

# National Guard to inspect old Camp McQuaide site

New Brighton Middle School sits on piece of Capitola history

By TOVIN LAPAN

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CAPITOLA — In 1928 Capitola residents, channeling their best “not in my backyard” attitudes, protested against military training at Camp McQuaide, where New Brighton Middle School, a small park and homes stand today.

Local residents complained the large artillery guns the National Guard’s 250th Coastal Artillery Regiment used for practice for two weeks every year caused erosion on the cliffs and disturbed their chick-

ens, preventing them from laying eggs.

That history came up recently when the California Army National Guard announced it would be inspecting former sites where munitions exercises took place.

The land is now heavily developed, and the National Guard does not expect to find anything of note, said the National Guard’s Chris Markowski.

“We are doing the due diligence and inspecting all of the sites, but we do not expect to find anything dangerous at the

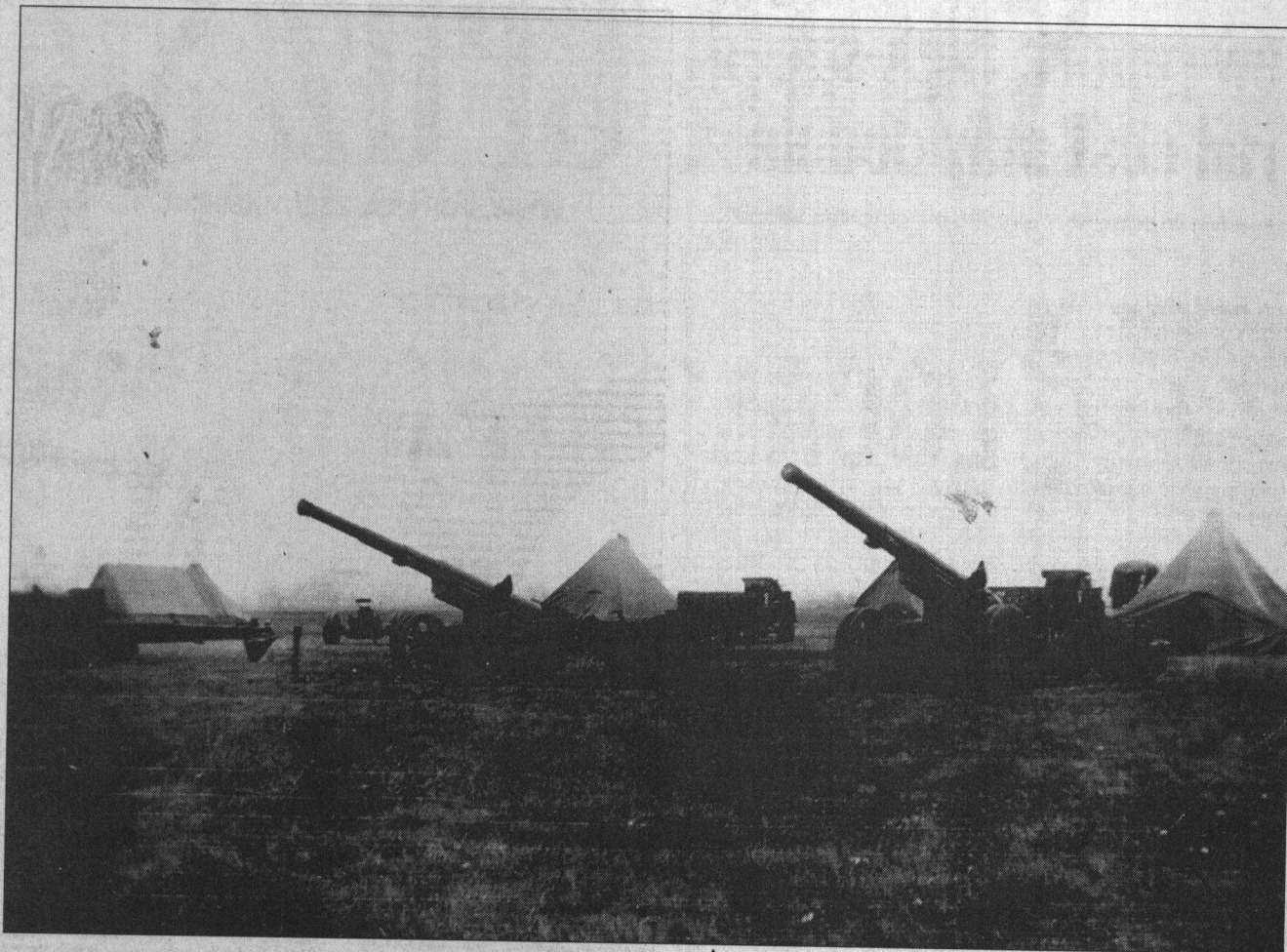
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In a photo from 1928, soldiers in the National Guard’s 250th Coastal Artillery pose at Capitola’s Camp McQuaide, now home to New Brighton Middle School. The California Army National Guard will inspect the site soon for old munitions.

CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



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CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The large artillery cannons soldiers in the National Guard’s 250th Coastal Artillery used to practice coastal defense at Capitola’s Camp McQuaide, where New Brighton Middle School stands today, are seen in a 1934 photo. The state’s National Guard will inspect the site for old munitions.

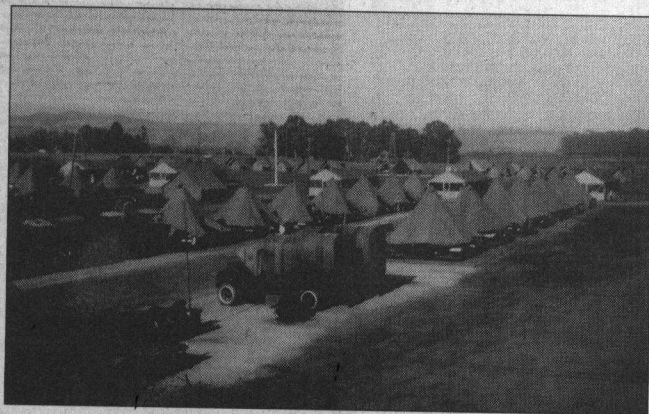
## MCQUAIDE

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Capitola site,” he said. “On land they mostly did small arms practice, and they did fire artillery into the bay, but they were non-explosive projectiles.”

The National Guard is responsible for 14 sites across the state, but the U.S. Department of Defense has a list of nearly 200 current and former sites in California that are part of the federal Military Munitions Response Program started in 2002. Markowski said the National Guard inspections will start Sept. 23 and will take a few months to complete. No specific date has been set for the visit to Capitola, and the final report will be made available in a yet to be determined local library.

The campsite will be inspected first. In a second phase the inspectors will survey what was left in the bay from artillery practice, and may retrieve old munitions.



CAPITOLA HISTORICAL MUSEUM/CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Capitola’s Camp McQuaide is seen in an undated photo taken around 1930. The National Guard’s 250th Coastal Artillery practiced coastal defense there from 1926 to 1938. Today, New Brighton Middle School stands on the site.

Camp McQuaide opened in Capitola in 1926 as a coastal defense training facility on land owned by prominent developer Frederick Hihn. At that time Capitola had a population of about 200, Capitola historian Carolyn Swift said, and the summer arrival of the regiment easily doubled the population.

“The military would warn residents to open their win-

dows because the vibrations from the artillery practice would break them,” Swift said.

It was not all bad though. Children would run to the shore when the regiment would fire off the cliffs at targets attached to boats and planes. The children would collect the scraps of silk from the obliterated targets and bring them home to their

mothers, Swift said.

In 1938 the residents won, and the camp was moved south to the current site of Monterey Bay Academy, a private Christian high school. That site is not being handled by the National Guard and was inspected previously.

In the late 1930s the Camp McQuaide site was used for the Civilian Conservation Corps, and in 1942 the camp was used briefly by the African American 54th Coast Artillery Regiment. In 1952 Capitola Elementary was founded where the camp barracks once stood.

New Brighton Middle School Principal Rob Martin said, during recent construction, crews were on the lookout for any remnants of the camp, but found nothing.

“We do share the story of how this used to be a base and an airstrip,” Martin said, referring to the old Capitola Airport that was adjacent to Camp McQuaide. “Our humanities teachers cover the camp when they discuss local history.”