

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	JUL 31 1979
DATE ENTERED	NOV 8 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Unknown

AND/OR COMMON Lewis Ark ; the "ark"; houseboat

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Hyde Street Pier (San Francisco Historic Ships)  
Foot of Hyde Street (Hyde and Jefferson Streets)

CITY, TOWN San Francisco VICINITY OF Fifth

STATE California CODE 06 COUNTY San Francisco CODE 075

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN San Francisco STATE California 94102

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Property Division, National Park Service, WRO

STREET & NUMBER 450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN San Francisco STATE California 94102

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Not Applicable

DATE  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

GOOD

RUINS

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED

ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE

MOVED

DATE 1969

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lewis Ark is a wooden houseboat, approximately 50 feet long and 20 feet wide, with a rounded, "barge-like" bottom and a one story residential section. The actual house is divided into six rooms. A roofed veranda encloses the ark proper, with two stairs affording public access to the ark. Originally, the stairs were not part of the structure. They were added when the Ark became part of the Hyde Street Pier collection in 1969. The wood is painted with the Ark's historic color scheme, white with green trim.

The interior of the Ark is panelled with a dark wood. Sliding doors lead into the two sleeping chambers, each with a built-in bed, closet, and dresser. All of these interior features are original. In the front room, or parlor, is a brick and iron fireplace, which is also original. The only surviving furnishing is also in the front room. It is a pump organ, vintage ca. 1915.

A narrow hallway leads to another sliding door which leads to the rear of the Ark, where the galley, water closet and dining room are located. The built-in cupboards in the galley are original. The rear section also contains an original built-in ice box. The water closet was altered during the Lewis period with the addition of a shower and a flush toilet.

The Ark retains its original exterior and interior appearance of 1906, and is in excellent condition. The 1969 restoration work consisted of little more than replacing a few rotted planks and painting the structure.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1906

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Unknown

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Developed in the 1880s, houseboats, known locally as "arks", were a San Francisco Bay Area phenomenon that survived for over half a century. The boats served as summer homes for many citizens from Bay Area communities. The Lewis Ark is a typical example of one of these, and the last essentially unaltered example. As such, the Lewis Ark is of local historical significance as an example of a type of maritime residential architecture--a houseboat--that has vanished from the waters of San Francisco Bay.

#### History:

A unique form of maritime architecture that is indigenous to the San Francisco Bay, the "arks" were used as summer cottages by residents of San Francisco, Oakland, Belvedere, Berkeley, and Tiburon. The ark at Hyde Street Pier is from Belvedere.

The term "ark" was applied to the houseboats of San Francisco Bay by their owners, who reportedly had built their vessels to conform to the "shape. . . as the one Noah built in obedience to the Lord's commandment. . ." In fact, the Bay Area "ark" owners called themselves the "descendants of Noah."

When the first "ark" was built is unknown, but the lines of this type of houseboat, which are square and resemble a boxcar, are definitely of California manufacture. One early account states:

The California houseboat should be called an "ark" and it should be modelled upon lines differing very materially from the broad, square-nosed sloop of the Chinese houseboat, or the solid, substantial house-boat of the Thames, though possessing the best qualities of them. . . There is an indescribable charm about the life: one has the pleasures of boating combined with the comforts of home, sea baths are at one's very threshold; fish are caught and cooked while you wait, in the manner that would give pleasure to any disciple of Izaak Walton. . . There are neighbors, thirty or forty families of them, within easy reaching distance if one can pull a stroke, for there is always a following of rowboats lazily resting upon the water in the wake of each ark.

