Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Washington Navy Yard

AND/OR COMMON: Washington Navy Yard

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Eighth and M Streets, SE. (Main Entrance) — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Washington — VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: District

STATE: D.C. — CODE: 11 — COUNTY: — CODE: 001

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
X DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	X MUSEUM
BUILDING(S)	PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	X GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
		NO	X MILITARY	OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: United States Government

STREET & NUMBER: Department of Defense, U.S. Navy, Pentagon

CITY, TOWN: Washington — VICINITY OF — STATE: D.C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER: 6th and D Streets, NW.

CITY, TOWN: Washington — STATE: D.C.

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: National Register of Historic Places

DATE: 1968; 1973 — X FEDERAL X STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: National Capital Planning Commission; National Register

CITY, TOWN: Washington — STATE: D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on the Anacostia River in the southeast section of the city, the Washington Navy Yard historic district covers approximately 42 acres and includes some 45 major historic structures as well as numerous small support buildings. The land on which they rest slopes gently upward from the river and except for the northeast one-third was created by landfill. Most of the structures date from the 19th century, but interspersed among them--chiefly on the eastern, western, and southern extremities--are several 20th-century buildings. These help preserve the symmetry of the district, and they blend harmoniously with the older edifices to represent more than 150 years of U.S. naval history. Immediately east of the district are other yard structures, most of which were erected in the 1920's and 1940's. Adjoining the district on the west are a group of yard buildings of World War II vintage. Currently these are being used by the General Services Administration.

One of the most striking features of the Washington Navy Yard is the Main Gate, designed by Benjamin Latrobe, architect of the original master plan of the yard. The gate provides entrance through a white-painted brick wall that parallels M Street, SE., the northernmost boundary of the yard. Situated just inside the wall and to the right of and in line with the gate is a row of white-painted brick officers' quarters erected between 1866 and 1900. Surrounded by residential planting and cast iron fences, these dwellings front on Warrington Avenue and range in style from asymmetrical Gothic Revival to Colonial Revival. To the left of the gate stands the Commandant's Quarters, one of the oldest structures in the yard. Directly in front of this residence is Leutze Park, a grassy area of about one block with displays of anchors, bells, and ordnance. Passing to the right of the park from the Main Gate to the Commandant's Office, which is situated about 450 feet from the waterfront, is two-block-long, tree-lined Dahlgren Avenue. It creates the north-south axis of the yard. Aside from the streets that form the eastern and western boundaries of the yard, only one other avenue--Patterson--extends north to south through the historic district. Only Warrington Avenue, at the north end of the district, extends east to west through the area. The result is a mazelike layout in the center of the district, where, in several instances, two or more two- and three-story brick industrial buildings have been linked. Similarly constructed in uniform scale, most of these edifices have gable roofs and three-bay-wide gable ends, and together they present attractive industrial streetscapes.

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Through the years many of the yard structures have been altered internally to meet the Navy's changing needs, but the overall external appearance of the historic district remains essentially that of a 19th century naval installation. Its gun factory having been closed in 1962, the Washington Navy Yard today serves as a major naval administrative center, houses the U.S. Navy Museum and the Navy Band, and maintains the President's yacht. The principal historic structures are described below. All are in good condition.

Material in HABC DC catalog conflicts, esp. in dates, with the descriptions below

Main Gate (building 2). Situated at the northern edge of the historic district, where Dahlgren Avenue intersects M Street, SE., this heavily stuccoed, brick structure is the principal entrance into the yard. Designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe, the gate was completed in 1804-5. Latrobe conceived of the edifice as a double gateway with north and south facades built 40 feet apart, connected by a double colonnade, and covered with a hipped roof. Flanking the gate to the east and the west were two single-story, brick guard lodges. To gain more space, the Navy added a second story to the guard lodges in 1823, and 7 years later the yard commandant had both the gate and the lodges painted white. In 1880-81 the Navy, again seeking additional space, knocked down the lodges, removed the gate roof, and constructed a large Marine barrack over and adjoining the east and west sides of the stately structure. The gate retained many of its original features, however. On the north facade these include a three-section opening divided by Doric columns and topped by a single entablature. The attached 105-foot-long, brick barrack is two stories high above the gate and three stories high on each side of the entrance. A Victorian melange of Classical and Italianate Styles, the barrack is gable roofed, white painted, and decorated on the north facade by three pedimented pavilions--one at the center and one at each end, and two four-story towers--each situated between two pavilions. Brick pilasters grace the second and third stories. Although it is generally agreed that the barrack addition spoiled the classic proportions of the gateway, the combined structures provide, nevertheless, a striking entrance to the navy yard.

