

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

For NPS use only  
received FEB 28 1983  
date entered 4/12/83

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic USS Laffey

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number West of Mount Pleasant on the east side of Charleston Harbor NA not for publication

city, town Mt. Pleasant XX vicinity of

state South Carolina code 045 county Charleston code 019

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> NA being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Patriots Point Development Authority, State of South Carolina

street & number Post Office Box 986

city, town Mount Pleasant NA vicinity of state South Carolina 29464

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Charleston County Courthouse

street & number 2 Courthouse Square

city, town Charleston state South Carolina 29401

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

Inventory of Historic Places in South Carolina title has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1981  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records South Carolina Department of Archives and History

city, town Columbia state South Carolina 29211

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

### Check one

unaltered

altered

### Check one

NA original site

NA moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The destroyer USS Laffey (DD-724), one of several dozen Allen M. Sumner-class destroyers built for the United States Navy, was constructed at Bath Iron Works, Bath, Maine, between June 28, 1943, and February 8, 1944, to Bureau of Ships specifications. The ship is now a part of the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in the Charleston Harbor. The Laffey has undergone only superficial alterations since World War II and is representative of the typical United States Navy destroyer of the era.

Additional Information: The Laffey is a World War II Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer. The ship was built with a hull length of 376 feet, 6 inches, a beam of 41 feet, 1 inch, a draught of 19 feet, and a displacement of 2,200 tons. The ship was powered by geared turbine engines fired by four Babcock and Wilcox boilers and could originally make a speed of 34 knots.

The Laffey's superstructure includes a forward island containing the bridge, the pilot-house, and the communications rooms, with a radio/radar mast rising above. Two exhaust funnels are in line behind the forward island. A rear island with a helicopter landing platform and shed is behind the funnels.

The Laffey's armament consists of six 5-inch/38 caliber guns in three turrets, two of which are located in front of the forward island, with the third located aft of the helicopter platform. Supplementary armament included four 40-millimeter anti-aircraft guns, eleven 20-millimeter guns, six 21-inch torpedo tubes, six depth charge projectors, and two depth charge racks. The Laffey's crew consisted of 336 officers and men.

During mothballing and reactivation in 1947-51, the Laffey's 40-millimeter and 20-millimeter guns were removed. In 1962 the ship underwent a FRAM II (Fleet Repair and Modernization) during which the helicopter platform was mounted for the DASH (Drone Antisubmarine Helicopter) weapon system. Two hedgehog depth charge launchers and two amidships (between the funnels) sidelaunching torpedo racks replaced the original depth charge and torpedo-launching apparatus.

The Laffey was at anchorage in mothballs from 1975 to 1981 before being towed to the Charleston Harbor. The ship is in serious need of painting and repair work.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1943-44

**Builder/Architect** Bath Iron Works

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The destroyer USS Laffey (DD-724) was built to Bureau of Ships specifications at the Bath Iron Works, Maine, in 1943-44. The ship served with the United States Navy in the Atlantic and Pacific Fleets in World War II and saw later service in the Korean War. During the World War II invasion of Okinawa Island in April 1945, the Laffey was attacked by Japanese kamikazes (suicide planes) and suffered five kamikaze hits, three bomb hits and two near-misses. The crew, despite heavy casualties and extensive damage, repulsed the attackers and saved the ship. The Laffey is now part of the Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum in the Charleston Harbor. Although the Laffey achieved significance within the last fifty years, the ship's accomplishments in the Okinawa campaign were of exceptional importance, warranting an exception to the fifty-year criterion.

Additional Information: The USS Laffey, namesake of an earlier destroyer Laffey sunk during the Guadalcanal campaign in 1942, was commissioned in February 1944 with Commander F.J. Becton in command. The ship, an Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer, performed convoy escort duty in the Atlantic during May 1944 and afterward assisted with the screening of the Normandy Invasion forces and bombardment of "Utah" beach and the German-held port of Cherbourg. The Laffey moved to the Pacific to join the Fast Carrier Task Force in November 1944. The Laffey supported the amphibious landings at Ormoc Bay and Mindoro in December 1944 and in January 1945 she supported the invasion forces at Lingayen Gulf in the Phillipines.<sup>1</sup>

