

## Shot and Shell Newsletter Collection, 1943-1961

**Repository:** Hingham Public Library  
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**Creator:** U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot of Hingham  
**Processed By:** Jennifer Williams. Finding aid completed in July of 2015.  
**Extent:** 3 Nonstandard Boxes  
**Access:** Open for research.

### Provenance

This collection was created by the U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot (USNAD) staff between 1943 and 1961. It was gifted to the Hingham Public Library by an anonymous donor.

### Historical Note

In 1906 the U.S. Navy felt that the ammunition storage facility in Chelsea, Mass. was no longer adequate for their needs. It was decided that it should be replaced and relocated, with a board of officers appointed to survey the New England coast for a suitable site. After an extensive search the board decided to create the new facility in the Hockley area of Hingham, on a protected coastal plain surrounded by hills.

The Navy purchased 697 acres of land in Hingham, as well as 208 acres in Weymouth, in order to build their new depot. In 1909 the first marine guards arrived, and by 1911 the barracks and utility buildings were fully functional. The depot was designed to meet the needs to the Boston and Portsmouth Naval Yards, storing and providing ammunition as needed for the North Atlantic fleet. This included small arms ammunition, machine gun bullets, flares, incendiaries, irritants, and grenades.

With the start of World War I the number of guards at the depot increased dramatically, as did job opportunities and wages for civilians. Many townspeople left their positions in local businesses to work there, and the town saw an influx of newcomers who had also obtained jobs at the depot. These workers helped to produce new ammunition and send it to surrounding naval sites. This state of affairs was maintained until the end of the war when many marines were discharged and most civilian workers were furloughed.

By the 1930s the depot had become somewhat decrepit and was in need of repairs. The Navy was able to hire carpenters, painters, and other workers to rehabilitate the facility, thanks to National Housing Act legislation passed as a result of the Great Depression.

However, it was not until the 1940s that the depot saw resurgence in both employment and importance. In 1941, the instability in Europe resulted in the depot receiving contracts worth several hundred million dollars. This required more workers as well as more space. The Navy therefore decided to create a seven square mile depot annex in the area that is now Wompatuck State Park. Approximately twenty-five homes were taken by eminent domain in order to provide

the Navy with the land needed to store high explosives in case of war. It would later be used to burn unneeded ammunitions.

In 1943, the military staff decided to publish a bi-weekly newsletter that would reach their expanding workforce. Entitled *Shot and Shell*, the purpose of the newsletter was to “provide a medium for the dissemination of information and news to the end that our jobs will be done even faster, more efficiently and accurately than in the past.” The newsletter allowed workers from different departments to provide news related to their jobs, families, and friends, while also offering military and civilian managers a place to discuss important national and local issues. The newsletter was produced until September of 1945 and was revived in August of 1951.

During and after World War II the depot retained a large number of civilian workers to produce, store, and ship ammunitions. However, by the late 1950s guided missiles and aircraft had largely replaced these materials in the field. In 1958 the Navy declared the depot and annex as surplus, which drastically reduced the number of jobs provided to civilians, federal money received by the town, and naval personnel living in the area. The depot and annex were officially closed in 1962.

### **Scope and Content Note**

This collection is composed of *Shot and Shell* newsletters created by the U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot (USNAD) in Hingham between 1943 and 1961. They contain poetry, short stories, editorials, letters, photographs, cartoons, articles, and columns regarding a variety of subjects pertinent to the USNAD employees. The topics discussed in the newsletters include safety regulations, employee contests, local sports schedules, departmental and employee news, social security benefits, ‘E’ bonds, and national news/events.

### **Arrangement**

This collection is arranged into the following series:

- Series I. *Shot and Shell* Newsletters, 1943-1961

#### **Series I. *Shot and Shell* Newsletters, 1943-1961**

##### **Boxes 1-3**

This series contains *Shot and Shell* newsletters which were created by the U.S. Naval Ammunition Depot (USNAD) staff in Hingham between 1943 and 1961. The contents of the issues include cartoons, photographs, regular columns and feature stories, editorials, letters to the editor, departmental and employee news, poetry, short stories, and recreational association audit reports.

Many of the subjects discussed within the newsletters focus on the daily lives and work of employees. Most departments had their own regular columns in which they could write any information related to the individuals who worked there. This included employee marriages, the births of children, the deaths of workers or their family members, the loss and gain of employees,

department projects and awards, as well as amusing incidents. There were also special articles which discussed such matters as safety tips for work and recreation, opportunities for employees to buy 'E' bonds, supervisors' reluctance to complete accident reports, various benefits available to workers, and contests sponsored by USNAD.

Feature stories in the newsletter focused on national and local issues affecting USNAD and its employees. This included the end of World War II, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the YMCA, the safety of hydrogen bomb testing, procedures to follow in the event of an attack on Hingham, the history of the town, holiday celebrations, and profiles on retiring and new military officers.