

MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, SENTRY HOUSES
(Building Nos. A272 & A279)
Railroad Avenue near Eighteenth Street
Vallejo
Solano County
California

HABS CA-1543-CZ
CA-1543-CZ

HABS
CA 1543-CZ

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PACIFIC GREAT BASIN SUPPORT OFFICE
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
600 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94103

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, SENTRY HOUSES
(MARE ISLAND NAVAL SHIPYARD, BUILDINGS A272 & A279)**

HABS No. CA-1543-CZ

- Location:** Located within the Naval Ammunition Depot, on Railroad Avenue, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Vallejo, Solano County, California
- U.S.G.S.: Mare Island, 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle, 1959, photorevised 1980
UTM Coordinates: Zone 10 564870 E, 4215626 N (Building A279) and 564858 E, 4215610 N (Building A272)
- Present Owner:** 63D United States (U.S.) Army Regional Readiness Command
- Present Use:** Vacant
- Significance:** Buildings A272 and A279, built in 1942, are considered significant for their association with U.S. Naval history and the Mare Island Naval Shipyard (MINSY), the first naval installation on the west coast of the U.S. Portions of the Mare Island Naval Shipyard are within a National Historic Landmark. These buildings, however, are outside the landmark and included in the Mare Island Historic District. They were constructed for the Marine Security Detachment as gate sentry houses, guarding entry to the Naval Ammunition Depot Area. They are contributing elements of the successful base operations at Mare Island and are the only examples of sentry house design, construction methods and materials used on the island during the World War II (WWII) era.
- Description:** Buildings A272 and A279, built in 1942, are identical sentry houses (CA-1543-CZ-4) located within the Naval Ammunition Depot area of the island, immediately south of the Shipyard South area on Railroad Avenue. This area is close to the Finger Piers and other support buildings and structures that were built in 1941 and 1942 at the onset of WWII. One of the sentry houses was built to the western side of Railroad Avenue (A279 [CA-1543-CZ-1, CA-1543-CZ-2]) and the other was built to the eastern side of the same road (A272) The buildings were used as sentry houses until 1953, when they were vacated. Window and door openings were boarded over in 1993.

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The 1942 sentry houses each measure seven feet, two inches square by approximately 12 feet, six inches high from finished floor level to roof peak. Each building's foundation is constructed of steel reinforced concrete and includes the 12-foot, eight-inch by nine-foot, eight-inch slab/platform and the one-foot-high base walls (with chamfered upper edges) on which the wood-framed buildings rest. Each building is set on its concrete slab so that one foot of the slab surrounds the southeast, northeast and southwest sides of the building and four feet of the slab is to the northwest; the northwest end of the slab includes a four-foot, two-inch by two-foot, three-inch planter opening directly in front of the building. There were two approximately nine-inch-diameter upright, torpedo-shaped "projectiles" attached by metal pipe dowels to the north and west corners of each sentry house slab (Barrett & Hilp Contractors 1942). The "projectiles" were removed at an unknown date; approximately nine-inch-diameter impressions and remnants of the metal pipe dowels are all that remain.

Each wood-framed sentry house has walls and composition shingle-surfaces hipped (pyramidal) roofing constructed of nominally dimensioned two- by four-inch lumber spaced at 16 inches on center. The top nine inches of the walls are inset about seven-eighths of an inch and approximately six-foot, two-inch-wide, seven-eighths-inch-thick applied vertical panels are centrally set on each wall of each building, giving the six-inch corners of each building an inset look.

The eastern sentry house (A279) has a centrally set door on its southwest side (CA-1543-CZ-2) and the western sentry house (A272) has a centrally set door on its northeast side (CA-1543-CZ-4). The doors are entry from a concrete stair. A279 has a two-riser concrete stair and A272 had at least a one-riser concrete stair that is now level with asphalt road surfacing. The original door on each building was a wooden Dutch door, with the upper section having a rectangular glazed area. The original doors were probably removed around 1980 and now have simple plywood doors. The door openings measure two feet, seven inches wide by six feet, eight-and-one-half inches high. The awning above the doorway of each building appears to be a later addition.

