

Mare Island Naval Shipyard,
Drydock 2 (Building DD2)
California Avenue, east side near 9th Street
Vallejo
Solano County
California

HABS No. CA-1543-BR

HABS
CAL
48-MARI,
IBR-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD
Dry Dock 2 (Building DD2)

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- Location:** Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, California
California Avenue, east side near 9th Street
- Significance:** Building DD2, commonly called Dry Dock 2, is a contributing element of the Mare Island Historic District. Its significance relates chiefly to its historic role in the ship repair and construction business at Mare Island. This dry dock gave Mare Island the capacity to accept work on any ship of the Navy that was then afloat or under design. The existence of this dry dock helped preserve Mare Island's position as the preeminent Navy shipyard in California, at a time in which the usefulness of this inland facility was under scrutiny by Navy planners and political leaders. Dry Dock 2 would continue to serve as the backbone of the Mare Island operation between its completion in 1910 and construction of the Dry Docks 3 and 4 in the late 1930s and 1940s.
- Present Owner:** U.S. Navy, EFA West
900 Commodore Drive
San Bruno, CA 94066
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Last Use:** Dry Dock
- Description:** Dry Dock 2, like nearby Dry Dock 1, is a key element of this historic landscape at the waterfront on Mare Island. It is located just south of Dry Dock 1 along the historic waterfront at Mare Island. It is shown in the context of the waterfront in Photograph BR-1. Photograph BR-2 shows the structure in the context of the historic shipyard. Buildings 46, 50, and 52, the oldest group of buildings at Mare Island, are at the center of that view.

To achieve a much greater length (and avoid demolishing existing buildings), the designers of this facility built it at a 45-degree angle to the shoreline. Dry Dock 2 is a deep concrete bowl, measuring 120' wide (at the crest), 740' long, and 36' deep. The side and end walls are stepped, permitting workmen to access a vessel at various levels. These concrete platforms may be accessed through concrete

stairways on the side walls. The edges of the dry dock, as well as the edges of the various platforms, are defined by tubular metal railings. Although it is predominantly a reinforced concrete structure, Dry Dock 2 does include granite masonry at crucial structural locations, including the lip of the bowl. The dry dock appears to be largely unmodified, except for changes in its mechanical system and installation of incidental safety devices, such as the metal railing.

Historical Context: Dry Dock 2 was built between 1899 and 1910, during a period of intensive modernization at Mare Island. Two events of 1898 worked to transform fundamentally the operations at Mare Island. First, an earthquake leveled many of the unreinforced masonry structures there. Second, the Spanish-American War helped to convince the Navy and Congress that it was necessary to maintain a substantial fleet in the Pacific. For both reasons, the years after 1898 were some of the busiest in the history of Mare Island with respect to construction of new and different building forms. Although new buildings were constructed throughout the base, the most important work took place in the industrial area of the shipyards. The new construction program in the industrial area included: steps to provide more modern shops; addition of ventilating monitors to existing shops; extensions to lighting, water, and fire protection systems; conversion of the central power plant from coal to oil fuel; an improved waterfront, including construction of dikes to maintain water depth; new berths; a new ferry slip; and reconstruction of the railroad track leading to the freight shed, down Central Avenue and in the area of Dock Street south of Dry Dock 2; an extension of the quay wall south of the entrance to Dry Dock 2; and the addition of a larger dry dock (Dry Dock 2) capable of docking any ship of the Navy afloat or under design.

Dry dock 2 was the key element of this modernization program. Work on this massive structure commenced in 1899. The Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific Company of San Francisco had the first contract for constructing this structure. The work was supervised by noted engineer, Alexis Von Schmidt, who would also design and supervise construction on private dry docks at Hunters Point in San Francisco. The Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific Company failed and the work was turned over to Scofield Construction from Philadelphia. The Scofield firm prepared all existing original plans for the dry dock. The second dry dock was distinctive for its concrete design, a

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major achievement in hydraulic concrete construction during early 20th century California. Although a modern concrete structure, it pays homage to its masonry predecessor through incised masonry-like elements at its locks and through the use of granite blocks along the upper sill. Construction continued for more than a decade; the dry dock was finished in 1910.

Dry dock 2 was designed as a “state of the art” facility for its time, capable of accepting any ship the Navy had afloat or in design. At 120’ x 750’, it was several hundred feet longer than Dry Dock 1, which was completed only a few years before work began on Dry Dock 2. Dry Dock 2 was so long that it had to be built at a 45-degree angle to the shoreline to avoid demolition of the older shops building. This great dock was lined in concrete, with granite masonry used only at selected critical areas. It would serve as the main dry dock at Mare Island between 1910 and the late 1930s. During the build-up leading to World War II, two other dry docks would be completed, both in the emerging Shipyard South area.

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

