Building 9115 Moved to InfoAge Campus

Ray Chase

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Through the cooperation of Brookdale Community College, the Frank Lurch Demolition contractor and InfoAge, building 9115 that formerly was located at the far south side of the Camp Evans site was relocated on Tuesday July 15th to a vacant former Quonset hut pad across the road from the end of building 9036A. This building was located on the Brookdale College portion of Camp Evans and was not part of the original InfoAge allotment. What is the significance of this event? As reported in this newsletter last year, Bldg. 9115 was designated "House HO-5" by the Army as the shelter and antenna base for the SCR-271 long range air search radar. The SCR-271 is one of the fixed location versions of the mobile SCR-270, the second radar developed by the Army. It was the type of radar sited at Pearl Harbor on December 7th 1941 that detected the approaching Japanese invading flight at least 20 minutes before the attack started. Unfortunately the warning went unheeded due to lack of a functioning command and control system. Building 9115 at Camp Evans dates back to the WWII period and probably was used for continued development of the SCR-270 family of radars. I have a 1943 Army Technical Manual that describes and pictures a series of antenna control modifications to this radar and it is very conceivable that the pictures in this TM were taken inside this very building. This 20 x 20 foot shelter is deceiving in its appearance as it serves as the base for a 40 foot antenna tower yet the interior has a clear 400 square foot area to accommodate the units of the

The SCR-271 Radar Shelter at its new location.
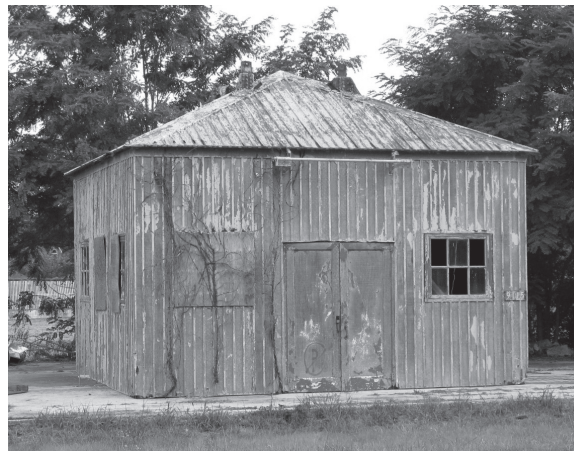

1943 Illustration of the SCR-271 Radar & Shelter.

radar equipment. The roof peak area has massive support beams that serve to transition from the beams around the internal periphery of the structure to the three foot square mast that was protruding from its roof. The demolition company did not appreciate the weight of this building and had to bring in a special crane that could handle its heft. Fortunately the move was handled well and 9115 is now emplaced at its new location as part of the InfoAge Campus.
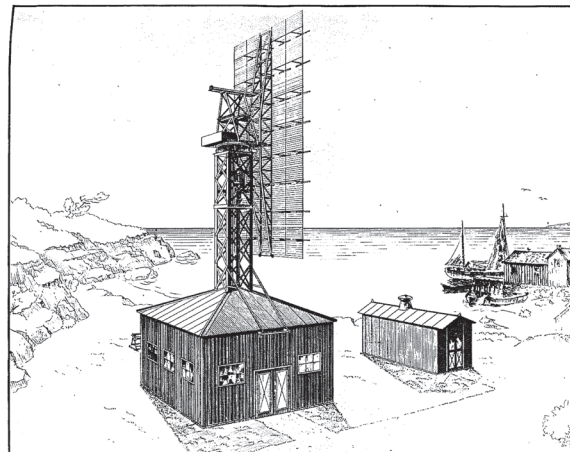
Some months ago Frank Lurch helped us remove some of the antenna control equipment that was still in the hut and that is now stored away pending its reinstallation. Unfortunately that was all the equipment that remained in the building; the basic radar units were removed many years ago. As can be seen in the pictures, the Army cut off and removed the antenna tower at its exit point at the top of the roof. Last year several work days were spent removing other debris from the hut and earlier this year an energetic group of youth volunteers helped us greatly by clearing the old Quonset hut pad of overgrown vegetation so that its new foundation was ready. We have good reason to believe that this building is the last surviving SCR-271 shelter in existence. Now our task is to preserve it for the future. We do have detail interior plans of how the rest of the SCR-271 radar modules were configured and it will not be too difficult to create mock-ups of them. This is clearly an important asset to our campus and its historic displays.

Computer Museum MARCHing to the Future

Evan Koblentz

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InfoAge's computer museum, operated by the Mid-Atlantic Retro Computing Hobbyists (MARCH), saw an impressive variety of new exhibits so far in 2014. MARCH itself is also evolving in exciting new ways.

The group's museum is located in four former office rooms of building 9032 section C. It totals approximately 1,400 square feet of mainframes, minicomputers, and microcomputers, with about half of the systems restored and operational.

Until recently the museum had computers from the 1980s, 1970s, and 1960s. That changed this past spring when MARCH took in a Bendix G-15 vacuum tube computer from the 1950s! Computers of that vintage typically filled large rooms, but the G-15 is one of the smallest of its kind, taking no more space than a double-wide refrigerator and a side desk.

Operators of a Bendix G-15 vacuum tube computer in the late 1950s. One such computer is now on display at InfoAge.