The Laffey's most notable achievements came during the Okinawa campaign which lasted from March until June 1945. One of 180 destroyers involved in the campaign, the ship performed exceptionally its two primary duties of screening aircraft carriers from enemy air and submarine attacks and providing support bombardment for the Army and Marine personnel ashore. On April 16, 1945 in 79 minutes, the Laffey shot down eleven of 22 kamikaze planes which attacked her. In this raid, the Laffey crew saved the ship by successfully controlling damage from five direct kamikaze hits, three direct bomb hits, two near-misses, and machine gun strafing. It is believed that the Laffey's battle that day was the most intense experienced by any ship and that her victory was the greatest single ship achievement of the entire kamikaze struggle. By absorbing the attention of 22 kamikaze planes, and destroying eleven of those, the Laffey provided invaluable protection for the more vulnerable aircraft carriers. In comparison, the Laffey out-performed any other destroyer or carrier in this most important campaign and for her efforts received the ultimate recognition of naval achievement, a Presidential Unit Citation. The Laffey was towed into Okinawa for temporary repairs and then sailed to Seattle for more extensive repairs. The Laffey did not return to service until after the Japanese surrender.<sup>2</sup>

The Laffey participated in the atomic bomb tests in Bikini Island in 1946 and was decommissioned in 1947. In 1951 the ship was recommissioned for service in the Korean War. The Laffey saw further service on antisubmarine escort duties in the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 1

Quadrangle name Charleston, SC

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	6	0	2	2	8	0	3	6	2	8	3	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** The nominated property is shown bounded by the red line on the accompanying National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration map #11524, entitled "Charleston Harbor." This boundary includes only the historic ship, excluding adjacent piers and anchorages.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state NA code county NA code

state NA code county NA code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Clark Reynolds John E. Wells, Suzanne Pickens Wylie  
Curator and Historian South Carolina Department of Archives & History

organization Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum date 16 February 1983

street & number Post Office Box 986 telephone (803) 844-2727

city or town Mount Pleasant state South Carolina 29464

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Charles E. Lee (CFL)

title Charles E. Lee State Historic Preservation Officer date 16 February 1983

### For NPS use only

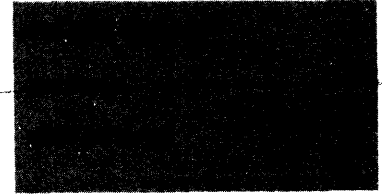
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Linda McClelland date 4/12/83  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Patrick Andrews date 4/2/83  
Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 1

Item number 8

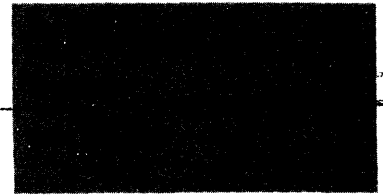
Page 1

Sea and as a Naval Reserve training and test ship in the Chesapeake Bay. The ship<sup>3</sup> was decommissioned in 1975 and was donated to the State of South Carolina in 1981.

The Laffey is the only surviving destroyer from the Battle of the Atlantic, the D-Day landings and the liberation of Europe and is the only surviving Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer. Although the Laffey was updated in the 1940s and 1960s, she retains her basic integrity as an Allen M. Sumner-class destroyer and the hull, superstructure, main guns, and much of her equipment are the same as during her period of greatest significance. Although the Laffey achieved significance within the past fifty years, the ship's exceptional experience during the vital Okinawa campaign makes her one of the most important and most representative reminders of the American struggle against the Japanese kamikazes in World War II.<sup>4</sup>

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 9

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Bibliography

Becton, F. Julian, Rear Admiral. The Ship That Would Not Die. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1980.

Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. Vol. 4. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969.

Reynolds, Dr. Clark to Patrick Andrus. 17 December 1982.