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Commandant's Quarters (building A). This 2½-story, gable-roofed, white-painted brick residence is situated immediately east of the Main Gate and facing Leutze Park. The structure was erected about 1801 as part of the initial yard development, but the originally rectangular-shaped main block, which measures about 48 by 32 feet and has a three-bay-wide pedimented central pavilion, has received several additions. These include two service wings on the north side and a late-19th-century, one-story, enclosed porch and advanced porte cochere that mask the south and east sides. The house has a molded brick water table, a belt course, a modillion cornice with paired brackets, and pedimented gable ends with interior, four-flue, brick chimneys. The windows have splayed voussoir, flat-arched lintels with keystones. Sidelights and a semicircular, glazed fanlight transom surround the front door. Inside, the house has a central hall plan. The first floor contains a dining room, library, kitchen, and two parlors, while the second floor has four bedrooms. There are two chambers in the attic. The brick foundation walls and the first-story floor-joists and sub-flooring have been replaced, and the house appears to be in good condition. Nearby, to the east, stand two small support buildings (numbers 60 and 61) constructed in 1848.

Officers' Quarters (building B). Erected about 1800, this rectangular-shaped, 2½-story gable-roofed, white-painted brick structure may predate the navy yard. In any case, it occupies a prominent position east of and facing Leutze Park. The house has been extended twice to the north using the full height and width. This entire section measures 76 feet long and 24 feet deep. Two one-story service wings, totaling an additional 65 feet in length, were attached later to the same end. A continuous two-floor porch, variously enclosed by screen and glass, extends across the front of the main block. Three gabled dormers and three multiflued chimneys pierce the slate roof of this section. Windows resemble those in the Commandant's Quarters. The principal entrance to the main block is in the eighth bay from the south. A small entry hall leads to a rear hall that passes laterally through the rear of the house and provides access to four rooms arranged one deep across the front. Upstairs are four bedrooms.

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Officers' Duplex (building C-D). Three-storied and hip-roofed, this white-painted brick structure was erected in 1879. It is situated immediately west of the Main Gate and begins a row of officers' quarters that extends almost to the western boundary of the district. Resting behind a cast iron fence, the duplex has a raised basement, a two-story rear wing, a denticulated, boxed cornice with ornamental brackets and paneled frieze, and hooded one-over-one sash windows. Crossing the six-bay-wide front is a one-story porch with all but the two central bays glass enclosed. Balustraded steps lead to the open sections, where wood- and glass-paneled double doors open into the interior.

Officers' Triplex (building E-F-G). This gable-roofed, three-storied, white-painted brick structure was built in 1880. Six corbeled, multiflued, brick stacks sit atop its metal roof, which has close, richly decorated eaves. A partially enclosed porch crosses the main facade at the first-story level and shelters a raised basement. Two sets of balustraded steps provide access from the ground to the porch and the three entrances. Most windows are one-over-one sash and have stone sills and lintels. Three L-shaped ells connect to the rear of the structure.

Officers' Quarters (building H). Constructed in 1890, this asymmetrical structure resembles the Gothic Revival Style. The two-story, white-painted brick dwelling is basically L-shaped, has a combination gable and hip roof, and is graced by a two-story hexagonal bay at the south gable end. A glass-enclosed, one-story porch extends fully across the south side of the ell.

Officers' Triplex (building K-L-M). Erected in 1868 and enlarged during subsequent years, this three-story, hip-roofed, white-painted brick residence consists of a main block, rear ell, full-height hexagonal bay--attached to the front or south side, three-story brick addition at the southeast corner, three-story frame addition

(continued)

at the southwest corner, and a one-story frame addition on the west side at the rear. A denticulated cornice with paired brackets and paneled freize surrounds much of the structure along the top edge of the second floor. The roof cornice is boxed and without ornamentation. Several corbeled brick chimneys pierce the roof.

Officers' Duplex (building N-O). This two-story, hip-roofed, white-painted brick structure is situated on the southeast corner of Patterson and Warrington Avenues facing west. The building features a low hipped roof with several hipped dormers and a denticulated cornice. Since completion of the residence in 1866, there have been several additions, including two-story frame wings at both the north and south ends and one-story, enclosed porches that cross the front facade from each end three-fourths of the way toward the center.

