

25 July 2005

Historical Advisory Board
City of Alameda - Department of Planning and Building
2263 Santa Clara Avenue, Room 190
Alameda, CA 94501

Subject: Request to add Naval Air Station Resources to Historical Building Study List

Dear Members of the Board:

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society (AAPS) requests that the following buildings and objects located within the former Alameda Naval Air Station (NAS) be added to the Historical Building Study List. AAPS, in conjunction with representatives of the Alameda Naval Air Museum, has identified several resources which merit consideration for their historical significance and associations before they are affected by the proposed redevelopment of Alameda Point or by any other project. Placement of these resources on the Study List does not require Section 106 review by the Navy or the State Office of Historic Preservation; it merely affords the HAB and public the opportunity for future consideration of preservation opportunities before the buildings are proposed for demolition or alteration. In addition, we further request that the City begin proceedings to add these resources to the City Monument designation of NAS Historic District.

As you know, architectural historian Sally Woodbridge prepared an inventory of pre-1946 buildings for the Navy in 1992, and identified a historic district that was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The Naval Air Station Alameda Historic District was determined to be historically significant under National Register Criterion A under the theme of development of U.S. Navy bases in the San Francisco Bay Area for World War II. The reason for siting of the NAS in Alameda was to provide landplane facilities alongside a protected body of water where seaplanes ("flying boats") could take off and land under a reasonable variety of weather conditions. According to Woodbridge's study, "the Alameda Naval Air Station was the most important new air station constructed on the west coast, and . . . it was the major air base for a great naval operating base area with auxiliary fields." In addition, the historic district was also found to meet National Register Criterion C, for its simplified, "early Modern" architectural style exhibited by the permanent concrete buildings as well as the semi-permanent, more utilitarian structures; featuring flat roofs, cubistic forms, and horizontal bands of fenestration. The site plan and landscaped park-like setting organized by east-west and north-south axes

were also identified as a significant element in the district. The period of significance of the historic district was identified as 1938-1945. No single building or resource was individually eligible for the National Register, but 85 buildings were found to contribute to the historic district; the remainder of the 400-some buildings on the base did not contribute to the significance of the district. The historic district was designated a City Historical Monument in compliance with terms of the Navy's Memorandum of Agreement (1999) that resolved the potential effects of future transfer of the base out of Federal ownership, in compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

Flight Control Tower, Building 19, West Tower Avenue

Constructed in 1941, the Flight Control Tower is one to four stories in height with a four story tower. It is distinguished by its horizontal bands of metal frame windows and its tower with canted windows. There have been alterations over the years, but these have been on side or rear elevations; the character-defining features of the original building are still very clear. The Tower played an essential role in the life of the NAS: it controlled air traffic coming into and leaving the base. The NAS could not have performed its historic role of serving seaplanes and land-based planes without this building. This building was evaluated by Ms. Woodbridge and found to no longer possess sufficient architectural integrity to meet the criteria of the National Register. We believe that the Tower tells an essential part of the story of the NAS, and this historical significance overrides the losses of integrity. Placement of this resource on the Historical Building Study List will encourage its reuse and preservation.

Boathouse, Building 15 (1605 Ferry Point Road), east side of the Seaplane Lagoon

The Boathouse is a two-story concrete building with a one story south side wing ; metal sash, and flat roof, built in 1940. Minor alterations were made in 1989 but the building still possesses high integrity. Building 15 was found not to contribute to the historic district because it was not considered architecturally distinguished and because it was too distant from the core of the historic district, and that enlarging the district boundary would allow too high a concentration of non-contributors. The Boathouse was initially built for the utility boats, crash and rescue boats that tended the seaplanes, or "flying boats," at NAS Alameda. This building's significance is based on the essential service it provided to the NAS's mission.

SIMA Diving Locker, Building 64, Ferry Point Road, east side of the Seaplane Lagoon

This is a small 2 story concrete building; with flat roof and metal sash windows in a simple version of pared-down Modernism. Built in 1941, it appears virtually unaltered. Ms. Woodbridge found the architectural significance not great and suggested it might not contribute to the NAS because of its utilitarian nature and because it is relatively isolated from the historic core of the base. However, its cubistic form and simple, utilitarian nature are part of its style. The SIMA (Shore Intermediate Maintenance Activity) Diving Locker was instrumental in maintaining ships on active duty in the Fleet. Divers could perform underwater inspections, clean hulls, and make repairs on ships rather than taking

the ships out of service and putting them into a shipyard or drydock. This building's significance is based on the essential service it provided to the NAS's mission.

East Gate Sentry House, Building 70a and East Gate Canopy, Atlantic Avenue

Building 70a is a concrete one-room building with metal windows and flat roof, built 1941. Woodbridge found this building representative of the Modern style of the base's central core, but too isolated from the core to be considered a contributor to the district. Ms. Woodbridge's survey made no mention of the canopy, because she only evaluated buildings or structures constructed before 1946. The canopy appears to date from around 1960, as it does not appear in early photos of the base. It is a cantilevered metal structure supported by two piers, in a minimal, futuristic design suggestive of the Space Age. The canopy originally was surmounted by lettering "Naval Air Station Alameda"; many of the letters have been removed or reused to spell out "Alameda Point." Within the last few years the south end of the canopy was damaged by a truck collision, but that section is repairable and the integrity of the original design is clear. Like the Main Sentry House at the north entry to the base, the East Gate Sentry House and Canopy defined the edge of the base and the formal entry onto military property. AAPS believes that the canopy could be reused like a gateway arch to convey a distinctive sense of place for Alameda Point, even if it must be moved from its original location.

