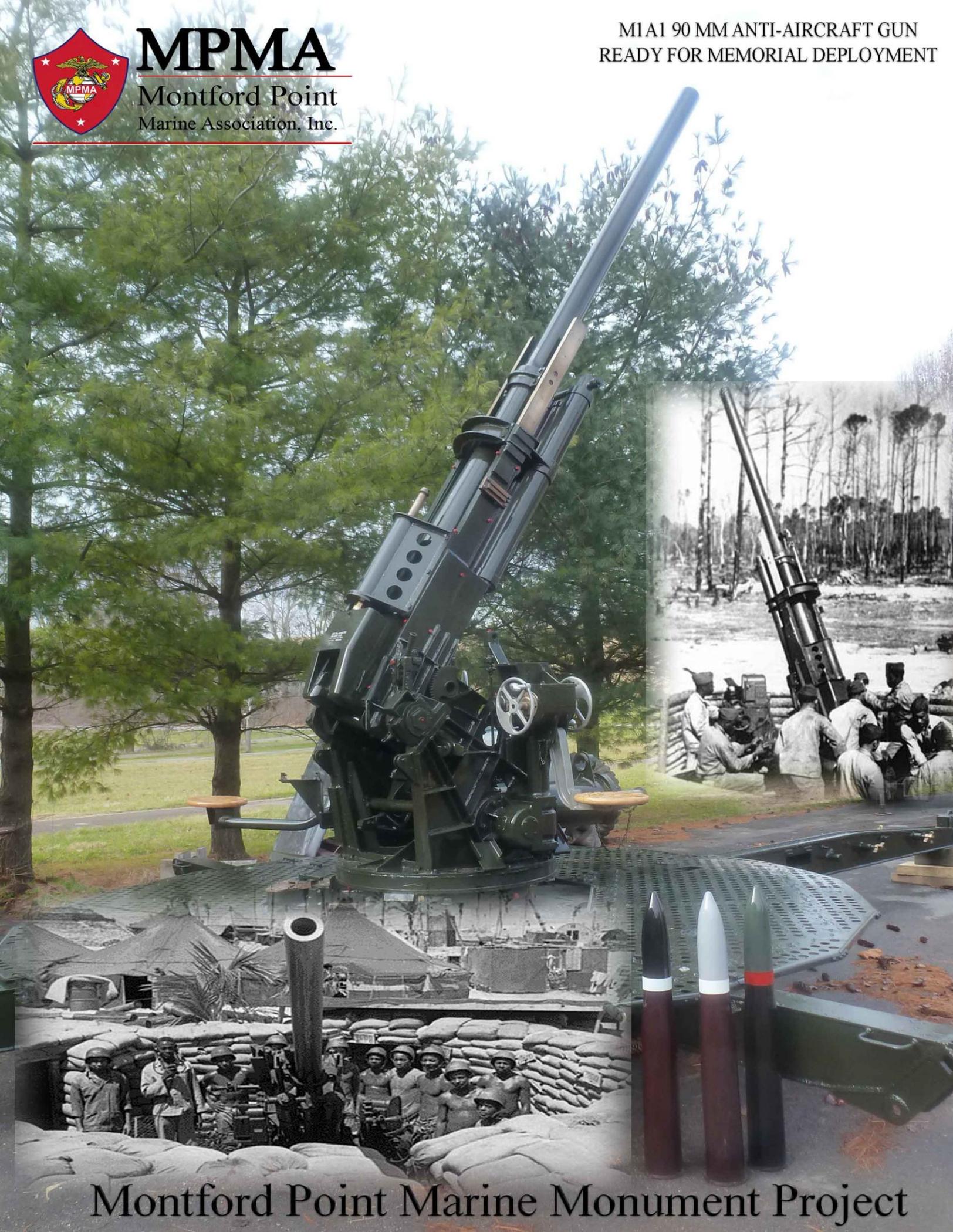




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Montford Point  
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MIA1 90 MM ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUN  
READY FOR MEMORIAL DEPLOYMENT



Montford Point Marine Monument Project

## Montford Point Marines welcome addition to museum

By Thomas Brennan, Jacksonville Daily News  
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CAMP JOHNSON — A 90 millimeter M1A1 anti-aircraft weapon system was delivered to the Montford Point Museum aboard Camp Johnson in Jacksonville during the early morning hours on Friday. Its resting place: “The Greasy Spoon,” which is the original Montford Point mess hall and home of the museum.

“This is a part of history,” said Montford Point Marine Norman Preston, 91, of Wallace. “Nobody would have ever believed this would be happening. To see the primary weapon we trained on come back home to hallowed ground is amazing — just outstanding.”

The 90 millimeter M1A1 anti-aircraft weapon system was the main weapon system used by the 51st and 52nd Defense Battalions from Camp Johnson from 1942 until 1946. The weapon weighs nearly 19,000 pounds and is almost 16 feet in length.

The M1A1 was the United States’ primary anti-aircraft weapon from early World War II into the 1950s. For Preston, its return to the original home of Montford Point, the segregated training ground for black Marines, recognizes the path the Montford Pointers paved.

“It’s a great feeling to be recognized this way,” said Preston, who was a military police officer aboard Camp Johnson from 1943 until 1945. “As the present day unfolds, we are so happy we can be a part of the next chapter of history. ...I hope it means a lot to the current Marines. Hopefully it symbolizes our struggle and hopefully they will respect that.”

The commanding officer of Camp Johnson, Col. Dutch Bertholf, said the anti-aircraft weapon is not only Montford Point history but Marine Corps history as well.

“It’s a tangible piece of history to help connect the present with the past,” said Bertholf, 47, of Orlando, Fla. “It helps make history real. You can touch and feel it.”

There are two aspects that make this event special, Bertholf said.

“First, it’s a real connection to Marine Corps history,” Bertholf said. “Second is the assimilation and breaking down of racial barriers by these Marines. It shows that African-Americans can and will serve this country well.”

Turner G. Blount, a “Hard Core Warrior” who served in World War II, Korea and Vietnam, said seeing the weapon system is truly outstanding and it brings him back to years past.

“I hope it teaches the current generation a lesson,” said Blount, 88. “I really think it should make them joyful and show them what we’ve been through. It fills me with pride that this generation is honoring our sacrifice.”

The museum’s acting director, Louise Greggs, said the future of the museum looks good and the addition of the anti-aircraft weapon is just one of the things they’ve got planned.

“We’re always looking to expand and highlight what we have,” said Greggs, 66. “As we expand, we will create spaces to exhibit artifacts we don’t even have out yet. ...But this weapon, it represents that era. The remaining Montford Pointers can relate to that when they see and hear about it.

“It’s a part of them.”



A 90mm M1A1 field gun is offloaded at the Montford Point Marines Museum aboard Camp Johnson Friday morning. It is the same gun used by the original Montford Point Marines who trained there in the early 1940s. John Althouse/Jacksonville Daily News