Officers' Quarters (building R). Located at the western end of officers' row, this two-story, white-painted, Colonial Style, brick house was erected about 1890. It has a parapet-gabled roof, is five bays wide and two bays deep, and is decorated by a front roof pediment, modillions, and quoins. The entrance is sheltered by a one-bay-wide, Doric-column-supported portico, which is topped by a shed-roofed, enclosed second tier. A one-story wing adjoins the east end of the dwelling. Most of the windows are six-over-one, double-hung sash, and while most have flat arches, some are segmentally arched.

Officers' Quarters (building V). One of the smallest residences on officers' row, this rectangular-shaped, two-story, gable-roofed, white-painted brick house was completed in 1900. It has a north-south orientation and is situated between buildings E-F-G and K-L-M.

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Commandant's Office (building 1). Erected in 1837-38, this two-story, white-painted brick structure with bellcast hipped roof serves as the visual terminus of Dahlgren Avenue. Designed to provide offices for the commandant as well as other yard officers, the building has been altered extensively inside and now contains several apartments. The exterior has been changed too, but as National Capital Planning Commission architect T. Robin Brown noted in nominating the structure to the National Register, not to such an extent as to obscure its early 19th-century scale and massing. Originally the building measured about 50 feet across its five-bay north facade and 44 feet across its four-bay sides. A two-tier gallery extended completely around this then unpainted red brick block. The veranda was replaced in 1873 and again in 1895-96, and today much of it is enclosed by weatherboarding, particularly on the first level. On all sides, though, the square, gallery-support columns (vintage 1895-96) are still visible as is the jigsawed railing on the both levels of the front and east facades. All chimneys have been removed, but a deck with turned balusters still surmounts the peak of the roof, and the building still rests on its original brick foundation. Most of the windows are six-over-six sash and not original, although the window trim may be. The exterior decor is completed by a projecting, one-story, gable-roofed entrance porch in the center of the north facade.

Marine Barrack (building 58). Situated immediately south of Officers' Quarters B and facing west toward Leutze Park, this three-story, gable-roofed, gray-painted brick structure was erected in 1859. Eighteen bays long and three bays wide, it has a full basement, slate roof with denticulated cornice, and two-over-two, double-hung sash windows with stone sills. The openings are positioned under flat, brick arches on the first story and segmental, brick arches on the upper two stories. A three-story, two-bay-wide, brick addition juts from the east side of the edifice.

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Administrative Building (building 57). Constructed in 1866, this gray-painted brick edifice sits opposite the south end of Leutze Park and forms a 90 degree angle with building 58. They display the same general design. Building 58 is 16 bays long, and its exterior features include six-over-six sash windows and brick quoins.

Administrative Buildings (building 44 and 108). These brick structures, erected in 1890 and 1902 respectively, are located immediately south of building 57. A one-story brick wing joins three-storied, east-west oriented, gray-painted number 44 to number 57, while three-floored, arcaded, 275-foot-long, two-bay-wide, north-south oriented number 108 abuts number 44. Building 108 probably had an industrial function initially. In any case, these structures together with number 76, which is on the west side of Dahlgren Avenue, form a pleasing industrial streetscape.

Copper Rolling Mill (building 46). Situated just south of building 57 and east of 108, this 306-foot-long, two-story, gray-painted brick structure and the more-recent, one-story, attached, brick building number 67 complete the block formed by Dahlgren Avenue, Kidder Breese, Harwood Street, and a now asphalt-covered park on the south. The mill has a pedimented, slate-covered, gabled roof with denticulated cornice, and there is a full basement. Here the assassins of President Abraham Lincoln were imprisoned for a short time while awaiting trial.

Breech Mechanism Shop and Adjoining Buildings (buildings 76, 44, and 40). Now housing the Navy Museum, this remarkable edifice was erected in 1899 for industrial use. An overhead crane system is still operative in the 656-foot-long, 146-foot-wide, 51-foot-high, two-story structure. Gable-roofed and brick-buttressed, it flanks the lower west side of Dahlgren Avenue. Several small, one story, brick wings have been added to the sides of the structure, but it remains an impressive and essential part of the streetscape.