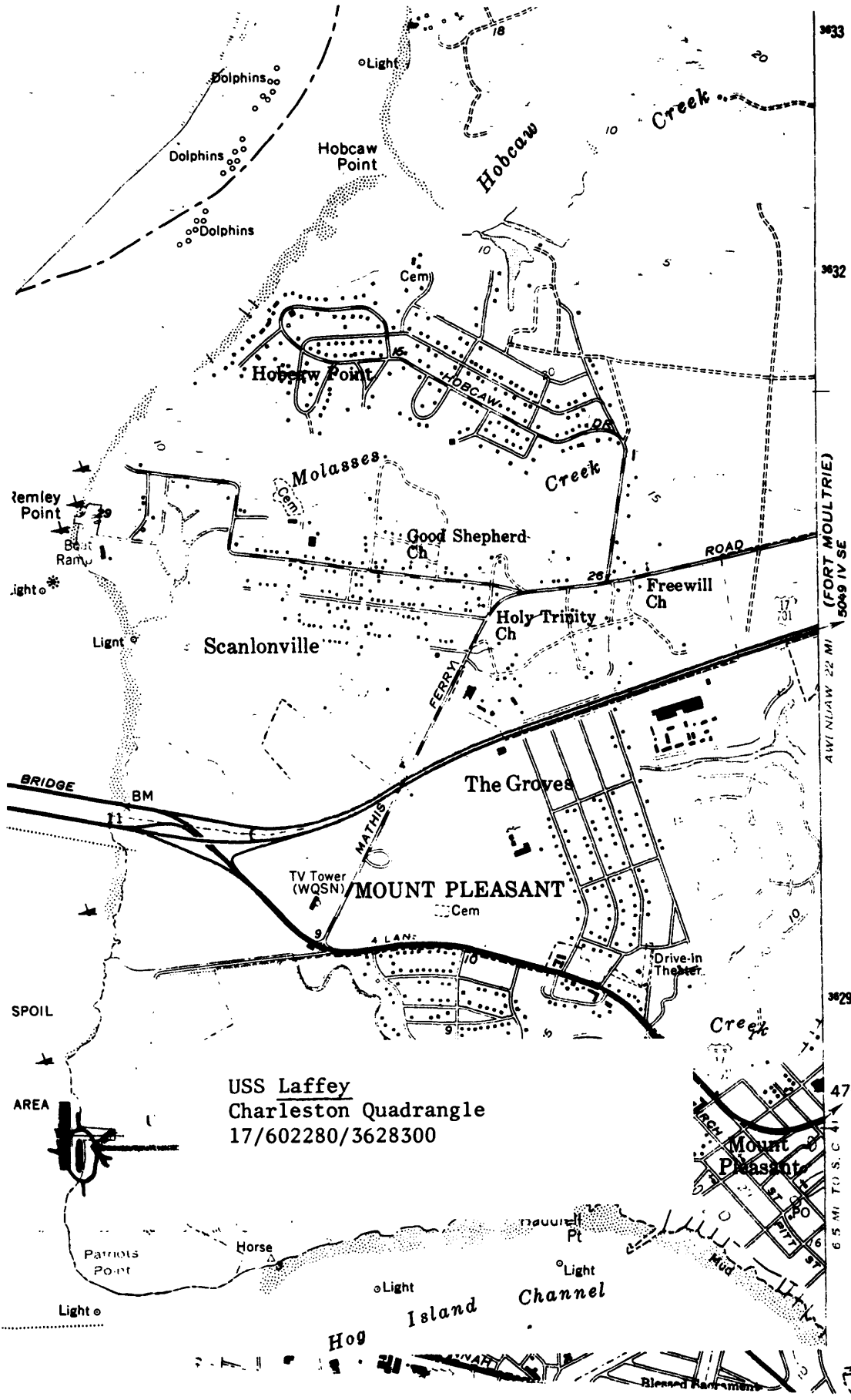
### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, vol. 4 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1969), p. 17; Dr. Clark Reynolds to Patrick Andrus, 17 December 1982.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Dictionary, pp. 18-19; Reynolds to Andrus.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



USS Laffey  
 Charleston Quadrangle  
 17/602280/3628300

3633  
 3632  
 3629  
 (FORT MOULTRIE)  
 50° 9' 14" SE  
 22 MI. N.W. AWL

47'30"  
 6.5 MI. TO S.C. 41



1. USS Laffey
2. Patriots Point, South Carolina
3. Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum
4. 1985
5. Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum
6. Exterior Side view
7. Photo #1