The remaining walls of each sentry house each include a centrally set three-foot-wide by two-foot, six-inch-high single-pane glass windows. According to original architectural plans, each building had two fixed single-pane windows and one hinged window (the northeast side window on A279 and the southwest side window on A272). Probably in 1993, all windows were boarded-over with plywood and the glass removed from the northwest window opening of A272.

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According to original architectural plans, each building was to include lettering and/or other decoration on some of their sides. Such decoration is not evident on the extant buildings. However, around 1993 the present number designation (A-272 or A-279) for each building was painted above its doorway (CA-1543-CZ-2, CA-1543-CZ-4). Attached to the northwest side of each building is light fixture that may be an early feature of the building. The arm of each light fixture is metal and the shade in enameled metal.

The interior of each sentry house includes approximately 42 square feet of floor space. Interior finishes include a cement floor and painted plywood-surfaced walls and ceiling. A272 has its original Douglas fir counter at the northwest wall; the original central drawer beneath the counter has been removed. There is wooden shelving beneath A272's original counter and a corner shelf at the southeast wall that are probably later additions. A279 includes counters and shelving that are probably later additions (CA-1543-CZ-6).

Originally there was a steel gate installed across Railroad Avenue just southeast of the sentry houses. The gate was removed sometime after 1953 and prior to 1970.

Historical Context:

Buildings A272 and A279 were constructed as part of the Mare Island naval facility located in Vallejo, California. The U.S. Navy established the shipyard in 1854 as a shipbuilding and repair facility. MINSY was the first west coast naval installation and was the only such facility in California for many years.

Mare Island's built environment is the product of over 100 years of military construction and consists of a blend of buildings that demonstrate many different historical functions, construction technologies and architectural styles. In response to growing tensions in Europe, the U.S. Congress, in 1938, decided to expand the size of the American fleet by 20 percent. This expansion escalated at the end of 1941 with the entry of the U.S. into WWII. There was a massive expansion of aircraft and shipbuilding industries at Mare Island during WWII. Along with a fundamental redesign of the Shipyard South area at the brink of the U.S. entry into WWII, the adjacent Naval Ammunition Depot expanded its productive and storage capacities. Buildings were constructed within this area of the island to support the bustling activity in the berthing areas and ammunitions depot. Many of these buildings, such as the sentry houses, were erected to support the U.S. Marine Security Detachment Unit, which was stationed unit stationed in this area to protect the Naval Ammunition Depot.

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The surviving buildings and structures from the WWII era represent an important collection of buildings, “arranged in a manner that enables an understanding of how the base functioned at that time” (JRP Historical Consulting with PAR Environmental Services, Inc. 1996: Section 8, page 53). In 1942 the U.S. Navy had the sentry houses (Buildings A272 and A279) built to guard entry into the Naval Ammunitions Depot. The sentry houses are located within the southern shipyard area close to the Finger Piers and are the only WWII-era sentry houses on the island. They were designed by the San Francisco contracting firm of Barrett & Hilp. Architectural plans and drawings identify draftsmen and contractors by initial only. The sentry houses were vacated in 1953 and the windows and doors boarded over in 1993.

The military base closed in 1993 and the City of Vallejo acquired a use permit for the property from the U.S. Navy. On July 12, 2002, ownership of Buildings A272 and A278 was transferred from the U.S. Navy to the U.S. Army Reserve.

Sources:

A. Architectural Drawings:

Barrett & Hilp Contractors. *Navy Yard, Mare Island, California – Naval Ammunition Depot, Entrance to Ammunition Depot – Plans, Elevations, Details, Misc. Fire Fighting Equipment (Y & D Drawing No. 270448) 1942.* On file, U.S. Army Reserve, Vallejo, CA.

B. Historic Maps and Views:

No historic views or aerial photographs were located for these structures

C. Interviews

Volk, J. S. Telephone communication between Tracy Bakic, PAR Environmental Services, Inc. and J. Stephen Volk (Environmental Scientist [Adecco TAD], 63D U.S. Army Regional Readiness Command CST Environmental Division), 2002.

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D. Bibliography

Bumatay, H. (Mare Island Naval Shipyard). California Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record form for Building A272, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Mare Island, California, 1994a. On file, State of California Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento.