WAVES Barracks, Building 78, northeast corner of Moonlight Terrace and Sunrise Court

The WAVES Barracks is a two-story, wood-frame building with a gable roof and an H-plan, constructed in 1942, with very high integrity. This type of simple, utilitarian building was once very common on mid-century military bases, and it is classic military construction of the period. However, its ubiquitous nature has led to demolition of most examples, and the type has become relatively rare. In fact this WAVES Barracks is the sole survivor of four identical WAVES Barracks that existed at the NAS during World War II. It is illustrative of the range of housing provided for enlisted personnel, in contrast to the quarters elsewhere on the base of permanent concrete construction in the Modern style.

The WAVES ("Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service") performed essential roles in the Navy and released male naval personnel for sea duty. Although women had been enlisted temporarily during World War I, the Second World War was the first time that female officers were commissioned, and WAVES served in a much wider range of occupations than before, such as in communications, intelligence, science, technology, medical professions, as well as in traditional secretarial and clerical roles. Aviation Machinist's Mates; Aviation Metalsmiths; Control Tower Operators; Aerographer's Mates; Link Trainer Instructors; and Parachute Riggers also provided essential services. By the end of World War II, WAVES in active service comprised about 2.5% of the Navy's total strength. Building 78 represents the women who contributed toward the war effort, and should be considered worthy of addition to the Historical Building Study List for its historical associations as well as for its example of a

typical military building type, now rare. This building could be moved to another location on the base in order to preserve it.

Seaplane Hangars 11 and 12

The two seaplane hangars, constructed in 1941, like the other three hangars facing the seaplane lagoon, are two-story concrete structures with metal frames and metal roof trusses concealed behind the parapets. These hangars are 321' x 242' and 50' high, framed by projecting corner piers. Two horizontal bands of windows distinguish the north and south elevations, while the east elevation of hangar 12 and the west elevation of hangar 11 contain sliding metal doors. In 1952, the space between the two hangars was infilled with Building 400. Woodbridge's study found hangars 11 and 12 ineligible as contributors to the historic district because they had been altered. However, if the buildings were restored, they would contribute to the district; identical sliding doors still exist on Building 5 (NARF) and could be reused in the restoration of these structures. The regular sequence of hangars facing the seaplane lagoon is an extremely significant vista of the NAS, and it illustrates the relationship between land, air, and sea that was the reason for the NAS's existence.

Quonset Hut, Building 346, off Tower Avenue, located between Building 5 (NARF) and Building 44.

This small building, semicircular in section and clad in corrugated sheet metal bolted to the curved steel ribs to form both walls and roof, has simple metal frame windows, and was constructed c. 1945. This building was not formally evaluated by Woodbridge's study, evidently because it was considered to be a temporary, miscellaneous, or nondescript structure that did not contribute to the NAS. Quonset huts were a prefabricated temporary building type developed by the U.S. Navy during World War II. A purely modern, functional structure of perfect geometric form, it could be erected or relocated quickly-- and by the end of World War II, over 170,000 Quonset huts had been erected all over the world. Quonset huts are now becoming increasingly rare. The Quonset hut, although intended as a temporary building, illustrates the range of building types typical on a mid-century military base, and it tells the story of rapid military base construction during World War II.

Airplanes on pedestals, Main Gate (north) and East Gate

An A-4 "Skyhawk" is located at the Main Gate. Nicknamed "Scooter", or "Heinemann's Hot Rod", A-4's were designed by Ed Heinemann and manufactured by Douglas Aircraft Corp. The A-4 was used by the Navy from 1956 on; production ended in 1979. The design is considered to be a classic aviation design due to its small size which did not require folding wings to fit on an aircraft carrier. A-4's were rebuilt at the Naval Air Rework Facility (NARF) on the base, as well as serving in Attack Jet Squadrons based at NAS Alameda. This model is thought to have been installed on its pedestal in the mid-1970s.

An A-7 "Corsair II" is located at the East Gate. Designed and constructed by Ling-Temco-Vought, this plane was selected by the Navy in 1963 to replace the A-4. The A-7

provided an extremely rugged and stable attack platform and was constructed in large numbers for the U. S. Air Force as well as the Navy. A-7's were rebuilt by NARF Alameda. This model was placed on its pedestal about 1977. Both airplanes, though they do not date to the World War II period, merit preservation at Alameda Point because they illustrate at a glance the NAS's mission. They could be easily relocated to locations within the Historic District if necessary.

In sum, these resources were not included in the National Register historic district for a variety of reasons; some were too far from the core of the historic district; others were not recognized at the time for their design which is now relatively rare. Others date to after the 1938-1945 period of the district, but they also convey a provide of feeling and association that convey the significance of the NAS Alameda. Even if these resources are not eligible as contributors to the National Register historic district, they are worthy of local designation. Placement on the Study List, and potential inclusion in the City Historical Monument will promote their potential for preservation and reuse in the Alameda Point development project.

If you would like to discuss this letter, please contact Elizabeth Kruse at (510) 286-5612 (office) or (510) 814-9431 (home) or me at (510) 523-0411. If you wish to respond to this letter by mail, please send it to c/o Elizabeth Kruse, 2520 Chester St., Alameda CA 94501.

Sincerely,

Christopher Buckley,
Chair, Preservation Action Committee

Attachments:
Photographs and map

Cc: Marilyn York- ANAM,
Cynthia Eliason (by electronic transmission)
Andrew Thomas (by electronic transmission)
Greg McFann, Interim Planning and Building Director (by electronic transmission)
City Council (by electronic transmission)
AAPS Board and Preservation Action Committee members (by electronic transmission)



East Gate (70A) + Canopy



