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Deal Test Site becoming fossil

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OCEAN TOWNSHIP — The Deal Test Site, being eyed as a historical landmark and municipal park, may become a fossil before the township is able to get money for the project.

The township has been trying for several years to get state Green Acres funding to convert the former U.S. Army communications center into a recreation park.

While the state considers the Deal Test Site a prime candidate for inclusion in both the national and state registers of historic places, the township council has opposed the plan to include the entire site in the two registers.

The council would be willing to recommend certain structures on the site for the registers, according to Gregory C. Fehrenbach, township manager.

"Placement on the registers limits what you can do on the site. We wouldn't want to have to go to the state every time we want to repair a window. At this point we have no plans to destroy any of the buildings," he said.

But the state Department of Environmental Protection's Department of Cultural Affairs wants to ensure that anything of archaeological value on the site is preserved, including both the buildings on the site, and whatever may be buried in the earth underneath.

State archeologists believe there may be a fossilized mastadon — a prehistoric, elephant-like beast — somewhere on the property, since some mastadon remains were found in a bog in Deal in 1824, according to Janet A. Fittipaldi, archeologist for the Green Acres program.

The site is also historically significant for developments in radio and communications technology. The first radar signals to be bounced off the moon were received there, and the Army Signal Corps used the site to track the initial signals from the Russian satellites Sputnik I and II.

In 1924, Western Electric used the station to relay the nation's first transcontinental telephone call to Santa Catalina Island off the coast of California.

The Deal Test Site is bounded by Deal Road on the south, Whalepond Road on the east, Dow Avenue on the north, and the Emanuel Terner estate on the west.

The township bought the property in 1974 from the Army for $1.9 million, with half the money coming from a DEP grant. The township has planned to turn the site into one of the largest and most diversified recreational parks in the county.

Plans for the park include a 10-acre lake in the central western portion of the site, which could be used for fishing, sailing and ice skating, and would also help alleviate flooding problems in that area, Fehrenbach said.

Other plans call for a horse stable, picnic grounds, an outdoor amphitheatre and trails for horseback riding and jogging. Fehrenbach said the state has also requested a museum be constructed on the site.

He said the township first applied for state funding for the project in 1978, but the application was received five days after the deadline, and was declared ineligible.

In 1980, a new application was submitted, and since that time, the township has been waiting for a status report from the DEP.

Robert Rusch, an administrator in the Green Acres program, said "there has been no significant change" in the status of the township's application for state funding. He said the department is awaiting feedback from archaeological surveys taken at the site.

"If they went ahead and developed it as originally proposed, there'd be some impact on certain archaeological and historic factors which have to be investigated before they receive our approval," he said. "We still have funds available for a good quality project and Ocean Township still has a good chance of being funded through our program."

Fehrenbach said that because the township applied for a grant in excess of $1 million ($1.1 million), it must comply with "certain archaeological and paleontological requirements."

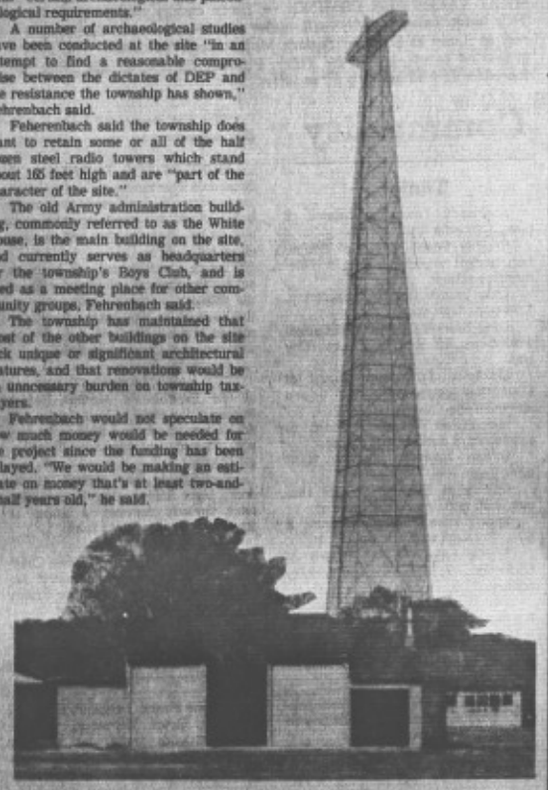
A number of archaeological studies have been conducted at the site "in an attempt to find a reasonable compromise between the dictates of DEP and the resistance the township has shown," Fehrenbach said.

Feherenbach said the township does want to retain some or all of the half dozen steel radio towers which stand about 165 feet high and are "part of the character of the site."

The old Army administration building, commonly referred to as the White House, is the main building on the site, and currently serves as headquarters for the township's Boys Club, and is used as a meeting place for other community groups, Fehrenbach said.

The township has maintained that most of the other buildings on the site lack unique or significant architectural features, and that renovations would be an unnecessary burden on township taxpayers.

Fehrenbach would not speculate on how much money would be needed for the project since the funding has been delayed. "We would be making an estimate on money that's at least two-and-a-half years old," he said.



s, classes help children live Colonial life

She conducted similar "enrichment" programs at the Carteret School, Bloomfield. She said she had no problem with the way history is taught, but she said she believed enrichment was as necessary to learning history as learning names and dates.

Mrs. Lewis said she wa[illegible] myth that life in Coloni[illegible]

"People fin[illegible]