JRP Historical Consulting Services with PAR Environmental Services, Inc. *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form for Mare Island Historic District, Vallejo, California*, 1996. On file, California Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento and U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D.C.

Mikesell, S. D. California Department of Parks and Recreation Building Structure Object Record form for Building A272, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Mare Island, California, 1995. On file, State of California Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento.

Mikesell, S. D. California Department of Parks and Recreation Building Structure Object Record form for Building A279, Mare Island Naval Shipyard, Mare Island, California, 1995b. On file, State of California Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento.

PAR Environmental Services, Inc. *Integrated Cultural Resource Management Plan for Army Lands at Mare Island National Historic Landmark, Vallejo, Solano County, California*, 2002. On file, California Office of Historic Preservation, Sacramento.

Project Information: After the September 11 terrorist attack, new standards were implemented for federal facilities. Building setbacks from roads and parking areas have been greatly increased. The Department of Defense's Antiterrorism Standards for Buildings, 4-010-01 8 October 2003 Distances per United Facilities Criteria require minimum setbacks that are greater than the existing setbacks, thereby requiring this facility's removal. This undertaking has been approved in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the California State Historic Preservation Officer and the U.S. Army Reserve, pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800, regulations implementing Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (16 U.S.C. 470f).

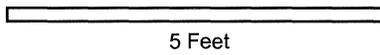
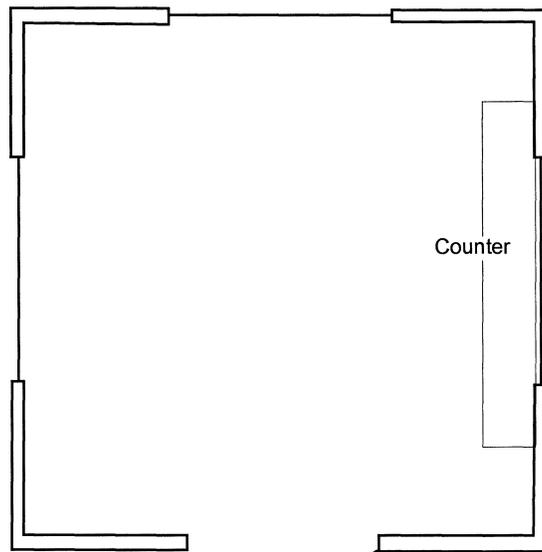
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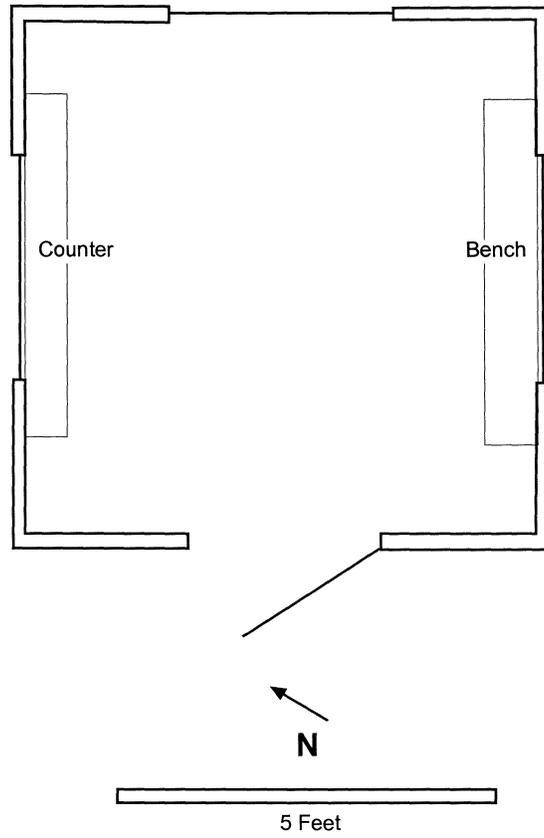
Prepared By: This report was prepared by Tracy Bakic, cultural resources specialist with PAR Environmental Services, Inc., Sacramento, California. Photography and the associated photographic index were prepared by David DeVries, Mesa Technical, Berkeley, California.

