

# World Trade Center steel used across the country for 9/11 memorials

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By **Rebecca Forand/Gloucester County Times**

Brooklawn Police Captain Steven Saymon remembers a drizzly, gray day ten years ago when he left the World Trade Center disaster site.

“All the ash and the dust the rain started washing off the leaves of the trees,” he said. “It was like a sign of hope.”

Saymon had spent four days pulling remains from the rubble of the Twin Towers.

A decade later, Saymon wanted to visit the site again — as he did on the first anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks — but after weeks of trying to contact the office of Mayor Michael Bloomberg without success, he decided to create a memorial of that fateful day a little closer to home.

“As part of my emotional healing, I wanted to go back for the tenth anniversary,” he said. “But on or about May 3, 2011, I figured I could take a hint. I’m not going to be invited. So I’m going to build my own.”

Saymon then did what hundreds of people have done in the past few years, he began contacting the individuals responsible for artifacts from the Sept. 11 attacks.

There are currently 9/11 memorials in all 50 states and in seven foreign countries that incorporate a piece of World Trade Center steel, and the people responsible for that steel have worked hard to make sure all requests have been honored, but it is not an easy process.

The steel — some burnt and twisted, some broken and chipped — is kept under the authority of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and stored in an airplane hangar at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

“We give it out on a first come, first served basis,” said Steve Coleman, a spokesman for the Port Authority. “People send us proposals and the main requirement we have is it is used for some type of memorial or public display.”

The steel is still considered part of a crime scene, so its removal from the hangar not only has to go through the Port Authority, it also has to be approved by a federal judge or by the FBI.

“It was fairly involved,” said Tim Chell, mayor of Mantua Township, where a 9/11 memorial has existed since 2002. “We had to make a request to the federal government and we had to get approval from the FBI.”



Staff photo by Lori M. Nichols Brooklawn Police Chief Steven Saymon describes how the light that shines on the World Trade Center steel beam gives the effect of the Twin Towers at the new Brooklawn 9/11 Memorial.

Once approved, a city, library, police or fire department, school or any other entity that is interested in building a memorial is awarded a piece of steel. Port Authority officials work with the entity to attempt to get the best shape and size of steel to fit the design.

“The smallest piece we’ve given out was six inches and the largest was about 53 feet,” Coleman said. “The biggest number of pieces went to Coatsville, Pa., the home of Lukens Steel, which helped to manufacture the steel that went into the original Twin Towers.”

There is no cost to the individuals except for transporting the steel from New York to their hometowns.

“The ones around the country have been picked up and taken out by tractor trailers,” Coleman said. “We’ve got firemen and policemen driving from all parts of middle America.”

For Brooklawn’s site — which will be opened to the public and dedicated on Sunday — Saymon was awarded a piece of steel from the World Trade Center, but he also wanted to make sure the Pentagon and the United Airlines Flight 93 crash were not left out, therefore, he had more work to do and more people to contact.

“Lest we not forget the two other disaster sites,” he said.

The memorial now includes a limestone brick from the Pentagon — with chips and damage from the plane’s hit — and soil and rocks from the Flight 93 crash area near Shanksville, Pa.

In order to get these items, federal employees at the Pentagon and the curator at the Flight 93 memorial museum had to be contacted.

Once Saymon picked these up, he loaded them onto a flatbed truck and began the trip to JFK, where he and other volunteers from the site picked up an 8,438-pound beam from the World Trade Center.

“When they brought out that piece of steel I was overcome,” Saymon said. “It was the only procession I’m aware of with artifacts from all three disaster sites.”

The three items were placed at Brooklawn’s new memorial site — a brick pentagon-shaped structure with a walkway that measures 9 feet by 11 inches — surrounded by red, white and blue mums. At each of the five points, time capsules will be placed filled with mementos, photos and notes given by residents or visitors to the site on its opening day.

As time passes, more people have become determined to build memorials close to their homes to remind the world that the events of Sept. 11 affected everyone in America, not just those in New York, Washington DC and Shanksville, Pa.

The Mantua Township memorial was installed just one year after the attacks, in part to honor John Rodak — a Mantua resident who died in the Towers — and in part to give everyone a place to think.

“We call it a place of reflection, and it does give you a chance to reflect,” Chell said.

And the new Brooklawn memorial will serve the same purpose.

“Anyone that seeks and desires freedom, wherever they are from, can come here,” Saymon said. “Eight miles and 10 minutes away is the Liberty Bell. These are artifacts that physically show the fight we go through and have gone through to keep our freedom.”