, this tree was introduced to the Mariana Islands by the Spanish voyaging along a trade route to the Philippines.

The guns and the trees behind Piti are unique reminders of the people throughout history who have found Guam valuable. For centuries, multiple nations have taken advantage of the island's mid-Pacific location, and have left behind evidence for others to discover.

Mahogany and African tulip trees are part of the diverse array of plants surrounding the Japanese guns.