Submitted By: 63D U.S. Army Regional Readiness Command Headquarters, 4235 Yorktown Avenue, Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5002

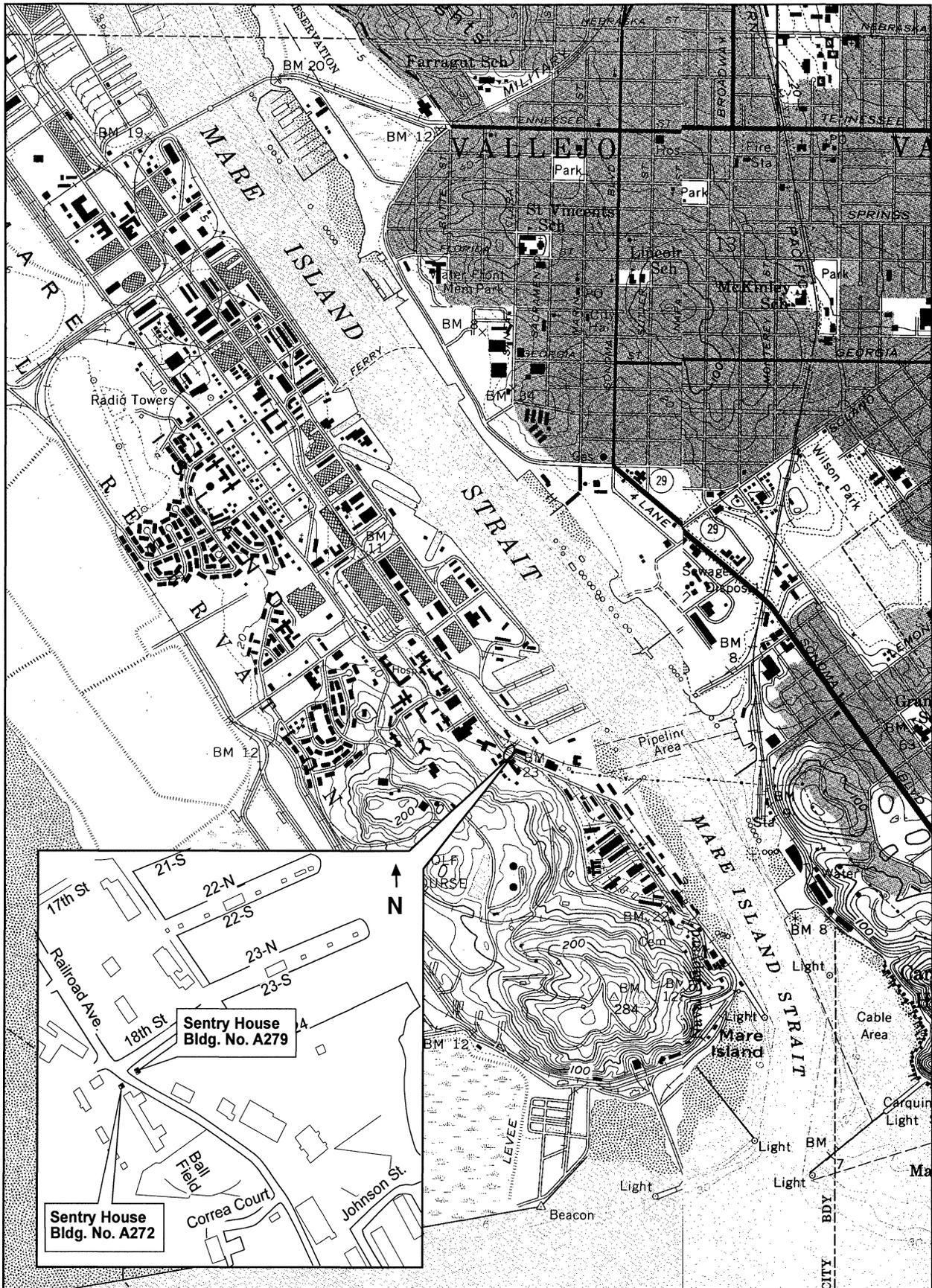
Inventory Date: November 4, 2002 (Updated April 18, 2005)

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Location Map and Site Plan (Inset) of Mare Island Naval Shipyard Sentry Houses (Building No. A272 + A279) (USGS: Benicia and Mare Island, CA 7.5' Topographic Quadrangle, Both 1959, Photorevised 1980)