

MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, ST. PETER'S CHAPEL  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

HABS No. CA-1543-C

HABS  
CAL,  
48-MARI,  
1C

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...**

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

HABS  
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48-MARI,  
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ARCHITECTURAL DATA FORM

STATE California		COUNTY Solano	TOWN OR VICINITY Mare Island VALLEJO
HISTORIC NAME OF STRUCTURE (INCLUDE SOURCE FOR NAME) Mare Island Naval Shipyard, St. Peter's Chapel			HABS NO. CA-1543-C
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE			
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)			
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) early 20th century		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) One story			
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Wood shingles, gable roof, square tower with pyramidal roof, gable hood over entrance			
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, SAINT PETER'S CHAPEL  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

HABS No. CA-1543-C

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XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013

ADDENDUM TO  
MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, ST. PETER'S CHAPEL  
Junction of Walnut & Cedar Parkway  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

HABS No. CA-1543-C

HABS  
CAL  
48-MARI,  
IC-

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

**Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California**

HABS  
CAL  
48-MARI,  
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Addendum to  
Mare Island Naval Shipyard, St. Peter's Chapel  
HABS No. CA-1543-C (page 2)

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, ST. PETER'S CHAPEL**

**HABS No. CA-1543-C**

**Location:** Junction of Walnut and Cedar Avenues  
Mare Island Naval Shipyard  
Vallejo, Solano County, California  
  
U.S.G.S. Mare Island, 7.5' Quadrangle.  
UTM Coordinates: 10 / 564060 / 4216380

**Present Owner:** U.S. Navy  
EFA West  
San Bruno, California 94066

**Present Use:** Unused

**Significance:** St. Peter's Chapel is significant as a key contributing element of the Mare Island Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places and a National Historic Landmark, and individually, as one of the most important chapels owned by the U.S. Navy. Built in 1901, St. Peter's Chapel is the second-oldest Navy chapel in the United States and the oldest on the West Coast. It is a handsome Shingled Gothic church, possessing an impressive display of signed Tiffany art glass windows. It also includes a nearly-complete set of original interior furnishings. The art glass windows as well as commemorative ceiling and wall tablets were contributed by the public, making St. Peter's Chapel an important memorial chapel to U.S. Navy personnel and a symbol of the sense of community that existed at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard through its many years of service. The building is almost completely unmodified, the few alterations to it restricted to small additions at the rear of the building, and to incidental interior modifications, including the installation of a second story room in the vestibule, as well as the installation of new carpet, organ pipes, and lighting fixtures.

## 1. PHYSICAL CONTEXT OF ST. PETER'S CHAPEL

St. Peter's Chapel is located within Mare Island Naval Complex, a Naval facility known as Mare Island Naval Shipyard until it closed in 1996. Mare Island is a 1500-acre island, at the edge of San Pablo Bay at Vallejo, Solano County, California. It is surrounded on the west by San Pablo Bay, on the east by the Napa River (called the Mare Island Strait at Mare Island), on the south by the Carquinez Strait, and on the north by marshlands along the northern edge of San Pablo Bay. The current island is approximately 50 percent man-made, with the northern one-half comprising fill from channel dredging and cuts on the natural island. The island is generally oriented in a southwest to northeast direction; pursuant to longstanding convention at the Navy facility, the island is treated as if it were oriented north to south, with the northeastern tip of the island referred to as the "north end." The directions used in this report follow the conventions of the island, i.e. north is the top of the island, although it is more precisely north-northeast.

St. Peter's Chapel is located near the west side of the island (facing Vallejo), approximately midway north to south. It is situated within the historic core of the Mare Island facility. The shipyard at Mare Island was until it closed the oldest Navy installation on the West Coast, having been founded in 1854. The base was active during all wars from the 1860s through the 1990s, including the Civil War and World Wars I and II. The island is something of a museum of Navy architecture and engineering over those years, with a substantial number of buildings remaining from each decade, particularly from the war years. A large part of the island has been designated as a National Register historic district.<sup>1</sup> Mare Island is also a National Historic Landmark.

The buildings at Mare Island include distinct zones of activity and structural types. The oldest shipyard industrial buildings line the eastern waterfront, near the center of the island. Industrial buildings from World Wars I and II and the Cold War exist south of the old shipyard and at the north end of the island. An ammunition depot is situated at the southern end of the island, as is the base cemetery. A Marine Corps facility was built atop a hillside at the center of the island, with a hospital just downhill from the Marine Corps area. Immediately west of the old shipyard is a residential-administrative area. This area includes a row of large residences for flag officers and smaller homes for other officers, dating from the 1870s through the 1940s, with the bulk dating to the first decade of the 20th century. This area also includes the key administrative buildings for the shipyard, including Building 47, the 1870 headquarters for the base. Also included in this area are two small parks, which serve as buffers, separating the residential quarters from the industrial buildings. One is Alden Park, located immediately south of Building 47. The second is Chapel Park, a triangular park that includes no buildings other than St. Peter's Chapel.

