



Castle Courier



A Publication of the U.S. Army Engineer Museum

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Special State of the Engineer Museum

It's time for my favorite issue of the year; the State of the Engineer Museum! 2016 has been a very challenging year. The good news is that the Engineer Museum is now healthier than it's ever been. We are now fully staffed with a great team, the Museum's collection has greatly improved over the past six years and in most cases we now have the artifacts needed to support our exhibits and educational programming. The Museum's new warehouse is just days from completion, which will greatly improve our facilities foot print.

In 2016 the Engineer Museum trained almost 8,000 soldiers and Army civilians. We added 164 artifacts to the collection and made significant improvements of our archival collection. The staff published three articles and supported the publication of six more. Donations to the Army Engineer Association (AEA), on behalf of the Museum totaled over \$7,000.00 and AEA contributed another \$5,000.00.

2017 looks to be a very promising year. We are putting the finishing touches on the WW2 to Vietnam expansion. Our next major project will be improving the airfield construction exhibit. Later in 2017 we will make improvements to the West Point case and change the Mexican-American War case into an exhibit on the Corps of Topographical Engineers (1838-1863).

We have also located several artifacts we hope to purchase in 2017. We are currently negotiating with a seller on about a dozen rare patches for units that served in the Occupation forces in Japan following WW2. We recently located a collection of books about specific units. This type of book, known as unit histories, is written by member(s) of the unit shortly after a conflict. Each year we budget 300-500 dollars to improve our reference library. This helps us provide better answers to request for information and to provide better support to researchers who visit the Museum.

ESSAYONS!

Troy

Museum Purchases Patent Model of the Army's First Bridge

After years of discussions, the Engineer Museum was able to purchase the patent model for the Army's first bridge. From 1836 to 1880 inventors were required to submit a model along with their patent application. The requirement limited the models to 12" x 12" x 12". During this period the Patent Office amassed a huge collection. Patents averaged 25,000 to 35,000 per year. Models were stored in various locations, awaiting Congress to legislate final disposition. In 1877, 87,000 models were destroyed in a fire, yet it would take until 1924 for the wheels of bureaucracy to create action. That year the remainder of the models were disposed of; most sold.

In 2009, while at a small militaria show in northern Ohio, I saw an exhibit on pre-vulcanized rubber. The exhibit had dozens of items made from Gutta-Percha and India Rubber.



One of the three pontons that make up the model. This ponton is stamped by the manufacture on one side and signed by the inventor on the other.

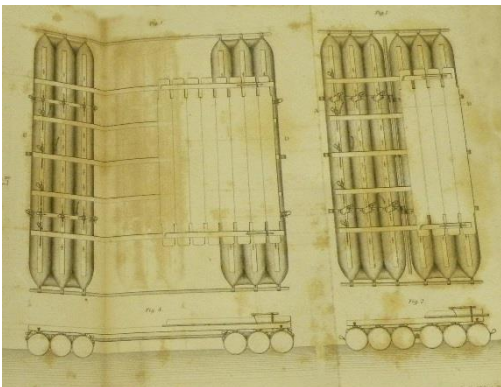
Contractors Support Museum Operations.

Budget cuts over the past four years have hit the four Museums on Fort Leonard Wood hard. Since 2010 a 50% percent reduction of staff has severely reduced services. The Fort Leonard Wood Museum has no staff members assigned. In late September, the Post hired contractors to provide museum services. The contractors man the visitor's desk, provide tours to the public, and perform minor housekeeping and maintenance. This allows the Museum staff to focus on our Soldier education mission, care of the artifacts, acquisitions, and improving the exhibits.

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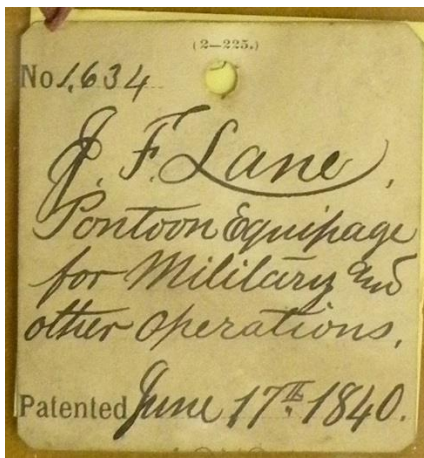
First Bridge

I was fascinated to learn of the military applications of these materials. The display had military buttons, combs, cases, cups, ponchos and waterproof headgear. The most amazing item was the patent model for the Army's first bridge and an 1849 Army Bridging Manual.



Left: Large, fold-out drawing from the 1849 Army Bridging Manual showing construction of the bridge.

I inquired about purchasing the model and manual. The owner replied that this was one of the top three items in his entire collection, and refused to sell. Over the next eight years discussions finally led to the sale.



Right: Original patent tag from the bridge model.

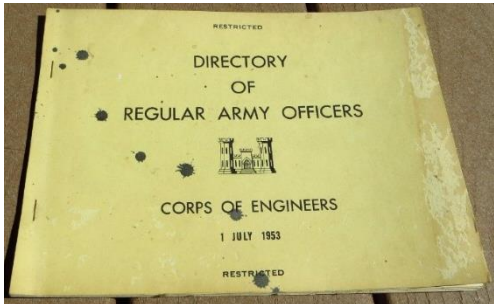
Top Ten Items on the Museum's Needs List.

Although over 100 archival items were added to the Museum's collection from the archival list over the past year, only one artifact from last year's list was acquired. The Museums greatest needs are listed below.

Artifacts

1. A Medal of Honor (MOH) for an Engineer. Sixteen MOH's are attributed to Engineers. The Engineer Museum has the MOH of Herman Wallace. Wilbur Colyer's MOH is in a Museum near Chicago. If you know of the location of any other Engineer MOH's please let me know.
2. Dive log from an Engineer diver (1973 or earlier).
3. A Nuclear Reactor Operator's badge with provenance.
4. Civil War Engineer's uniform.
5. Tools or small bridge components

Archival items

1. Engineer unit publications: unit newspapers, unit histories, and magazines published by Engineer units.
 2. Rosters and Directories of the COE or Engineer units.
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3. GTA cards or other training aids.
 4. MTOEs and any other documents showing number of soldier and type of equipment assigned to specific Engineer units.
 5. Programs from change of commands, retirements, or other ceremonies, if they contain bios or unit rosters.

And as always, if you see any Engineer items at an antique store, in your garage, or in a museum, please send me a picture troy.d.morgan12.civ@mail.mil or give me a call (573) 586-6720.