

MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, BUILDING 47  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

HABS No. CA-1543-E

HABS  
CAL,  
48-MARI,  
1E-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

RECEIVED  
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ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE California		COUNTY Solano	TOWN OR VICINITY <del>Mare Island</del> VALLEJO
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Building 47			HABS NO. CA-1543- <del>E</del>
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE			
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)			
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE)		ARCHITECT(S) (INCLUDE SOURCE)	
SIGNIFICANCE (ARCHITECTURAL AND HISTORICAL, INCLUDE ORIGINAL USE OF STRUCTURE) Part of naval complex			
STYLE (IF APPROPRIATE)			
MATERIAL OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE STRUCTURAL SYSTEMS) Wood frame			
SHAPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) Three stories, rectangular			
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Flat roof, wooden exterior stairway to third floor			
INTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE (DESCRIBE FLOOR PLANS, IF NOT SKETCHED)			
MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND ADDITIONS WITH DATES			
PRESENT CONDITION AND USE			
OTHER INFORMATION AS APPROPRIATE			
SOURCES OF INFORMATION (INCLUDING LISTING ON NATIONAL REGISTER, STATE REGISTERS, ETC.) National Register of Historic Places			
COMPILER, AFFILIATION Melissa McDonald HABS Historian			DATE 7-20-83

Addendum to:  
Mare Island Naval Shipyard,  
Old Administrative Offices (Building 47)  
8<sup>th</sup> Street, north side between Railroad Avenue and Walnut Avenue  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Addendum to  
MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD  
Old Administrative Offices (Building 47)

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Data page 1 was previously transmitted to the Library of Congress.

**Location:** Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, California  
8<sup>th</sup> Street, north side between Railroad Avenue and Walnut Avenue

**Significance:** Building 47 is a contributing element of the Mare Island Historic District. It is highly significant historically as well as architecturally. Historically, the building served as the headquarters for the Mare Island Naval Shipyard for more than 120 years. Architecturally, it is one of the few remaining non-industrial brick buildings at the island and illustrative of the original architectural program for the residential-administrative area. Although it has been modified substantially, the building retains enough of its original detailing to convey its prominent and important place within the historic building stock of the Mare Island Historic District.

**Present Owner:** U.S. Navy, EFA West  
900 Commodore Drive  
San Bruno, CA 94066

**Present Use:** Vacant

**Last Use:** Administrative Offices

**Description:** Building 47, the historic headquarters of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard, is the most prominently sited building at the base. Its location is symbolically and functionally at the core of the physical plant, with the homes of the ranking officers to the west and the major shipyard buildings to the east. It also faces Alden Park, the oldest and most important formal landscape at Mare Island. Between Building 47 and Alden Park is Farragut Plaza, a formal landscaped area that serves as the immediate setting for the facade of the headquarters.

The setting for Building 47 is intact in some respects, but has also been modified extensively. Photograph E-3, taken from Alden

Park, shows Building 47 within the context of the mature landscape at Farragut Plaza; the bulbous tree at the right-center of that view is a rare bunya-bunya tree. Photograph E-2 is a view from across Walnut Avenue. At the left side of that view is one wing of Building 521, a huge administrative annex built on one side and at the rear of Building 47 just prior to World War II. At the rear, the setting for Building 47 is cluttered with numerous additions, as shown in Photograph E-6; Building 47 is at the right of that view. Building 47A, a turn-of-the-century wood frame addition is at the left of that view, while a World War II-era vault addition is at the center. While most of the 1870 Building 47 is intact, that building can rarely be seen except in the context of these many additions.

Building 47 is a two-story brick structure, with a main rectangular block flanked at each end by small wings, two window segments in length and slightly recessed. A hip roof covers the main building, and a side gabled roof covers each wing. The remaining base of an octagonal cupola is found at top ridge center of the main hip roof; that cupola was destroyed in an earthquake of 1898 and was never replaced. The cupola base is shown in detail in Photograph E-14. A central full pediment with oculus window and triangular molding insets protrudes from the roof over the front eaves. The pediment is detailed in Photograph E-11. Simple brick pilasters connected by a brick frieze divide the wall into equal segments. Tall segmental-arched windows line the upper story, and slightly less tall round-arched windows line the lower story, with four-over-four double hung wooden sash frames. A round-arched entry of the same round-arched window proportion, slightly recessed, is found at the center. The entry is shown in detail in Photograph E-9. Double doors with etched glass and a sunburst transom window mark this main front entry.

A small one-story brick wing exists at the right (east) side of the facade. This small wing was not original but was built before the Building 47A addition. Ca. 1895 photographs illustrate the wing in place but without the wood frame 47A addition. This small wing includes a three-sided bay window with segmental arched openings. It includes a small balustered railing at the roof level, as shown in Photograph E-10. The board and batten siding of the Building 47A addition may be seen behind this wing; Building 47A links to Building 47 at the rear of this small wing.

The interior of Building 47 retains a moderate degree of integrity. The building was used heavily through the Spanish-American War, World War I, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam conflicts and has suffered through that heavy use. The most important interior space is located immediately behind the central entry, where a series of segmental arch openings define the entries to cross corridors, as shown in Photograph E-15.

**Historical Context:** Building 47 was built in 1870 and served as the headquarters for the Mare Island Naval Shipyard until it closed in the mid-1990s. Although it has been modified substantially, Building 47 must be regarded as among the most important buildings within the Mare Island Historic District.

When it was constructed in 1870, Building 47 replaced a small structure which Commander David Farragut had used for his headquarters. Folk wisdom holds that Building 47 incorporated a two-room structure Farragut had used earlier, but that contention has never been proven. Building 47 is sited on the southernmost portion of two knolls that rose at the north end of the island.

Upon construction, Building 47 was a squarish two-story brick building with a hipped roof that terminated in a tall cupola. It is perhaps a testimony to the functional importance of Building 47 that it has been so substantially modified through the years. The building remained reasonably intact through 1898, when it was damaged, although less so than most unreinforced masonry buildings at Mare Island. The most important impact of the earthquake was destruction of the cupola, which was never rebuilt. The building was repaired between 1898 and 1901. Building 47A, a wood frame addition, was constructed at the turn of the century. Just prior to American involvement in World War II, the Navy built the huge Building 521, which largely supplanted Building 47 as the effective headquarters for Mare Island. Building 47 was retained, however, for ceremonial as well as functional purposes.

Building 47 is important historically for its association with the operation of the shipyards. Virtually every decision between 1870 and 1940 of import to the history of the island was made in this building. Architecturally, it is important as one of a small number of non-industrial buildings to have survived the earthquake of 1898. Brick masonry defined the character of Mare Island in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For whatever reason, the brick industrial buildings

survived that quake while the non-industrial buildings did not. Building 47 is a reminder of the intended appearance of all of the buildings along Walnut Avenue.

**Sources:** (See list of sources under HABS Narrative Report for Mare Island Naval Shipyard Historic District.)

**Project  
Information:**

The action causing this documentation to be undertaken is the disposal of historic properties at Mare Island Naval Shipyard in accordance with the Base Realignment and Closure Act, as amended in 1993. Once the transfer to the City of Vallejo occurs, these National Register properties will no longer be afforded the protection of the National Historic Preservation Act. This documentation is a requirement of the MOA among the Navy, SHPO and ACHP reached in accordance with the regulation for the "Protection of Historic Properties," (36 CFR Part 800) implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

LOCATION MAP

