

Today the San Francisco premises are allocated to the Triple-A Shipyard, Hunters Point Division.

The Navy Radiological Laboratory was established at Hunters Point in 1946 because of a mid-twentieth century need following the birth of the nuclear age. It was specifically established in connection with the decontamination of target ships used in the first peacetime atomic tests at Bikini Atoll. In the years that followed, over 600 people, both civilian and military, were involved in the research operations. Because of funding cuts, it was disestablished on 3 November 1969. The last commanding officer was Capt. Theodore C. Fick, USN, who was responsible for the final closure of the facility.

Other activities at Hunters Point are: Hunters Point Surface Launch Test Complex; Navy Printing and Publications Service Office; and Planning and Engineering for Repair and Alterations for Combat Support Ships (PERA) (CSS).

### Western Division, Naval Facilities Engineering Command

The Western Division, (WESTDIV), Naval Engineering Command, is located in San Bruno, twelve miles south of San Francisco. It is one of six engineering field divisions responsible for the planning, design, construction, and facilities management support of Navy shore activities within a geographical assignment. WESTDIV serves the Eleventh and Thirteenth Naval Districts, which includes all naval and Marine Corps activities in nine western states and Alaska. Serving over 150 activities, WESTDIV is the largest field division of the Naval Facilities Engineering Command.

Formerly the District Public Works Office, Twelfth Naval District, WESTDIV originated from its forebearers, the Public Works Offices at Mare Island and San Diego. The headquarters were moved from San Francisco to San Bruno in 1952.

WESTDIV employs approximately 1,160 civilian and sixty-six military personnel, primarily engineers. Of this number, 771 are located in San Bruno and 348 in twenty-seven field offices located in western states from Yuma, Ariz. (q.v.), to Adak, Alaska (q.v.). The total annual payroll is about \$28 million.

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SUE LEMMON

### Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, Calif., 1953-

Mare Island is located on San Francisco Bay thirty-five miles northeast of San Francisco. Its recorded history began with Don Perez de Ayala, the first European

to see it. While engaged in an exploratory expedition on His Spanish Majesty's Ship *San Carlos* on 5 August 1775, he gave it its original name, Isla Plana (flat island).

Mare Island's second historical figure is Mariano Guadalupe Vallejo, soldier, colonizer, and statesman. More than any other individual in California, he was responsible for the smooth transition of government from Mexico to the United States. It was he who renamed Isla Plana "Isla de la Yegua" (island of the mare) after the white mare belonging to his wife swam over to the island in the mid-1830s.

After the end of the Mexican War, thoughts in Washington turned to the development of the newly acquired territory of California. On 2 December 1851, President Millard Fillmore recommended the establishment of a navy yard on the Pacific coast. A board headed by Commo. John D. Sloat selected Mare Island, and 956 acres were purchased on 4 January 1853 for \$83,491. Through land reclamation projects and grants, the property has grown to 2,626 acres of hard land and an additional 1,891 acres of tidelands. While the shipyard is its only continuous occupant since 1854, Mare Island has been the location of many smaller activities over the years.

Comdr. David G. Farragut took command of Mare Island on 16 September 1854 and began to construct navy yard facilities. During its long life, the shipyard has built 513 craft, from the wooden paddle-wheel steamer *Saginaw* in 1858 to nuclear-powered ballistic submarines. The yard also built the first radio installation on the Pacific Coast; converted the first Navy ship to burn fuel oil; built the first aircraft landing deck in the Navy on the armored cruiser *Pennsylvania*; built the first electrically propelled ship, *Jupiter*; and designed and built the Navy's first guided missile submarine, the *Grayback*.

History records Mare Island's small role in the Civil War; in the Spanish-American War it fitted out many of the warships that, under Adm. George Dewey, swept the Spanish from the Philippines. World War I also saw many records broken, including the launching of the destroyer *Ward* in seventeen and a half days from keel laying.

During World War II the shipyard repaired and returned to the battle line 1,227 ships of all types, including ships of the Danish, Swedish, British, French, and Soviet fleets. During this period the yard also built 391 new ships. The employment reached a peak of 41,053 in the latter stages of World War II.

The shipyard ushered in its second century of service by embarking upon an intensive training program to qualify its engineers and artisans in the application of nuclear power to ship propulsion. Since 1958 it has built seventeen nuclear-powered submarines, including seven Fleet Ballistic Missile types.