The carefree life on the "ark" was very much in character with the flamboyant days of early San Francisco and her environs. The Turn of the Century saw what has been termed the "flowering of the Victorian Age", and certainly the "ark" is a Victorian invention with its fancy features and quaint usage.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Starr, Laura B., Strand Magazine, 1899 (no other date), File: Hyde Street Pier, "Lewis Ark"

Interview with Harry Dring by James Delgado, September 28, 1978

Reed School, Eighth Grade Class; Shark Point-High Point: An Illustrated History of Tiburon & Belvedere in Marin County, California. Belvedere: Reed School District Parent Teacher Club, 1958. pp. 42-44.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY not applicable

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,0	551-020	5	50	9	6	0	4	1	8	4	6	3	0	B									
	ZONE	EASTING						NORTHING								ZONE	EASTING							
C															D									

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Verbal boundary description is not relevant as the object is a moored houseboat; the boat as an object is significant in its entirety; the U.T.M. coordinate marks its present location.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James P. Delgado, Historian, Western Region

Gordon S. Chappell, Regional Historian, Western Region

ORGANIZATION

DATE

National Park Service, Western Region

October 4, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

(415) 556-4165

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

San Francisco

California 94102

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

5/15/79

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

Asst. Dir. Cultural Resources

DATE

7/16/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

Neal D. Shuler, Acting Director

DATE

11-8-79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

11-6-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The carefree "ark" life met its first blow after the 1906 earthquake and fire in San Francisco, The "ark" took on a new use, as a refugee home, as the only shelter for some residents of the city who had lost all else. As Sunset magazine stated in their August, 1906, edition:

"Gay then, this season will not be. Our men are too busy; our women are too busy. There is a city to be builded, the most beautiful and beloved of cities. The ark, the country home of the sea-lover, is this year his home where he must think and work for the 'city beautiful'. "ARK", the very name seems prophetic! To this place of refuge, where, before, their lightest moments were spent, came hundreds in their direst need, flying before earthquake and fire; naught left of all their wealth but their little palaces of pleasure, now their only homes. Rather soberly then, in comparison, will life go aboard the houseboats this year."

It was during this time that the so-called Lewis Ark was built. Who built it and where is long forgotten. It can be assumed, however, that it remained berthed near the place of its origin, which would indicate that the Lewis Ark was built in or near Belvedere.

After San Francisco recovered from her destruction in 1906 by earthquake and fire, the "arks" resumed their role as floating summer homes. However, the fleet was reduced, the only substantial gathering of "arks" being at Belvedere. One member of that gathering was the Lewis Ark.

Since the "arks" were not powered craft, they had to be pulled or towed by powered craft to their mooring. At Belvedere, the "arks" were berthed in a small lagoon near Tiburon during the harsh weather of the winter months. In the summer, the small drawbridge that traversed the lagoon would be let up to allow for the passage of the "arks". When in 1939 the bridge was converted into a permanent structure, many "arks" were trapped inside. This spelled the doom of the "arks". Some were removed to other waters, but many were left in the lagoon to decay and fall into disrepair. Some were hauled ashore and used as land dwellings, including the Lewis Ark.

The Lewis Ark received its only known name from the residency of Rear Admiral Robert Lewis (USN-retired) who moved in during 1959. The Admiral and his wife lived in the Ark until 1968, when development plans forced the removal of the Ark and the subsequent destruction of the last remaining "arks" in the lagoon.

Fortunately, the Ark was donated to the State of California for use in the Hyde Street Pier State Maritime Park. The Ark was moved to the Pier in 1969, where some minor restoration work took place. Finally, in late 1969, the Ark was opened for public display. The Ark has remained on display since then. In 1976, the Hyde Street Pier was absorbed as a unit of Golden Gate National Recreation Area.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

There is a detailed file concerning "ark" life on San Francisco Bay on file at the Hyde Street Pier. Interpretive programs also relate the days of the "arks", and the Lewis Ark is appropriately a focal point of the park, as the only surviving, unaltered reminder of a once vast fleet of "arks" on the bay.

The entire houseboat is regarded as significant, including all built-in facilities and the organ, which apparently has been a part of the houseboat's furnishings for some years. The remainder of the furnishings are Victorian period furnishings which have no particular association with the Lewis Ark.

Continuation Sheet

Item Number 9

Page 2

Frank, Phil, "Venerable Arks Ride the Tides", Historic Preservation, July-September, 1978