This particular computer came with a mystery: why is the Bendix system stamped with a Control Data label? Bendix made 500 units of the G-15, unchanged, from 1956-1964. Control Data acquired the Bendix company in 1963. MARCH therefore deduced this G-15 was one of the last systems. However, the group then found documented proof that this G-15 is serial number three! It was originally shipped on an eight-year lease and rebadged by Control Data shortly after its return. Another twist: serial number one never left Bendix and serial number two went to the Army, making this third unit the very first one Bendix sold commercially. We believe the customer was a civil engineering firm in the Washington DC region.

MARCH is currently negotiating with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to acquire another computer from the 1950s. Details are not yet public, but this system is very historic and like nothing else in our collection.

It's said that good things happen in threes so perhaps still another 1950s computer may find its way into the museum one of these days. Contact us if you know of anything in the wild...

On the business side, MARCH turns ten years old as of Jan. 1, 2015, and club officials are working hard to transform the simple computer club into a federal 501(c)3 non-profit. We would also like to be open more hours and so we need more tour guides. If you or someone you know loves computers, digs history, and is awesome in dealing with the general public, then please contact us about this opportunity.

An event announcement: MARCH's flagship public convention, the Vintage Computer Festival East, will be held again on April 17-19, 2015 at the museum. Several changes are planned from the "9.1" event held earlier this year: more technical classes on Friday, fewer historical lectures, longer exhibit hall hours, and a special 50th birthday party for the DEC PDP-8 minicomputer.

MARCH and its members collect, restore, and exhibit vintage computing technology from the 1940s-1980. We charge no dues and welcome new members. We're also interested in donations, however, you must contact us before delivering anything. Please contact club president Evan Koblentz at evank@midatlanticretro.org or call (646) 546-9999. We're also on Facebook (njcomputermuseum) and Twitter (@march_museum).

Another Radar Saga

Ray Chase

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To preserve our heritage as the home of "Army Radar", we are always on the lookout for historic artifacts that will enhance our museum displays. And so it began on March 10th this year when I spied a message on the Milsurplus internet reflector; a site populated by military electronics aficionados.

An amateur radio operator in North Carolina, Todd, KA1KAQ was hoping to clear some space in his garage of accumulated WWII equipment that he no longer had a need for. Included was a BC-406A unit. Todd had researched this piece and found that it is one of the two receivers for the SCR-268 radar, the U.S. Army's first radar.

Now we already have one BC-406A in our radar room and adding a second would move us on towards the goal of acquiring as many bits and pieces of a complete SCR-268 radar system that we can amass for our display. I immediately contacted Todd and told him how we would be delighted to acquire that unit but the location was 450 miles away and although the unit was only a little bit over a cubic foot in size, it weighs in at just about 100 pounds so shipping would be a problem. Todd thought it would be great for it to go to a museum and agreed to donate it. He then verified our credentials to insure that I was not an opportunist individual trying to get a freebie.

As an aside, Todd's wife, who is a school principal and has a masters degree in U.S. History was pleased that Todd saved it for over 20 years so that it would find a good home in a historical museum. But then, we had to solve the

John Dilkes (left) and Al Klase (right) with the BC-406A.

transportation problem. Well, I knew that there was an upcoming annual radio convention in Charlotte, NC on March 20 to 22 that our friend John Dilks of Egg Harbor, NJ would be attending so a deal was struck that Todd would meet with John at a convenient location in NC and transfer the unit to him. John could not lift the unit himself but he had space in his vehicle so Todd loaded it in.

The plan was to bring it to InfoAge as soon as John got back from NC where we would offload it. Well things did not work out as planned. As soon as John got back to his home in Egg Harbor his wagon was needed for urgent family needs so his son unloaded the receiver at John's place.

April came and then May and so on and there just did not seem to be an opportunity with the right combination of people to get the receiver back into John's vehicle and complete the final leg of the 450 mile trek. Then on the 16th of July, seemingly all the planets were in the correct alignment so John got the receiver reloaded and brought it to InfoAge.

Finally five months from the initial contact the BC-604A is in our hands and it gives InfoAge a full complement of receivers for our SCR-268 display. This BC-406A is in remarkably good condition for its age and has not been modified along the way as happens to many items of surplus WWII electronics items. Many thanks to Todd in NC, John Dilks in NJ and all those who helped along the way to recover this important artifact and bring it home to InfoAge at Camp Evans.

The Newsletter of InfoAge
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Save The Dates

InfoAge Annual Wall Of Honor Dinner
Saturday, September 20, 2014
7PM to 11PM
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

WWII Presentation
Sunday, September 21, 2014
1PM to 4PM
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

Hamfest/Convention
Saturday, September 27, 2014
7AM to 1PM
2300 Marconi Road, Wall

Camp Evans Base Of Terror
Fridays & Saturdays
Ocobter 3, 4, 10, 11, 17, 18, 24, 25, 31, 2014
7PM to 11PM
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

Jersery Shore Chamber Of Commerce
Golden Osprey Awards Dinner
Thursday, Ocobter 16, 2014
6PM to 9PM
Jumping Brook Golf Club, Neptune

Fallout Shelter Reopening
Saturday & Sunday
Ocobter 18-19, 2014
1PM to 5PM
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

Holiday Spectacular & Train Show
Saturdays & Sundays
December 6, 7, 13, 14, 20, 21, 2014
Noon to 6PM
2201 Marconi Road, Wall

For more information about these events, such as admission costs and times,
call 732-280-3000 *or visit us online at* ***www.infoage.org***.