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Abutting the north end of the museum is building 41, a 292-foot-long, 3½-story, gable-roofed, 19th-century, brick, industrial structure, which with adjoining building 40 (1892) is situated along Dahlgren Avenue west of Leutze Park. If present plans for the metropolitan Washington subway are carried through, it will pass underneath these two buildings and might necessitate their demolition. As historic structures they would be missed, but their destruction would not destroy the integrity of the historic district.

Industrial Buildings (buildings 22, 33, 36, 37, 39, 109, and 111). These brick structures are the principal components of an industrial row between Paulding Street and Patterson Avenue west of building 76. Constructed in 1857-58, numbers 33 and 36 are two-story, L-shaped, hip-roofed structures that measure 432 feet along their longest axis. Used presently as service and storage facilities, they are juxtaposed and form a quadrangle in the center of the row. Within the quadrangle is a small storage building, number 109, erected in 1855 and two newer structures, numbers 37 and 39. Building 22, constructed in 1858, abuts the north exterior end of the quadrangle. The multistoried, east-west oriented building now houses laundry and storage facilities. Building 111, completed in 1902, is situated south of the quadrangle on the lower side of Kennon Street. It is an east-west oriented, one-story, gable-roofed, brick-buttressed edifice with imposing stone lintels over all openings.

Industrial Buildings (buildings 28, 73, 104, 105, 112, 143, and 176). Located between Patterson Avenue on the east, Isaac Hull Avenue on the west, Warrington Avenue on the north, and an alley extension of Kennon Street on the south, these east-west oriented, gable-roofed, brick structures complete the interesting streetscape along Patterson Avenue. Most of these builings are 250 feet long. At the north end of the row stand the somewhat shorter numbers 112 and 105. Erected about 1910 and now used by the Navy Band, these striking two-story structures have been joined together by a small wing, but they retain their turn-of-the-century appearance.

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Distinguishing features include segmentally arched openings throughout and circular windows in the upper gable ends. Immediately south of these edifices is the similarly designed number 104, which consists of two buildings joined by a common wing. Built in 1901, number 104 has an outstanding corbeled cornice and sixteen-over-sixteen, segmentally arched windows on both stories. Completing this industrial row are buildings 72 (1942), 143 (1915), 28 (1942), and 176 (circa World War II). Number 28 stands on the site of the Dahlgren gun shop that was erected in 1865 and later demolished.

Model Basin (building 70). Situated east of the Commandant's Office, this rectangular-shaped, 506-foot-long, 52-foot-wide, single-story, pilastered structure was completed in 1897-99. It has a gabled, monitored roof and is windowless along the east and west facades. An important facility at the time of its construction, the model basin has been filled, and the building serves presently as a warehouse. It remains, however, an essential feature of the waterfront.

Marine Railway (structure 308). Completed in 1823 and apparently rebuilt in 1855, the marine railway is situated in a slip just east of the Model Basin. One of the Nation's first, the marine railway is still operative and is used in maintaining the President's yacht.

Boundary Justification. Generally the historic district encompasses the area and extant structures that comprised the Washington Navy Yard about 1858. This includes all extant buildings from the pre-1858 years as well as all known extant structures from the second half of the 19th century and the important industrial buildings from the World War I era. The district also includes the waterfront. It has lost its 19th-century boathouses in favor of World War II quays, but to preserve the original character of the yard, the historic structures must remain visually linked with the river.

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Boundary. As indicated in red on the accompanying U.S.G.S. and U.S. Navy maps, a line beginning at the intersection of M Street, SE., and Parsons Avenue and extending approximately 1,800 feet to the south along the right curb (or, where applicable, as a continuation of the right curb) of Parsons Avenue to the Anacostia River; thence, northwestward approximately 1,185 feet along the water's edge and including the quays to the center of Isaac Hull Avenue; thence, northward approximately 1,450 feet along the center of Isaac Hull Avenue to its intersection with M Street, SE.; thence, eastward about 1,150 feet along the right curb of M Street, SE., to the starting point.

Morris, Richard K., John Holland (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1966).

Peck, Taylor, Round Shot to Rockets: A History of the Washington Navy Yard and U. S. Naval Gun Factory (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1949).

Weigley, Russell F., The American Way of War (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc, 1973).

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	X MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		X INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1800-1962 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Benjamin Latrobe and other

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Not true 'cos Gov't owned!!

