

United Engineering Company Shipyard,

HAER No. CA-295-C

Gate House

(United Engineering Company Shipyard, Timekeeper's Office No. 67) HAER

(Building No. 3) CAL

2900 Main Street I-ALAM,

Alameda 4C-

Alameda County

California

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
San Francisco, California

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

**UNITED ENGINEERING COMPANY SHIPYARD, GATE HOUSE**  
(United Engineering Company Shipyard, Timekeeper's Office No. 67)  
(Building No. 3)

HAER No. CA-295-C

**Location:** 2900 Main Street  
Alameda  
Alameda County  
California

U.S.G.S. 7.5 minute Oakland West, Calif. quadrangle.  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.562480.41842460

**Significance:** The Gate House is a contributing structure in the United Engineering Company Shipyard historic district that has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The United Engineering Company Shipyard, established in 1941 to build and repair ships for the U.S. Navy, is the last surviving of several large World War II shipyards in Alameda. United Engineering built 21 tugboats and repaired hundreds of ships during the war. The facility was one of the largest employers in Alameda and played an important economic and social role in the city. As the check-in point for hundreds of round-the-clock workers, the Gate House represents both the contribution of labor to work at the shipyard and the management of labor by the United Engineering Company and its successors.

**Description:** The Gate House is located south of the large Inspection and Repair Shop and east of the Office Building in the Alameda Gateway complex. The complex is situated at the north end of Main Street in Alameda, Alameda County, California.

The Gate House is a long, narrow, one-story building with an irregular-shaped plan. It measures 89 feet across the north and south facades, 19 feet 6 inches across the west, and 15 feet across the east facade. The structure has a total area of approximately 1500 square feet. The Gate House is utilitarian in appearance and has little ornamentation.

The eastern half of the building rests on a foundation of wooden posts, and the western half sits on a reinforced concrete base. The building has a wood frame covered with horizontal wood siding on the exterior. The roof has several levels. Most sections are gabled with a shallow pitch, and others, such as the porches and south addition, have shed roofs. All areas are covered with asphalt rolled strip roofing. Gutters

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provide drainage, and there is one vent on the roof. A flagpole that is attached to the south facade also projects above the roofline.

Most windows are double-hung, three-over-three divided lights with wooden sashes. The addition on the east end of the building has aluminum sliding sash windows. Several doorways have the original wooden half-glassed doors. On the west end of the building, most of the plank doors to the aisles have been removed, and the openings have been covered with plywood.

The building is fully plumbed and wired for electricity. The interior is lit with hanging fluorescent lighting fixtures. The interior walls are primarily clad in painted particleboard.

The building was constructed in several phases and has been remodeled. As a result the Gate House has a complicated plan. The original building was a rectangular structure built in 1941. This portion is the core of the current building. In 1942 three additions were made to the structure; a single room was added to the east end, a small addition was made on the south side, and a large addition was built on the west end. The largest portion of this last section was a large room divided into nine aisles. The doorways to the aisles (which are now on the interior of the enclosed porch) are still labeled overhead with numbers indicating aisle numbers and what appear to be employee numbers. For example, a sign above the fifth aisle reads, "#5 200 to 666." West of the aisles, two small offices and a porch were added at about the same time.<sup>2</sup> This area is now a storage space.

A few years later (sometime in the late 1940s) another addition was built on the east end of the building. It matches the existing building's width, siding, roof pitch and general appearance but has sliding sash aluminum windows. The addition consists of two rooms and a small bathroom.

Sometime later, the wall that divided the two spaces of the original structure was partially removed. In addition, the railings between the aisles were removed, the north aisle doors were boarded over, the south doors replaced with a single large opening, and the porch on the south end of the aisles was enclosed with plywood.

The separate sections of the Gate House have different floor and ceiling treatments. The original core of the building has linoleum-tiled floors, and the ceiling is covered with acoustical tiles. The eastern

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<sup>1</sup> *Alterations and Addition to the Gate House* (Alameda, CA: United Engineering Co., Ltd., Alameda Shipyard, 30 November 1942).

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addition has linoleum-tiled floors and a dropped ceiling added years after the addition was built. The large western addition has a concrete floor and exposed truss work.

The building has been altered on the interior and exterior and has a low degree of integrity.

**Historical Context:**

The original Gate House and primary additions were built in 1941 during a construction campaign by United Engineering. At that time the company quickly constructed numerous buildings to accommodate shipbuilding and repair necessitated by U.S. involvement in World War II.

Alben Froberg created drawings for the Gate House in July of 1941. The building was composed of a guard room and an office with four pay alleys in between. A little over a year later, in November of 1942, plans for the first major additions to the Gate House were drawn. The drawings for the additions were labeled with the uses of the rooms. The east end of the building housed two offices and a lavatory. The center of the building was a large room with built-in drafting cabinets (still extant). West of these there was a large addition with aisles (labeled "Storage" on the attached sketch plan). These nine aisles, or "alleys" as the original plan called them, were used by the thousands of workers checking in and out of the shipyard during the hectic war years. Galvanized steel rails divided each aisle, and wood shelves attached to the center of each row were probably used for marking time cards. At the west end of the alleys there were two "Time Checkers" offices with windows that opened onto the alleys on the east and an exterior turnstile on the west.

On the 1948 Sanborn map, this building was identified as the Timekeeper's Office and labeled no. 16. During the Todd Shipyard years, the building was called building 67. In 2001, still called building 67, the original portion of the building is occupied by a tenant who operates a fabric, upholstery, and design company.

**Sources:**

Alameda Gateway. *Existing Site Plan*. 30 January 1984.

