



The News Journal/GARY EMEIGH

One of two emplacements for 12-inch guns at Fort Saulsbury, a Slaughter Beach landmark.

## 'Forgotten' Fort Saulsbury gets a history at last

By MERIDITH EPSTEIN  
Staff reporter

SLAUGHTER BEACH — A retired Presbyterian pastor has written Fort Saulsbury its own history book.

An author's autograph session is set for 3 p.m. today at the Parson Thorne Mansion in Milford.

Author Hugh M. Miller of Slaughter Beach said the fort "stands there as a forgotten memorial."

His 24-page booklet, "Sussex County's Unique Memorial," details the life of the fort. From late 1942 to 1945, 3,000 German prisoners of war passed through the fort.

Miller decided to write the booklet after speaking at a meeting of the Capt. Jonathan Caldwell Chapter of the National Society Daughters of the American Revolution. "I realized then that it was an unknown thing," he said.



He said he hasn't been able to find any map noting the fort, on the south side of Delaware 36 just west of Slaughter Beach.

The fort was erected in 1917 by the Army as a coastal defense and named after Willard Saulsbury, a U.S. senator from Delaware from 1859-71.

The fort remained active until 1946. Sigmund F. and Theodore P. Kendzierski bought the fort the following year for \$12,000 as surplus government property.

The state, too, recently recognized the fort's historical importance. The fort received a Delaware historical marker, dedicated April 6.

Men who had served at the fort, some interviewed by Miller, returned to the site for the ceremony. Miller said he spent about two years researching the fort, and he still is.

"I'd like to have a booklet of just pictures," he said.

Aside from serving as pastor of First Memorial Presbyterian Church in Dover, N.J., Miller served two terms as chairman of the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel in Washington, D.C.

He and his wife, Minerva, moved to Slaughter Beach in 1981, after spending many summers there.

Catherine Holcombe, a trustee for the Milford Historical Society, said the booklet is the first publication about the fort available to the public.

The booklets cost \$3, with proceeds going to the restoration fund for the Thorne Mansion, an 18th century plantation that belonged to the Rev. Sydenham Thorne, co-founder of Milford. The historical society now owns the mansion.

"Two younger men have funded it [the booklet] in memory of their father who served at the fort during World War II," Holcombe said.

Milford residents David and William Kenton financed the booklet in memory of William K. Kenton Sr., their father, who served at the fort from 1941 to 1942.

Mail orders of the booklet, at \$3.75, are available from Virginia Glenn, 419 Kings Highway, Milford 19963.

# For Sale — 2-bunkr. fort, bomprf., w/gun emlemnts.

On 163 acres of farmland near Slaughter Beach

By PHIL MILFORD  
Staff reporter

SLAUGHTER BEACH — It's a fixer-upper of sorts.

There a fort for sale in Sussex County, complete with bombproof bunkers, powder magazines and gun emplacements.

The owners of Fort Saulsbury, home to 1,000 German prisoners of war during World War II, are looking for a buyer.

The 163-acre property, mostly farmland, was recently provided with a Delaware historical marker that tells the story of the 74-year-old fort, originally part of the coastal defense network during World War I.

The site is owned by Sigmund F. and Theodore P. Kendzierski, who bought it as surplus government property in 1947 for \$12,000. Sigmund's son, Gerald L., lives with his family in a farmhouse at the fort.

"It's not listed with a real estate agent, but it's for sale," said Gerald Kendzierski, a Milford salvage dealer. No price has been determined for the land, but Kendzierski said "They'd like to sell the whole thing" and not the fort separately.

The family wouldn't mind selling to the state, but Kendzierski said there haven't been any offers from Dover.

The fort, enclosed by a high, tree-flanked dirt berm, is on the south side of

Delaware 36, just west of Slaughter Beach.

The historical marker was dedicated last month, sponsored in part by the Capt. Jonathan Caldwell Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, said project coordinator Betty Homan of Milford.

She said at least one former German prisoner of war attended, anonymously, and 14 Army veterans, "who hadn't seen each other in about 50 years," came from surrounding states to join about 200 people at the ceremony.

The marker "is at the old entrance to the fort," adjacent to an open field some distance away.

Inside the fort, "there are two bunkers, 75 to 100 feet apart," said Homan. "You can walk between them. One is in a little disrepair. We toured one. Inside there are living quarters, with cells and bars."

Homan said that at one time "there was a brass circular staircase for gunners to climb up to the heavy gun emplacements," but the fixtures were later scrapped.

While the fort is on private property that sports a "beware of the dog" sign, the Kendzierskis will permit people to tour the fort by appointment.

Homan and Kendzierski would both like to see the fort open to the public, but that would only be possible if the state



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One of two emplacements for 12-inch guns at Fort Saulsbury near Slaughter Beach.



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bought it.

A booklet about the fort, written by Dr. Hugh H. Miller, a retired minister, will soon be available from the Milford Historical Society, Homan said. According to Miller's research, Homan said, up to 300 prisoners at a time were kept at the fort.

It has also been used to process chickens and to store pickles. In 1978, neighbors raised a storm of protest when the site was suggested as a possible base for offshore oil drilling equipment.

The new marker explains that the fort was built by the Army in 1917 and named after Willard Saulsbury, a U.S. senator from Delaware from 1859 to 1871.

There were two gun batteries, each

with a pair of powerful 12-inch guns capable of bombarding ships in the nearby Delaware Bay.

The guns were removed during World War II, and the fort became a camp for prisoners of war, who worked on local farms. The fort was deactivated in 1946.