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<sup>1</sup>JRP Historical Consulting Services, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Mare Island Historic District," Prepared for EFA West, January, 1996.

Chapel Park is a triangular open space, bounded by Alden Park and Walnut and Cedar Avenues. The park includes some of the oldest and best cared-for trees at Mare Island. The park has no formal order and is dominated by mature trees and shrubs. Shrubs exist at the foundation of the chapel. Other large shrubs have been pruned into small trees, scattered throughout the lawn area. Very large eucalyptus trees form a row along Walnut Avenue. The park is dominated by the eucalyptus as well as coast redwood, incense cedar, pittosporum, and a giant redwood (*Sequoia giganteum*) at the front of the chapel. St. Peter's Chapel is located at the western end of the park, its facade facing west toward the shipyard. Chapel Park retains a much higher degree of integrity to its original design than does Alden Park, which was filled up with bomb shelters during World War II.

Chapel Park forms the immediate setting for St. Peter's Chapel. The chapel is shown in that context in photographs 3, 6, and 7.

## 2. SPECIFIC HISTORY OF ST. PETER'S CHAPEL

St. Peter's Chapel was built in 1901, on designs by Albert Sutton. Sutton, a private architect in San Francisco, was paid from church proceeds rather than Navy appropriations, although his plans were approved and altered somewhat by the Bureau of Yards and Docks in Washington, D.C.<sup>2</sup> Funds for construction were provided through normal appropriations, with \$5000 included in the Naval Appropriations Act of 1900.<sup>3</sup> St. Peter's Chapel was named after Simon, called Peter, a sailor, whose story is told in the Gospel according to St. Matthew 4:19.

The chapel came into being through the fundraising and political acumen of Chaplain Adam A. McAlister. McAlister was chaplain in the U.S. Navy from 1873 to 1909, spending nearly all of that period at Mare Island. He would return periodically to Mare Island in the years between his retirement in 1909 and his death in 1916. He is buried in the cemetery at Mare Island.<sup>4</sup> McAlister, then, served as chaplain for nearly 30 years before the construction of St. Peter's

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<sup>2</sup>Sue Lemmon and E.D. Wichels, *St. Peter's Chapel: A Dream, a Memorial, and a Christian Beacon Serving the Navy at Mare Island, Vallejo, California*, Vallejo: Mare Island Historical Society, 1979. This volume represents the definitive history of St. Peter's Chapel.

<sup>3</sup>Arnold S. Lott, *A Long Line of Ships: Mare Island's Century of Naval Activity in California*. Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1954, p. 137. This volume represents the best single source of historical data on Mare Island, along with Sue Lemmon and E. D. Wichels, *Sidewheelers to Nuclear Power: A Pictorial Essay Covering 130 Years at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard*. Annapolis: Leeward Publications, 1977.

<sup>4</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, 1979, pp. 4, 36, 61-2.

Chapel, presided over its initial construction, and lived to see the installation of nearly all important art glass windows and interior furnishings in the church. He more than any other individual was responsible for the presence of this church at Mare Island.

Before 1901, religious services at Mare Island were held in various temporary locations which could, in the words of Mare Island historian, Arnold Lott, be "rigged for church" with minimal disruption to ordinary functions.<sup>5</sup> Between 1854 and 1870, services were held aboard ships assigned to the shipyard, first the *USS Warren*, then the frigate *USS Independence*. After construction of Building 47 in 1870, interdenominational services were conducted chiefly in that building, either in the Court Room on the first story or the Lyceum on the second.

McAlister, who conducted nearly all services in Building 47, was never satisfied with this makeshift arrangement. It was he who lobbied California political leaders to seek funding for a permanent chapel at the base. He succeeded in convincing U.S. Senator George C. Perkins to include a \$5000 appropriation in the 1900 Naval Appropriations Act.<sup>6</sup>

Notations in McAlister's diary indicate he wasted little time in planning for the chapel's construction once funding had been secured. His diary indicates that McAlister commissioned San Francisco architect, Albert Sutton, to develop a "plan and specifications for a Chapel at Mare Island." The same notation indicates he paid Sutton \$50 for his services, apparently from church coffers, and that he forwarded Sutton's plans to the Navy Department for approval. The plans were forwarded to Washington, D.C. on November 30, 1900, only months after congressional approval of the project. The chapel was completed and first services conducted there on October 6, 1901.<sup>7</sup>

Sutton was 34 when he designed the chapel. He was born in Portland, Oregon in 1866 but moved to California to study architecture at the University of California in Berkeley. He practiced in California until 1916, most of those years in partnership with Charles Peter Weeks. The two achieved some success, most notably in their involvement with one phase of the design of the State Capitol building in Sacramento. In 1916, Sutton returned to Portland, where he continued a

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<sup>5</sup>Lott, p. 132.