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Sanborn Map Company. *Insurance Maps of Alameda, California*, p.  
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*Gate House*, plan. 30 November 1942.

United Engineering Company Ltd. *Alameda Shipyard: Map Showing*  
*Existing Facilities and Those Under Construction*. 22 October 1942.

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*Showing Existing and Proposed Additional Facilities*. Plan no. UEC-  
A-1-7. 14 June 1943.

United States. Army Corps of Engineers – San Francisco District and  
California. State Historic Preservation Officer. Memorandum of  
Agreement Regarding the Oakland Harbor Navigation Improvements  
Project, Alameda County, California. Signed 31 January 2001 and 22  
January 2001.

Widell, Cheryl, State Historic Preservation Officer. Letter to  
Richard G. Thompson, Lieutenant Colonel, San Francisco District,  
Corps of Engineers, Regarding Oakland Harbor Ship Channel  
Deepening and Improvements, Alameda County [Determination of  
Eligibility Concurrence]. 9 June 1998.

Thompson, Richard G., Lieutenant Colonel, San Francisco District,  
Corps of Engineers. Letter to Cheryl Widell, State Historic  
Preservation Officer, requesting Determination of Eligibility. 30 April  
1998.

**Project Information:**

This report was prepared for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and  
the Port of Oakland in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement  
(MOA) between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, San Francisco  
District and the California State Historic Preservation Officer  
concerning the former United Engineering Company shipyard. The  
Port of Oakland and the City of Alameda were concurring parties to  
the MOA. The MOA was created because of a proposal by the U.S.  
Army Corp of Engineers in partnership with the Port of Oakland to  
sponsor the Oakland Harbor Navigation Improvements Project. This  
project "would deepen Oakland Harbor channels and berth areas from  
-42 feet mean lower low water (MLLW) to -50 feet MLLW, with 2  
feet overdredge allowance" and widen some portions of the channels.  
These actions, which would constitute an Undertaking under Section

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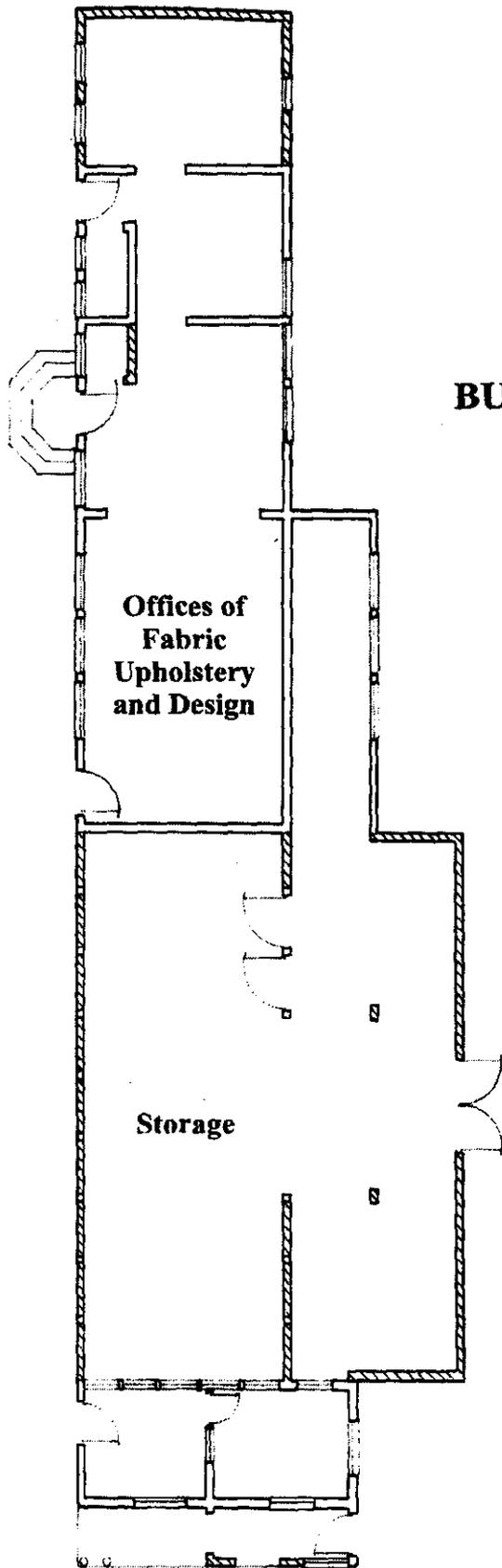
106, would result in the demolition of several buildings and structures at the former United Engineering Company Shipyard. Because the shipyard had been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the Undertaking would have an adverse effect on the property. Under the MOA, the following HAER documentation has been prepared: a written historic and descriptive report on the shipyard as a whole, seventeen separate reports on individual buildings and structures in the shipyard, including this report, and photographic documentation.

This building will not be demolished by the federal undertaking.

This report was prepared by Jody Stock, architectural designer, and Michael R. Corbett, architectural historian. Corbett was a subcontractor to Basin Research Associates of San Leandro. Basin Research was under contract to g. borchard & associates.

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**BUILDING NO. 3: GATE HOUSE**



Prepared by Jody R. Stock  
2/11/01

Plan is based on scaled drawings, *Alterations and Additions to the Gate House*. Alameda, CA: United Engineering Co., Ltd., Alameda Shipyard, 30 November 1942., and Alben Froberg, *Gate House for United Engineering*. Alameda, CA: United Engineering Co., Ltd., Alameda Shipyard, 31 July 1941. The plan has been altered to reflect current field conditions. The walls that have been added (after 1942) are indicated with hashmarks and are not to scale.