The founding of the Washington Navy Yard is synonymous with the early history of the U. S. Navy, Washington, D.C., and the Nation itself. As the country's first navy yard, it served as the Navy's first home port and as the center for early 19th-century naval operations crucial to the development of American nationalism. In fact, for a century and a half, the Washington Navy Yard played an important role in the transformation of the United States from a relatively weak country militarily to a position as one of the world's superpowers.

After the War of 1812, the yard took on an increasingly industrial character, becoming the center for the manufacture of ship's equipment. It also served as testing ground and laboratory for a number of talented individuals whose work was to make the Navy the foremost in the world. Here Robert Fulton tested early topedoes, Commodore John Rodgers built the first marine railway, and John P. Holland demonstrated the practicality of the submarine. The yard was best known for its advances in ordnance. It was here that John A. Dahlgren made his famous improvement in cannon and that important guns for the Spanish-American War, World War I, and World War II were developed and manufactured.

In 1962 the Navy closed the gun factory at the Washington Navy Yard, and today the yard serves as a major naval administrative center, houses the Navy Museum, and maintains the Presidential yacht. The historic district covers about 42 acres and contains some 45 major historic structures. These include officers' quarters that date to about 1801 plus many mid-19th-century industrial buildings.

History

The founding of the Washington Navy Yard is synonymous with the early history of the Navy, Washington, D.C., and the Nation itself. When the Navy Department was created in 1798 during the undeclared war with France, Congress, prodded by the Department's first

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Secretary Benjamin Stoddert, appropriated $1,050,000 for the construction of ships and drydocks. Stoddert, fully aware that private shipyards were too small to build the large vessels he envisioned, decided that a government-owned yard was a necessity. Although Congress had made no specific appropriation for a navy yard, Stoddert broadly interpreted the section of the bill authorizing drydocks as granting him authority to build a yard. Influenced by George Washington, the Secretary eventually settled on the new Capital as the site for the yard because it seemed secure against attack, was close to supplies of good timber and other shipbuilding materials, and could be closely supervised by the Government. By October 2, 1799, the Navy had acquired land for the yard and was ready to begin construction.

During its first years, the yard grew slowly. Only two buildings were completed in 1800, and the yard's continued existence was threatened late in the year when the quasi war with France ended and Congress cut naval appropriations. Even more threatening to the yard than peace with France was the election of Thomas Jefferson whose Republican Party "was especially suspicious of the Navy."[1] Trouble with the Barbary States and continued difficulties with Great Britain and France, however, made it vital to maintain the Navy, and Jefferson took special interest in the Washington Navy Yard. In 1803 he designated it as the Navy's home port. Jefferson also persuaded Benjamin Latrobe, who had designed the Philadelphia water system, to develop a plan for the yard's development and design any necessary buildings. In 1805 Latrobe's recommendations were approved by Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith and over the next decade were gradually put into effect.

From 1805-14 the yard was extremely busy building ships, manufacturing equipment, and acting as a supply service for the entire Navy. A large number of Jefferson's famous gunboats--small one-gun craft which were designed for harbor defense but which later proved impractical--were constructed at Washington, as was

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1 Russell F. Weigley, The American Way of War (New York, 1973) 45.

the sloop Wasp, which won lasting fame in American naval annals for its battle with the British ship Frolic in 1812. Yard activity contributed significantly to Washington's economic development. As historian Constance M. Green has pointed out, the yard was the "chief manufacturing establishment in the city."[2] Because it was the center of American naval activity and only yard able to service the fleet, the Washington Navy Yard became a primary British target in the War of 1812, and they almost totally destroyed it when they captured the Capital in 1814.

Rapidly rebuilt after the war, the yard did not fully recover its prime role in shipbuilding because wartime experience had demonstrated that yards close to the sea were better for servicing a fleet. Because of the yard's skilled work force and many areas of competence, however, the Navy Board decided in 1827 that the Washington facility should be the center for the manufacture of ship's equipment. The yard had already become a center for research and experimentation. In 1822 Commodore John Rodgers built the first marine railway to haul ships out of the water and place them under cover for repair or protection, and over the years, yard engineers made significant improvements in steam engines for ships.

A new era in the Washington Navy Yard's history opened in 1847, when Lt. John A. Dahlgren arrived to take charge of rocket manufacture, a new enterprise at the yard. Soon, he was in complete charge of ordnance and within a few years, says historian Jack B. Hilliard, "he built the navy yard from the primitive shop he found on his arrival in 1847 to a complete research and development center. Dahlgren's greatest achievement at the yard was the improved cannon that came to bear his name. Shaped somewhat like a soda bottle,

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2 Constance M. Green, Washington: Village and Capital, 1800-1878. Volume I (Princeton, 1962), 36.