<sup>6</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, 1979, p. 3.

<sup>7</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, 1979, p. 3. Sue Lemmon, who acted as historian at Mare Island for many years, had access to the private papers of Chaplain McAlister. The history written and Lemmon and Wichels is invaluable for that reason.

successful practice until his death in 1923.<sup>8</sup> Apparently, few of Sutton's buildings remain in California.<sup>9</sup> According to research by Sue Lemmon and E. D. Wichels, Sutton designed three additional churches in the Shingled Gothic Style. One, the Faith Chapel on Jekyll Island, Georgia, is quite similar to St. Peter's Chapel.<sup>10</sup>

The chapel was largely completed by October, 1901, although Sutton's plan was not completed until 1904. The rather complicated structural history of the building is detailed in Section 3 below, under "Modifications Over Time." Although the building was largely in place in 1901, the art glass windows and many of the interior furnishings were added over the next decade. One of the earliest entries in McAlister ledger for the chapel expenses includes payment to a Philadelphia firm for colored paper to cover the windows, to simulate stained glass.<sup>11</sup> Little by little, however, the art glass and furnishings were paid for through private donations. The windows were dedicated in memory of U.S. Navy personnel, typically by family members. It appears that all but two of the windows were in place by the time of McAlister's funeral services in St. Peter's Chapel in 1916.

St. Peter's Chapel was formally an inter-denominational Christian church from the outset. In the second service held there on October 13, 1901, the formal dedication of the chapel, the proceedings were lead or observed by ten ministers from throughout California and the West, representing a variety of Protestant faiths. The first Catholic mass was held at St. Peter's Chapel the next month; the church was home to both Protestant and Catholic services throughout its long history at the island.

In addition to the commemorative art glass, the chapel continued to serve its memorial function through the installation of ceiling tiles and wall tablets. The earliest ceiling and wall tablets were installed during McAlister's tenure, the first being ordered in 1901, less than a month after the church was completed. The ceiling and wall tablets were dedicated to various individuals and groups. Some commemorate specific individuals, as is the case with the art glass. Others were placed to commemorate sailors and Marines who died in combat or through disasters. One ceiling

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<sup>8</sup>Henry F. and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing, 1956), 586; *The Architect and Engineer* (Vol. XXV, No. 3, December 1923), 114.

<sup>9</sup>David Gebhard, et al, *A guide to Architecture in San Francisco & Northern California* Santa Barbara and Salt Lake, 1973 lists only the 1906 remodel of the State Capitol under the accomplishments of Sutton, individually or in partnership with Weeks.

<sup>10</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, p. 63, includes photographs of two of these churches.

<sup>11</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, p. 22.

tablet, for example, commemorates the 103 men who died in an explosion on the *Bennington* in 1954. Another ceiling tablet is dedicated to those who died on the *U.S.S. Thresher*, a submarine that was destroyed in 1963. A wall tablet commemorates the sailors and Marines who died in a hurricane in Samoa in 1889. Others are more general, as with a ceiling tablet commemorating all Navy personnel who served in submarines during World War II.

The chapel served the Mare Island community in much the same manner as community churches throughout the United States. Protestant and Catholic services were conducted without interruption, even during the frenetic wartime years. The chapel was the site of hundreds of weddings, baptisms, and funerals. Some of these ceremonies concern well-known Naval officers. More commonly, however, the weddings, baptisms, and funerals at St. Peter's Chapel involved the enlisted men and women as well as the civilian employees who made up the bulk of the Mare Island population and workforce. For example, the greatest number of marriages at the chapel occurred during World War II, as young sailors got married just before being sent off to the Pacific Theater. Funerals were held for individuals as well as groups of sailors who died in shipboard accidents. Many of these individuals were also buried in the Mare Island cemetery, located near the south end of the island in the Ammunitions Depot.

In general literature on Mare Island and Naval history, St. Peter's is commonly singled out for its pioneering status among Navy chapels: it is the second oldest chapel owned by the Navy, the oldest on the West Coast, and the oldest inter-denominational chapel owned by the Navy. The building is unquestionably important in terms of those national and regional distinctions. The significance of the building, however, is best appreciated within the more limited context of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. St. Peter's was arguably the focus of life at the base. It was at the core of religious life there and the scene for key transitional events -- baptisms, marriages, funerals -- for many generations of employees at the base. The art glass and commemorative tablets symbolize the role of the church in nurturing a sense of community at Mare Island. The chapel, more than any other building, bears witness to the closeness of the community that developed at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard.

### **3. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION OF ST. PETER'S CHAPEL**

#### *The Building, Exterior*

St. Peter's Chapel is a wood framed, one-story cruciform church building with a steep front gabled roof. The building includes a rectangular nave with a cross-gabled chancel, and rectangular sanctuary. The vestibule is offset to the right of the facade. The entire building measures about 50' wide by 80' deep, although the nave and sanctuary are only 28' x 70'. The walls and roof are shingled. The building is supported on a brick foundation, except for additions at the rear, which are on concrete foundations. Doors exist at the vestibule, at either side of the chancel, and on the

side of an addition at the rear of the sanctuary. The building is in the Gothic style with shingled siding, best described as Shingled Gothic.<sup>12</sup> St. Peter's Chapel was identified as Building 104 in the numbering system of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard.

The facade (the west elevation), shown in Photograph 8, includes a vestibule, offset to the right of the nave. The vestibule is accessed from a wooden stairway. The railing for the entry stairs is solid, with shingled siding and a gabled cap. This railing design is used for the chancel entries as well and is mimicked in the buttress design as well. A portico with a steep gabled roof, supported on tapered octagonal timber columns, shelters the entry. The gabled end of the portico roof is open, with horizontal boards and trim pieces that form a lancet arch and trefoil patterns. The trim on the sides of the portico also forms lancet arches. The portico and railings are shown in Photograph 16. The vestibule is capped with an octagonal spire, with four wooden gablets at half-height on the spire. The spire terminates in a wooden finial and metal cross. The spire is supported on a hipped roof at its juncture with the square vestibule. The spire is shown in Photograph 17. The main entry into the vestibule is through a pair of stile and rail wooden doors, which together form a lancet arch.

The wall of the nave at the facade is dominated by a large, flattened lancet window, as well as the gable wall. The rakes of the overhanging gabled roof are shingled with a dog-toothed edging, as shown in Photograph 18. This edging is also found on the spire, at the gabled portico, in a belt course at the spring line for the arched front window, on the sides of the railings at all entrances, on the buttresses on the side elevations, and elsewhere on the side and rear elevations.

The side elevations are nearly identical, except for the presence of the vestibule on the right side. The side elevations are shown in Photographs 10, 11, and 12. The walls are shingled, with shingled buttresses aligning with the roof trusses. The buttresses repeat the alternating shingle and dog-tooth edging pattern and the gabled caps found on the railings. Typical buttresses are shown in Photographs 13 and 14. A series of rectangular art glass windows, grouped in threes, exist along each side elevation, with four groups on the south and three on the north. The roof for the chancel is gabled, terminating in a hipped form with flared eaves. Wooden steps lead to each chancel entry, with solid railings similar to those found at the vestibule. A chancel entry is shown in Photograph 20. The doors into the chancel are rectangular with a stile and rail pattern similar to that found on the vestibule doors. The rear of the side elevations shows evidence of additions, discussed below.

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<sup>12</sup>A Historic Resources Inventory Form (DPR 523) was prepared for this building in 1984 by Kenneth Cardwell. Cardwell identified the style as "Shingle (Victorian Gothic)." Cardwell completed this form as part of an extensive, although not comprehensive, inventory of historic buildings at Mare Island.

The rear elevation, as well as the rear portion of the two side elevations, show evidence of alterations from Albert Sutton's 1900 design. The rear elevation is shown in Photograph 9. Three small additions exist: one at the rear of both sides of the chancel, and a small addition at the rear of the sanctuary. These additions are described in greater detail below under "Modifications Over Time." The gabled roof form at the rear of the building is identical to that at the facade. A large rose window is centered in the gable end. The rear addition was constructed in 1929 and the side additions in 1963. The side additions extend from the rear of the original chancel walls to the plane of the rear of the building. The side additions are shed roofed. The rear addition is centered on the rear elevation, directly beneath the rose window. It too is shed-roofed, with a gabled dormer. A small lancet arch window exists at the rear of this addition. A door exists on the left side of the rear addition. The additions are generally well integrated with the original design, the shingles, doors, and other elements matching the quality and design of the originals. The additions may be detected chiefly by the presence of concrete foundations, which contrast with the brick foundation on the original building.

### *The Building, Interior*

#### *Layout*

The floor plan of St. Peter's Chapel, as it exists today, approximates the cruciform plan, the traditional plan of many Christian churches. The building is oriented east-west, with the sanctuary and altar located at the west end. The chancel, with the choir stalls wing to the left and sacristy wing to the right, forms the arms of the cross. Additions, mentioned earlier, have somewhat obscured the original shape of the cruciform.

Front entry to the chapel is through a pair of doors set within a lancet arched frame and opening into the vestibule. Through the vestibule to the left are a pair of tall rectangular doors opening into the rear of the nave. The nave faces west toward the altar and sanctuary. Photographs 21 and 22 offer general views of the nave and sanctuary. In front of the altar and sanctuary is the area of the chancel, with choir stalls recessed into the wall at the left. At the rear of the choir stalls is a door leading to a rear storage partition and outside access door contained within the wing. From this rear partition can also be accessed the 1960s infill addition built between the top and left wing of the cross. The addition contains a built-in confessional and storage areas. Another wing, known as the sacristy wing, exists to the right of the chancel, and is accessed through a single door. The wing contains a small enclosed restroom and storage area. Outside access also goes through this wing. There is a 1960s infill addition connected to rear of the wing, parallel with the addition at the rear of the choir stalls wing.

Two other areas, both additions to the chapel, provide functional space for the chapel. In 1929, an organ room was added to the back of the chapel, appearing at the top of the cross plan. The

room houses the instrument and connects with an opening just large enough to accommodate the organ pipes that are set above the altar. The other area was added in 1959 above the vestibule by converting empty tower space into a choir robing room, accessible by a stairway from the vestibule. The 1959 stairway is shown in Photograph 15.

The floor and steps ascend toward the sanctuary, with the nave and vestibule being the lowest, three steps leading up into the chancel, one step leading up into the sanctuary, and three small steps leading up to the altar. Hardwood floors run lengthwise from the front to rear of the nave, and carpeting covers the floors and steps of the chancel and sanctuary.

### *Features*

The interior of St. Peter's Chapel is characterized by a number of strong elements, one of which is the rich presence of natural finished wood. Dark wood is incorporated into the interior design in many forms, including the wainscoting, ceiling, floor, trusses, pews, and many crafted furnishings. The five wooden scissor trusses are among the most noteworthy of character-defining structural elements. Heavy timbers make up the diagonal members of the trusses, and carved brackets along the walls support each truss at the intersection between wall and ceiling. Additional supporting blocks are placed at each side of the trusses just above the brackets. Five-prong metal straps with spear shaped ends tie the central truss members together. The front (west) truss was built in a modified version of the other original trusses in order to open up the view to the rose window which is placed high in the gable wall. The central diagonal members of the truss are placed higher into the upper portion of the truss, thus opening up the central area between the vertical members for a clear view to the rose window.

The brackets that support the trusses are carved with a scallop at the upper point, and with an additional "holding" bracket at the lower point. Heavy bolts line the curved interior of the brackets. A wide molding in natural finished wood lines the top edge of the wall, creating a deep ledge between the wall and ceiling, and running between the brackets. The ceiling of the church is also characterized by the strong presence of natural finished wood. Other wooden structural elements, in addition to the trusses, may be observed. Purlins pierce horizontally through and tie the top members of the trusses. Resting on the purlins are the exposed rafters, and wood sheathing covers the ceiling above the rafters. It is in the sections of wood between the rafters and purlins that the commemorative tablets are placed.

The wainscoting on the walls of the nave and sanctuary includes some of the most handsome naturally finished wood to be found inside the chapel. Three levels encompass nearly all the walls of the chapel, ascending in height from the lowest in the vestibule and nave, to the second level around the chancel, and to the highest level in the sanctuary around the altar. The wood is smooth and natural finished, with a simple fretwork design made from narrow batten-type wooden pieces placed along the smooth wood. Tall pieces are placed vertically, side by side, to create tall bays,

and a piece runs horizontally below the top ledge, creating an approximate square shape at the top of each bay. A carved molding forms the top ledge of the wainscoting. Wooden columns are incorporated into the wainscoting at the level where the sanctuary meets the chancel. Upon the top ledge of the wainscoting sits most of the windows in the chapel.

### *The Art Glass*

St. Peter's Chapel is particularly noteworthy for its art glass windows which, in addition to their beauty, reflect the community spirit with which the church was built and maintained through the years. There are 29 art glass windows altogether, each installed through a donation, typically in memory of U.S. Navy personnel. Of particular interest are 16 of the 29 windows which are signed "Tiffany Studios," in the lower right hand corner. According to Mare Island historians, Sue Lemmon and E. D. Wichels, the placement and nature of the signature indicate the glass were manufactured by the Tiffany Company after 1900; earlier works would have been signed Tiffany Glass Company or Tiffany Glass and Decorating Company.<sup>13</sup>

There were no art glass windows when the church was dedicated in 1901 but nearly all had been installed by 1911. In a March, 1911 letter, the Commandant at the base, Capt. Henry Mayo, spoke at length about the windows. His letter clarifies several points about them. First, he observed that all but a few had been installed by 1911. Second, all had been donated to the church in memory of Navy personnel, chiefly by their families. Third, the basic plan for the glass -- the images for individual windows and the placement of those images -- had been developed by the Tiffany Company. Mayo refers to the "Tiffany Plan," suggesting that the company developed the general plan for the windows and may have manufactured many of the windows, even some of the unsigned pieces. Mayo wrote:

St. Peter's Chapel at Mare Island is beautified by many handsome memorial windows and tablets to officers who have served their country honorably and valorously. In fact, so generous have these memorials been donated that the Chapel has taken on the form of a Memorial Chapel. At present, all windows except one, on both sides of the Chapel, have been decorated by stained-glass memorials and all windows in the Sanctuary, except one, have been similarly decorated. In the sanctuary there are five windows, four of which have already been decorated in accordance with a plan submitted by Tiffany. The last remaining undecorated window is a large round one immediately above the altar, and the most conspicuous of the group. The Tiffany plan contemplates placing in this window

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<sup>13</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, 1979, p. 27.

a figure of our Lord as if in the act of blessing the congregation. Together the five windows would make a beautiful picture.<sup>14</sup>

The windows follow an observable and formal plan, with different sizes and shapes of windows on the sides of the nave, in the apse, and at the facade. The windows along the sides are rectangular openings, with lancet arch frames for the images formed in glass. The windows at the rear of the sanctuary are in lancet arch openings, while those on the sides of the sanctuary are rectangular with round-headed arched frames in glass. The center window in the sanctuary, set above the altar, is a large rose window. The large window at the facade is a triptych set into a round-headed window, with lancet arch frames formed in glass.

The imagery also follows a formal plan. The side windows, set in groups of three, typically include images of saints at either side, with an image of the Madonna, Jesus, or Joseph in the center. Typical side groups are shown in Photographs 30 and 31. The rose window in the sanctuary includes an image of the ascendant Christ; it is shown in Photograph 28. Three of the remaining windows in the sanctuary include warlike images: Sir Galahad and two archangels. The Sir Galahad window is shown in Photograph 27. The fourth large window in the sanctuary, dedicated to Chaplain Adam McAlister, is a pastoral view. The triptych at the facade tells the story of Simon, called Peter, for whom the church is named, and his confession to Christ. The triptych is shown in Photograph 29.

The various windows were dedicated to Navy personnel, chiefly by their families. The larger windows were dedicated by the community generally to officers with important roles in Mare Island history. The triptych, for example, was dedicated to Admirals John Sloat and David Farragut and Commodore Robert Stockton, the three men most responsible for establishing a presence for the U.S. Navy in California following its conquest from Mexico. The bulk of the remaining windows were dedicated to high-ranking officers who served at Mare Island at some time, with many being Rear Admirals.

### *The Furnishings*

Another notable characteristic of St. Peter's Chapel is the presence of many original or very old interior furnishing, fixed and moveable.

The current organ was installed in 1929, although modified in 1966, including the addition of new organ pipes above the altar. Also notable is a brass and bronze lectern in the shape of an eagle,

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<sup>14</sup>Quoted in Lemmon and Wichels, 1979, pp. 3-4.

donated to the chapel by a citizen in memorial to an ensign who died young.<sup>15</sup> Wooden chairs at the sides of the chancel as well as the pews were apparently crafted by carpenters who worked at Mare Island, very early in the history of the chapel.

The pews are among the elements giving the strong presence of finished wood in the chapel. Sixteen pews line the south wall of the chapel and 14 line the north wall, with access only from the middle aisle. The pews are a simple slat-backed design, with supporting ends that are fluted and scalloped at the back and armrests. Additionally, within the armrest are carved out Christ figures, ascending in size and height forward with the upward sloping of the armrest. A keyhole design is carved out of the backrest portion of the supporting sides. Each of the pews has a built-in kneeling rest which can be pulled down from the pew in front of it, except the front pews which have an independent kneeling rest. The front kneeling rest is built as a moveable partition, slightly shorter in width than the front pews due to the extra width of the front stairs entering the chancel. The partition holds the folding kneeling rest at the bottom, and contains carved designs within the wall and ends. Christ figures line the partition, with balusters separating them. The supporting ends have scalloped edges and a cross relief placed on the wood.

Three shorter pews and a kneeling partition for the choir to sit at the left side of the chancel. The pews are designed the same as the nave pews, but the front kneeling partition has slightly more detailed carving. The cross relief at the sides has carved end points, and another carved cross extends from the top of the side rail. The side pews are shown in Photograph 23.

The chancel railing is yet another observable element of craftsmanship. Within the railing are rows of carved Christ figure forms, divided by balusters. The Christ figures have small triangle openings separating the tops of their heads. A long flat ledge lines the top of the railing. End posts are square and solid, in the form of a square column with hipped and crenellated capitals.

To the left of the chancel, recessed behind the choir pews and organ, is the choir stalls wing that was added three years after the church was built. Unlike the rest of the church walls that are a combination of wood and plaster, the interior of the choir stalls wing is entirely wood, with wood wainscoting at the lower level, and narrow horizontal siding at the walls and ceiling. The ceiling of the wing is concave, curving at the rear to deflect sound outward toward the chancel and church. The wide opening to the choir area is supported by wooden columns at either side, holding an architrave that is created by a slight protrusion of the wide molding surrounding the church walls. Two narrow pivotal windows, one at each side, open outward from the wing and contain stained glass with the triangular criss-cross design also found in the vestibule windows.

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<sup>15</sup>Lemmon and Wichels, 1979, p. 21.

The sacristy wing to the right of the chancel is separated by a wall and accessible through a simple three-panel door. The wing contains an original section enclosed as a restroom.

The focal point of the chapel is the altar at the front, with the rose window above and the lancet windows high on each side. Pipes for the organ, which replaced the original reredos in 1929, stand up from the altar and fill the area up to the rose window. The altar in itself is a major work of craftsmanship. It is composed of five bays having upper and lower levels. At the lower bays, the central three bays protrude forward creating the table portion of the altar. The outer two bays stand back at the sides. The upper five bays are nearly flush together with the outside lower bays, though the outside upper bays protrude forward slightly. The altar and organ pipes are shown in Photograph 24.

Carvings on each of the altar bays display more of the craftsmanship found throughout the chapel. The upper bays contain inset triangular Christ figures with turned half-round pedestals. The lower bays contain the most intricate carvings. Each of the designs is inset within a circle of carved molding. At the four corners of each lower bay panel, just outside the edges of each circle, are small carved olive branches. Within the circles of the outer bays are a carved cloverleaf design with a symbolic letter at the center. Within the central three bays that protrude forward, the left circle contains a carving of a lamb with a staff shaped cross surrounded by stars, the central circle contains a cross intertwined with letter symbol, and the right circle contains a dove with an olive branch. Photograph 21 offers a detailed view of carvings in the altar.

Carved wooden chairs made by Mare Island craftsmen sit in the chancel and sanctuary. The chairs are characterized by their tall backs, with the highest level being a triangle and coming to a top point. Cloverleaf designs are cut out of the back and carved into the supporting sides of the arm and back rests. An opening carved in the general shape of the Christ figures is carved into the high triangular point of the chair, and a carved cross is set within that opening. Moldings and scalloped edges line the chairs.

Other carved wooden furnishings placed within the sanctuary include an octagonal baptismal with cross, cloverleaf, and lancet arch designs; and a tripod candelabra with tiered legs. A carved wooden shelf is attached to the wall at the rear right of the sanctuary.

The eagle lectern is a display of craftsmanship in brass and bronze. With wings spread, the eagle faces the congregation, perched upon a turned brass base with rounded top and three claw feet at the bottom. The back of the eagle's wings is used to set the books of the speaker. A simpler lectern of brass and wood has also been placed in the chancel.

Brass lanterns hang in the sanctuary, suspended by chains from the front truss. A larger lantern hangs in the center and a smaller one hangs at each side. The electric lights that currently hang in the chapel nave are not original, but date to the 1948-49 era. They are cylindrical in shape,

made of a translucent material and strapped together with metal pieces approximating the proportions of the wainscoting. The top metal strap is wider, with cloverleaf cutouts in the metal and crown points carved out at the top edge.

### *The Commemorative Tablets*

In addition to the art glass windows, St. Peter's Chapel is graced with several dozen commemorative tablets which line the ceiling and walls of the nave and the vestibule. Unlike the windows, which were mostly in place by 1911, the wall and ceiling tablets were installed over many decades. The wall and ceiling tablets follow no particular plan in terms of design or placement.

The ceiling tablets are necessarily of a uniform size because they are fitted into the purlins and rafters of the ceiling. There are 26 such tablets and they generally exhibit a very high degree of wooden craftsmanship. Apparently, most of the earliest tablets were crafted by carpenters at Mare Island. Ceiling tablets are shown in Photograph 26. The wall tablets are smaller and follow no particular pattern in terms of the shape, size, or placement of them. These too were installed over many decades, beginning in 1901 and continuing throughout the life of the church.

### *Modifications Over Time*

In general, St. Peter's Chapel has experienced very few modifications through the years. Nonetheless, the building has been altered, chiefly through construction of additions and through interior modifications.

In his original design, submitted in 1900, Albert Sutton planned a true cruciform, or cross-shaped building. The stem of the cross was formed by the long and narrow nave, the cross piece by the chancel, and the top of the cross by the sanctuary.<sup>16</sup> His plans were submitted to the Bureau of Yards and Docks, which developed the working drawings from which the building was constructed. For reasons not explained in the plans, the Bureau elected to eliminate the sides of the chancel, leaving only the basic rectangle of the nave and sanctuary, along with the offset vestibule. The earliest Yards and Docks plans were developed early in 1901.<sup>17</sup> Somewhat later in 1901, however, the Bureau changed its plans to include a chancel extension on the north side

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<sup>16</sup>Sutton's plan is stored as Plan 104-1 in the vault and microfilm collection at the Mare Island Naval Complex. Many of the most important original plans have been transferred to the Federal Archives, San Bruno, California. Twelve of the most valuable plans are reproduced as part of this HABS documentation.