In an ill-fated merger, the shipyards at Mare Island and San Francisco (Hunters Point) were merged as San Francisco Bay Naval Shipyard on 11 May 1965, with headquarters at Mare Island. The expected financial savings did not result, and the activity was disestablished on 31 January 1970 and replaced by two separate shipyards as before. (Hunters Point was subsequently closed on 30 June 1974.)

Mare Island's principal mission today is to overhaul and refuel modern submarines. One of eight naval shipyards, it employs 10,000 civilian workers.

#### *Naval Ammunition Depot*

The first magazine at the Naval Ammunition Depot Mare Island was built in 1857 as part of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, under the command of Commander Farragut. The magazine, which still stands on the southern tip of the island, is constructed of hand-hewn sandstone.

Construction of that first magazine was the beginning of a steady expansion from a single ammunition storage facility to a full-fledged depot. Equipment was acquired to produce and renovate all calibers and types of naval gun ammunition from 20mm to 16-inch guns. During World War II the depot employed 1,796 civilians and 2,200 military personnel.

In 1942 NAD Mare Island became a part of the newly established Naval Magazine at Port Chicago; consolidation was completed on 23 December 1957. The Mare Island Annex is all that remains of the original Ammunition Depot.

#### *Marine Barracks*

The Marine Barracks at Mare Island is the oldest permanent Marine Corps installation on the West Coast, established in 1862 aboard the old USS *Independence*. The original barracks building was built in 1868 and stood until 1958, when it was torn down. The present barracks was constructed in 1917 and served as the first Marine Corps boot camp on the West Coast. It served as the primary training facility for West Coast Marines during World War I and was disestablished in 1923 when the boot camp moved to San Diego.

The present mission of the Marine Barracks is to provide perimeter security on Mare Island. A second mission is to provide rifle and pistol range facilities for Marine organizations ashore and afloat in the Bay Area.

#### *Observatory*

The arrival of the North Pacific Surveying Expedition at Mare Island on 24 October 1855 gave the yard its first observatory and view of an eclipse of the moon. Capt. John Rodgers sailed his ships *Vincennes*, *John Hancock*, and *Fenimore Cooper* to the yard after a survey and reconnaissance of the Bering Strait, the North Pacific, and China Seas. The ships had hardly anchored when Captain Rodgers had his observer on shore with instruments checking the eclipse, noted as "total at 10 P.M." by Commander Farragut.

The next day the expedition's astronomer established a temporary observatory on Dublin Hill, on the north end of the island.

An observatory building was constructed there in 1865 at a cost of \$1,700. It rose about 60 feet above the water, and over the years was variously called "Brooks Observatory," "Astronomical Building," and "Observatory for Navigation." It had a 5-inch equatorial refractor telescope and a retractable roof. In

early days it was used for time signal purposes and for overhauling and adjusting ships' chronometers.

The observatory operated under the direction of the internationally known scientist, Capt. T.J.J. See from 1903 until his retirement in 1930. The observatory was then closed, and the hill shoveled away to make room for a storehouse.

#### *Naval Hospital*

The medical history of Mare Island dates from the day the sloop-of-war USS *Warren* arrived; her medical officer, Assistant Surgeon John M. Browne, USN, became Mare Island's pioneer medical officer in 1854.

Medical facilities of the Navy Yard consisted of the sick bay of the *Warren*, from 18 September 1854 until relieved by the frigate USS *Independence* on 2 October 1857. The *Independence* served as station and receiving ship for the yard until 2 November 1862 and provided its entire medical facilities until 1863. In that year an old granary was moved to near the berth of the *Independence* and converted into a temporary hospital of twenty-four beds. This makeshift structure was used until 1870, when the first permanent hospital was completed, with Surgeon W. E. Taylor in command.

The new hospital, on the southern part of the island, was a brick structure situated part way up the slope of a hill facing the northeast. The hospital grounds consisted of 51 acres.

The first hospital, with a capacity of eighty beds, was used until 1898, when an earthquake so severely damaged the building that it was condemned and torn down. Congress appropriated the sum of \$100,000 for rebuilding, which was completed on 3 April 1900.

By 1912 the capacity of the hospital had increased to 220 beds. During World War I the erection of four H-type ward buildings and five single ward buildings increased the capacity by 1,000, in addition to which tents with wooden platforms provided cover for 500 more beds.

In the period between World Wars I and II many of the World War I temporary ward buildings were removed or converted to other uses. Modernization of the hospital started in 1928 with the construction of a five-story, L-shaped, reinforced concrete wing, extending to the northwest. By 1941 this wing was duplicated on the southeast side. In 1943 the hospital reached a capacity of 1,167 beds, and during World War II it reached a peak capacity of 2,281.

During World War II the hospital was designated as a diagnostic and treatment center for neuropsychiatric patients as well as the West Coast center for the care and rehabilitation of amputees.

Although the hospital was decommissioned in 1957, the Naval Regional Medical Center Oakland maintains two Branch Clinics on Mare Island, one for military personnel, and one to provide care to the civilian employees. With the exception of the military clinic, the buildings formerly used by the hospital are now occupied by the Combat Systems Technical Schools Command.

### *Naval Prison*

A naval prison was established at Mare Island about 1890. It was the only facility of its kind on the West Coast, and "No. 84," the building in which prisoners were housed, was a name recognized throughout the Navy.

Shortly after the turn of the century, a vocational program for prisoners was inaugurated that included dairy farming. It was a profitable enterprise, and for several years milk, cream, and cattle from the prison won blue ribbons at the California State Fair.

The prison existed until after World War II, when Building 84 became the location of the Print Shop, and a Retraining Command was established in Building 750. The Retraining Command was disestablished in 1953.

### *Naval Radio Station*

Beginning with a pigeon loft a couple of years before, the Naval Radio Station Mare Island was commissioned in April 1904. It served as a transmitter station to ships at sea as well as to shore commands in the Pacific.

In May 1904 the first radio message transmitted to the Pacific was sent from Mare Island to the hospital ship *Solace* as she steamed out through the Golden Gate. Contact was lost at seventy-five miles.

The station's mission during the early years was to provide the then new Marconi wireless circuits to fill the Navy's requirements in the San Francisco Bay area.

By 1915 Mare Island had built all of the radio stations that spanned the Pacific Coast from Point Loma at San Diego to the Pribilof Rocks in the Bering Sea, as well as the Lafayette Station at Bordeaux, France. In 1919 the Mare Island team went to Siberia to build the first station erected in Vladivostok.

In 1917 Naval Communication Station San Francisco moved its headquarters and receiver site from Mare Island to Yerba Buena Island; the transmitter site remained at Mare Island.

In 1965 a new transmitter site was built at Dixon, Calif., and the long-existent transmitter site at Mare Island was disestablished in 1966. All that remains at Mare Island today is a Navy Telecommunication Center.

### *Naval Security Group Activity Skaggs Island*

The Naval Security Group Activity at Skaggs Island, Sonoma County, is located west of Mare Island off State Route 37. It had its beginnings in 1941 when the Navy purchased 3,300 acres for the Naval Radio Station, San Francisco Receiving Unit. It has continued as an important West Coast naval facility through the years, and on 1 July 1962 was redesignated as Naval Security Group Activity Skaggs Island. Incoming messages from fleet and naval shore installations in the Pacific areas are received here.

The Skaggs Island installation is governed rigidly by security measures because of the unique nature of its operations. It provides communications, research and development, and support for air-sea rescue missions.

### *Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility*

Beginning in 1946 the Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility (also known as the Pacific Reserve Fleet, Mare Island Group) occupied the water area in Mare Island Straits between Sears Point Bridge and the Causeway. Its primary mission was the inactivation, security, maintenance, and activation of units assigned to this group, and it was composed principally of submarines and submarine tenders that were out of commission in reserve. The facility was closed in 1976.

### *Naval Electronic Systems Engineering Center Vallejo*

The Naval Electronic Systems Engineering Center Vallejo is located on the northern portion of Mare Island. Its mission is to provide electronics material support for systems and equipments for which the Naval Electronic Systems Command is assigned responsibility and to perform such other functions as may be directed by the Commander, Naval Electronic Systems Command.

Under the command of officers with such titles as Equipment Officer, Officer in Charge Wireless Telegraph Station, Pacific Coast Radio Officer, Electronics Officer, and Industrial Manager, people based at Mare Island have been engaged in shore electronics installation work since 1904.

The first installations were a group of spark radio telegraph installations scattered along the West Coast from San Diego to Alaska. A Pacific Coast group of Direction Finder networks was inaugurated in 1919.

In 1951 the Industrial Manager, USN, Twelfth Naval District, assumed responsibility for many electronic installations in the area. On 1 August 1966, the Secretary of the Navy Established the Naval Electronics Systems Command, Western Division, whose title was changed to the present Naval Electronics Systems Engineering Center Vallejo on 2 January 1974.

The center provides electronic engineering support in two broad categories. In the general geographical category, support is provided to all naval and Marine Corps activities in the thirteen northwest states. The second category of specialized worldwide support is uniquely assigned to Vallejo on the basis of special technology. The four major assignments in this special category are: satellite communication; navigational aids; Marine Corps electronics; and undersea acoustic research.

The engineering support in both categories spans an entire spectrum of electronic life cycle support. This support includes design, development, test and evaluation, acquisition, and installation of new systems. It also includes maintenance and material support to the fleet and in the field.

### *Naval Nuclear Power School*

The Naval Nuclear Power School was established in December 1958 to provide basic instruction for officers and enlisted men in the field of nuclear propulsion. In February 1977 it was consolidated, along with the school in Bainbridge, Md. (q.v.), into one new Nuclear Power School located in Orlando, Fla.

### Combat Systems Technical Schools Command

On 20 June 1962 the Naval Schools Command was established at Mare Island and located in the buildings formerly used by the Naval Hospital. Its purpose was to fulfill the requirement for a specialized training activity on the West Coast in which officers and enlisted personnel of the U.S. Navy and allied navies might be trained in the latest surface missile systems, combat data systems, and cryptographic equipment applicable to the combat ships of the nuclear-age Navy. In 1973 the name was changed to Combat Systems Technical Schools Command.

There are three major school components: Cryptographic Technical Maintenance School; the Surface Missile Systems School; and the Tactical Data Systems School.

### Naval Support Activity

The Naval Support Activity Mare Island was established in July 1971 to provide appropriate logistic support for activities and commands as assigned by the Chief of Naval Operations. The activity provides legal assistance, conducts religious services, furnishes berthing accommodations, offers family housing, messes, athletic and recreational facilities, and a multitude of other activities. It provides limited support to such agencies as the Navy Relief Society, U.S. Post Office, Mare Island Elementary School, and California Maritime Academy.

### Engineering Duty Officers' School

The Engineering Duty Officers' School, located in the Schools Command complex, began operations in September 1974. Its mission is to improve the professional proficiency of Engineering Duty Officers in the practical, nontheoretical aspects of the profession as related to the engineering requirements of the ship life cycle.

### U.S. Coast Guard Station Annex

The U.S. Coast Guard Station Annex Mare Island was established in June 1977 after transferring from Benicia. It has the responsibility of covering San Pablo Bay, Suisun Bay, Carquinez Straits, and tributaries. It is manned twenty-four hours a day, and the normal workload is from 500 to 550 search and rescue cases a year, with port security, law enforcement, and hazardous ship escorts.

The Coast Guard Reserve Unit and Coast Guard Auxiliary Unit take an active role in the operation of the Station and the area.

The following additional activities are also located at Mare Island:

Intra-Fleet Supply Support Operations Team (ISSOT)  
 Representative  
 Naval Audit Site  
 Naval Facilities Engineering Command Contracts

Naval Investigative Service Resident Agency Mare  
 Island  
 Naval Publications and Printing Service Branch Office  
 Naval Regional Dental Center Branch Facility  
 Naval Regional Medical Center Branch Clinic  
 Naval Reserve Center  
 Naval Sea Support Center Mare Island  
 Naval Ship Weapons System Engineering Station  
 Naval Weapons Station Concord, Mare Island Annex  
 Navy Campus  
 Navy Commissary Store Region Detachment Mare Island  
 Navy Tactical Data Systems School Development and  
 Evaluation Site  
 Navy Telecommunication Center  
 Pacific Fleet Support Operations Assistance  
 Program (SOAP) Team  
 Personnel Support Detachment Mare Island  
 Property Disposal Activity, Defense Supply Agency  
 Service Squadron Three  
 Special Boat Unit Eleven  
 Submarine Development Group One Detachment  
 Submarine Force Pacific Fleet Representative  
 Mare Island  
 U.S. Department of Energy, Naval Reactors Representative's Office (NRRO)  
 U.S. Navy Recruiting Aids Department

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