

MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, SMITHY, BUILDING 46  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

HABS No. CA-1543-D

HABS  
CAL  
48-MAR1,  
ID. -

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA**

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

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS...

HABS  
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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, Smithy, Building, 46		HABS NO. CA-1543-D
SECONDARY OR COMMON NAMES OF STRUCTURE		
COMPLETE ADDRESS (DESCRIBE LOCATION FOR RURAL SITES)		
DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (INCLUDE SOURCE) Late 19th 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) Brick		
TYPE AND DIMENSIONS OF STRUCTURE (SKETCHED FLOOR PLANS ON SEPARATE PAGES ARE ACCEPTABLE) One story		
EXTERIOR FEATURES OF NOTE Three bay front, low-pitched gable roof, round-arched windows and round arched panels		
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,  
Smithery (Building 46)  
California Avenue, west side at California Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street  
Vallejo  
Solano County  
California

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Addendum to:  
MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD  
Smithery (Building 46)  
HABS No. CA-1543-D (Page 2)

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD Smithery (Building 46)

HABS No. CA-1543-D

- Location:** Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, California  
California Avenue, west side at California Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street
- Significance:** Building 46 is a contributing element of the Mare Island Historic District. Building 46 is arguably the most important building at Mare Island and is a candidate for the short list of the most important historic military resources in California. It is the oldest building at Mare Island as well as the oldest building in the key shipyard area of the base. It was the first building to be initiated during the tenure of Commander David Farragut as commander of the shipyard. Architecturally, it is among the most interesting and handsome of the many brick industrial shipyard buildings at Mare Island.
- Present Owner:** U.S. Navy, EFA West  
900 Commodore Drive  
San Bruno, CA 94066
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Last Use:** Pipe Shop
- Description:** Building 46 is the oldest and most important element of a core group of 19<sup>th</sup> century brick industrial buildings at Mare Island between the waterfront and Railroad Avenue. This core group, which also includes Buildings 50, and 52, collectively comprises an historic shipyard scene that is unrivalled on the West Coast and is on par with any comparable group of buildings in the United States. The place of Building 46 in that group is shown in Photographs D-3 and D-4; Building 46 is at the forefront in those views. Because it is a U-shaped building, Building 46 also appears near the left side of that view.

This core group of shipyard buildings evolved over several decades from the mid-1850s through the 1880s. As new functions were required, new buildings were constructed as structural links to the older buildings, and the new additions were given separate building numbers. As a result, the core buildings effectively comprise a single structure, assembled at various times during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Building 46, the historic smithery, is a U-shaped building with an arched pilastered wall. A sandstone cap marks the spring line between the pilaster and the arch. The wall between two pilasters is penetrated by two round arched openings that were originally filled with multi-light wooden sash and transoms divided into fan shapes. Metal sash with awning vents and muntins following historic patterning have replaced the original sash. The Romanesque arches of Building 46 are shown in detail in Photograph D-11. The sandstone cap and metal sash are shown in detail in Photograph D-12. Some bays had single large archways filled with large paired and glazed doors. The original metal roof rising from a simple dentil cornice was hipped. The replacement roof has hips at the elbow of the U and terminates against new parapeted gable walls at the east end of the wings. Nine ventilator cupolas lined the ridge and small brick chimneys rose from the exterior walls. A large square chimney was centered in the court serving the many forges in the building. The earthquake (1898) and roof restructuring have forced removal of the cupolas and chimneys which have been replaced by a glazed ventilating monitor. Skylights which once penetrated the roof have been removed.

The building, as noted, is U-shaped with a north, south, and a west wing. The north wing is shown in Photograph D-6. The west wing, effectively the rear of the building, is shown in Photograph D-7. The south wing is joined on the south by Buildings 50, 52, and other buildings, such that it may be seen only at the facade or east elevation.

In its interior, Building 46 comprises three rooms, one for each wing. Like the other brick shops at Mare Island, Building 46 survived as a functional part of the modern shipyard because it included a series of useful clear span industrial spaces which could be adapted for a variety of purposes.

The integrity of Building 46 is generally high, considering its age and the fact that it was in heavy industrial use for nearly 150 years. The most notable changes are attributable to repair work following the earthquake of 1898. The roof was largely reconstructed after that quake, including brickwork above the cornice level. Most important character-defining elements have survived, including the distinctive Romanesque patterning to the window and door openings.

**Historical Context:** There is a distinct “style” to the 19<sup>th</sup> century shipyard buildings in the Shipyard North area. All are brick, built to temple-like proportions, and fitted with neoclassical details. Building 46 set the precedent for that style and is the best remaining example of it.

Building 46 was the first permanent building to be constructed as part of the 1854 Sanger Plan, the first master plan for the base. This early construction was accomplished during the tenure of Commander David Farragut as base commander, and that of Daniel Turner as the first civil engineer of the base. In August 1854, the Secretary of the Navy assigned Commander David Glasgow Farragut to Mare Island as the station's first commandant. Upon his arrival on September 16, 1854, Farragut observed problems with the master plan, which had been prepared by the Bureau of Yards and Docks in Washington, D.C. with little on-site work. In several cases Bureau of Yards and Docks planners had ignored the topography of the island and had located buildings with one end on level ground near the waters edge and the opposite end extended into the hillside far enough to require the removal of 20 to 30 feet of soil to bring the foundation to grade. The original yard plan also placed the shops and storehouses around the building way; Farragut felt that this was in error and that they would be better relocated around the planned wet basin. Additionally, the Bureau of Yards and Dock's rendering of the plans had many buildings drawn wildly out of scale. Making some minor modifications in the Sanger Plan, Farragut and his Superintendent of Yards and Docks, Daniel Turner, set about construction of the Smithery, Steam Engineering Complex, and storehouses.

Many of the buildings at the base from this period were designed by Daniel Turner. Eight buildings remain from Turner's early work at the island. His structures are quintessential 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial buildings – heavy masonry construction in a restrained classical revival style. Building 46, built in 1856, has distinctive Romanesque

arches. [Navy real property records indicate the building was completed in 1856. As shown in Photograph D-13, the building itself includes a very old (but probably not original) sandstone plate that indicates the building was constructed in May 1855.] Building 71 is a heavily modified Turner building from 1858. Building 85 is a large brick building with Classical Revival gable returns and denticulated cornice. Turner was also likely responsible for designing Buildings 87 and 89/91, 1858 brick buildings with detailing similar to that of Building 85. Turner's buildings epitomized the early period of Mare Island history, 1854-1865. His buildings were: executed in masonry, usually brick; heavy and broad, reflecting their masonry materials; and detailed in classical details, reflecting the continuing influence of the Classical Revival in the design of all modes of Federal architecture.

Building 46 is a key structure within the pre-Civil War building stock at Mare Island, for several reasons. It set the pattern for industrial design at the station for the next half century. It was also a key metal-working building, of central importance to the early operations of the shipyard. For many years, it was also the social hub of Mare Island, simply because it was the only permanent building of any size that had been completed.

**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 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