<sup>17</sup> Plan 104-A-2, Plan for Yard Chapel," 1901.

of the building, creating a somewhat awkward shape that was neither cruciform nor rectangular.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that the chancel extensions were deleted for lack of funds and that the Bureau intended from the outset to build both the north and south chancel wings. The south chancel wing was built in 1904, less than three years after completion of the original building.<sup>19</sup> This small wing, then, should not be considered a modification but rather the completion of the original design.

From the 1920s through the 1960s, the base contemplated various additions to what was (and is) a small chapel space that lacked adequate accommodations for church-related functions -- sacristy space for sacramental goods, changing rooms for the choir, space for organ equipment, a confessional room, and so forth. It was difficult to build onto the chapel, however, without diminishing its two most important attributes: the cruciform plan and the walls of art glass windows.

The first addition was built in 1929. It was a small (14' x 9') addition to the rear of the sanctuary, built to house the organ equipment. The addition, designed by the Public Works office on the base, was quite sympathetic to the design of the church. It was carefully placed between the large lancet windows and below the rose window on the rear wall of the sanctuary. It was shingled to match the original building, including the use of dog-tooth edging, and was fitted with a small lancet window at the rear.<sup>20</sup>

It proved much more difficult, however, to provide the larger spaces needed for storage, choir room, and confessional. During the 1940s and again in the 1960s, the base prepared plans to extend the chancel wings to the north and south, doubling the length of each wing. This solution would have preserved the basic cruciform plan and would not have blocked access to any of the art glass windows. These plans, however, were not built. The next addition was built in 1959 and did not involve the chancel wings. Rather, the base added a choir changing room by constructing a second story to the vestibule, above the portico but below the spire. The vestibule was built with an attic space at this level, accessible only by ladder. The 1959 work simply added an interior stairway in the vestibule to provide access to this space. At the same time, the attic walls and floor were finished and a sink and closets were fitted into the small room.<sup>21</sup> The 1959

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<sup>18</sup> Plan 104-A-19, "Plan of Proposed Retiring Room to be Added to Plan of Proposed Chapel, U.S. Nay Yard, Mare Island, Cal." 1901.

<sup>19</sup> Plan 104-A-4, "Plan and Sections of Proposed Addition to St. Peter's Chapel," December 1904.

<sup>20</sup> Plan 104-A-9, "Building 104, Yard Chapel, Addition to House Organ, Etc., Plans, Elevations, Details," September 1929.

<sup>21</sup> Plan 104-A-20, "Building 104, Choir Robing Room, Second Floor," 1959. Drawn by the Public Work Department, Mare Island.

work cannot be seen from the exterior. The new room was fitted with windows which are hidden behind large attic vents, which were part of the original design. The vestibule staircase was fitted with lancet arch trim between the balusters and blends well with the rest of the vestibule and the adjacent nave.

In 1963, the base designed and built additions at the rear of each chancel wing, the north addition for use as a sacristy, the south addition for a confessional. The additions are small, each measuring about 12' x 12'. They detract from the cruciform plan, however, by bringing the chancel walls in a plane with the rear of the sanctuary. The additions also block light to two large art glass windows, located at the sides of the sanctuary. These windows are now dark except when backlit with fluorescent bulbs installed for that purpose.<sup>22</sup>

Other, relatively minor, modifications are known to have occurred. The altar in the sanctuary originally included a tall reredos, or carved screen. This was removed to provide space for the organ pipes, probably at the time of the 1929 rear addition. A large, bell-shaped metal speaker was installed on the roof ridge in 1945.<sup>23</sup> Brass and onyx gates at the chancel were installed in 1904, in a memorial to Rev. William Kip, the pioneer Episcopal Bishop for California. These were removed in recent decades to provide easier access to the sanctuary. The carpeting has been changed many times over the life of the church. The current lighting fixtures were installed at some point between 1948 and 1952.

#### **4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Mare Island Naval Shipyard closed in 1996. The historic buildings therein have been assigned a "caretaker" status under the control of the Engineering Field Activity, West (EFA West). The "caretaker" status generally involves mothballing a building, including securing its doors and windows, shutting off utilities, and so forth. EFA West has elected to record to HABS specifications many of the most significant historic buildings at Mare Island, prior to laying down the building to a caretaker status.

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<sup>22</sup>Plan 104-A-21, "Building 104, Additions. Floor Plan, Elevations & Details," May 1963. Prepared by the District Public Works Office in San Bruno, California.

<sup>23</sup>Plan 104-A-14, "Building No. 104, Chapel Amplifier Support," October, 1945. Plan developed by the Public Works Department, Mare Island.

## 5. SOURCES

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