3 Jack B. Hilliard, "John A. Dahlgren and the Naval Gun Factory. Paper given at Duquesne University Sixth Annual History Forum, November, 1972, 9.

Dahlgren's cannon had reinforced breeches which made the guns safer to operate and made possible greater caliber without increased weight. Dahlgren also developed a system of testing guns on water and precisely locating the fall of shot. The lessons learned in these tests were eventually put to use by the Navy. Dahlgren's guns and methods proved their worth in the Civil War, and remained standard equipment for almost four decades.

During the Civil War, the yard played an important role in Union naval operations. It served as communication center between the Navy Department and the vessels blockading Southern ports, and took on increased importance for outfitting and rebuilding ships after the Norfolk Navy Yard fell to the Confederacy in 1861. Throughout the war, the yard played a vital role in the defense of Washington by maintaining the Potomac Flotilla, which kept that river under Union control. Immediately after the war, the yard served as a place of confinement for the conspirators in Lincoln's assassination and for Raphael Semmes, commander of the Confederate raider Alabama.

Although there was little significant activity at the yard in the decade after the war, the 1880's witnessed a rising tide of expansionism, leading to increased interest in the Navy and improvement of the Washington Navy Yard. In 1886 it was designated as the center for naval ordnance manufacture. Specializing in the production of large guns for the new Navy and offering courses in their operation for naval personnel, "the Washington Navy Yard and Gun Factory could" according to historian Taylor Peck, "be called in 1898 the most modern ordnance plant in the world."[4] The impact of the yard's work became clearly evident that year when its guns and trained men annihilated the Spanish fleet, thereby elevating the United States to world power status.

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4 Taylor Peck, Round-Shot to Rockets: A History of the Washington Navy Yard and U.S. Naval Gun Factory (Annapolis, 1949), 188.

By 1900 the tremendous increase in the size of the fleet made it impossible for the Washington Navy Yard to supply all demands, and part of its work had to be contracted to private industry--a trend later accelerated by two world wars. Increasingly the yard's facilities were devoted to research and development. In 1896 a model ship basin had been constructed to provide a means of determining the power needed to propel ships as well as to learn the best underwater design to reduce ship resistance. In 1899 the "first practical submarine,"[5] developed by John P. Holland, was tested at the yard and accepted by the Navy, marking the beginning of its submarine fleet. Over the next two decades, the yard developed improved guns, gun sights, and fire control equipment which were to prove their worth in two world wars.

Although the yard operated at peak capacity during World War I, the decade of the 1920's witnessed a drastic reduction of activity because of government retrenchment and international treaties which limited naval armament. After the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932, though, the pace at the yard quickened as the fleet was built up to treaty strength and even expanded as the treaties expired.

During World War II, the primary function of the Washington Navy Yard was to act as a coordinating agency for the naval ordnance plants, and in this capacity it handled over 1 million contracts. Also, it continued to serve as a research center, repaired battle damaged ships, and corrected manufacturers' deficiencies. In December 1945, the designation "Washington Navy Yard" was dropped, and the name changed to "United States Naval Gun Factory."

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5 Richard K. Morris, John P. Holland (Annapolis, 1966), xviii.

The decades after World War II witnessed the gradual demise of capital ships with large guns, as the Navy placed increased reliance on aircraft carriers and submarines. As a result, the Washington Naval Gun Factory gradually became absolete and was closed in 1962. Today, the old navy yard and gun factory serves as a major naval administrative center, a naval museum, and the docking place of the President's yacht.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Green, Constance M., Washington: Village and Capital, 1800-1878 Vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

Hilliard, Jack B., "John A. Dahlgren and the Naval Gun Factory." Pape given at Duquesne University Sixth Annual History Forum, November 1972.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	326660	4304300	B	18	327020	4047310
C	18	327010	4041010	D	18	326410	4042610

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(see last page of description)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: George R. Adams, Managing Editor
Ralph Christian, Assistant Editor

ORGANIZATION: American Association for State and Local History

DATE: November 1975

STREET & NUMBER: 1400 Eighth Avenue, South

TELEPHONE: (615) 242-5583

CITY OR TOWN: Nashville

STATE: Tennessee 37203

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL ___

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER