

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

| |
|--|
| _____ |
| Name of Property |
| _____ |
| County and State |
| _____ |
| Name of multiple listing (if applicable) |

Section number _____ Page _____ 1 _____

Supplementary Listing Record

NRIS Reference Number: SG100002109

Date Listed: 2/23/2018

Property Name: RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station

County: Marin

State: CA

This Property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation



Signature of the Keeper

2/23/2018

Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Location:

The Street Address location is revised to read: 17400 Sir Francis Drake Blvd.; Point Reyes National Seashore.

The CALIFORNIA SHPO and NPS FPO were notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station

Other names/site number: Station KET

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 17400 Sir Francis Drake Blvd

City or town: Inverness State: CA County: Marin

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

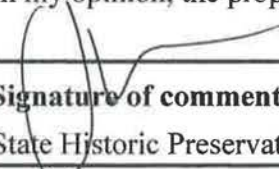
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

| | |
|---|-------------------|
|  | <u>12/19/2017</u> |
| Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>NPS FPO</u> | Date |
| State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government | |

| | |
|--|---|
| In my opinion, the property <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria. | |
|  | <u>16 August 2017</u> |
| Signature of commenting official: | Date |
| <u>State Historic Preservation Officer</u> | <u>California Office of Historic Preservation</u> |
| Title : | State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government |

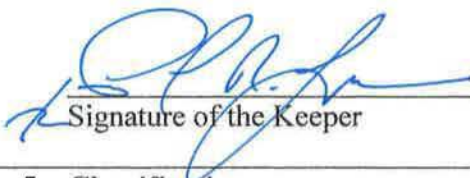
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)


Signature of the Keeper

2/23/2018
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-------------------|------------|
| <u>3</u> | <u>1</u> | buildings |
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | sites |
| <u>2</u> | <u>3</u> | structures |
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> | objects |
| <u>7</u> | <u>4</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/Communications Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/Communications Facility

AGRICULTURE/Agricultural field

GOVERNMENT/National Park Service facility

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Foundation: Concrete; Walls: Concrete, stucco;
Roof: Tile, asphalt; Other: Brick (detailing)

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station is located on the Point Reyes Peninsula, about three-and-a-half miles due west of Inverness, California. The landscape gently slopes north and northwest down toward Abbotts Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean. The primary plant community found within the boundaries of the historic district is coastal grassland, a mixture of low-growing, native and non-native species. Coastal scrub vegetation, consists of low-growing woody shrubs, is interspersed with the grassland. These plants, combined with the gentle topography of the land, create an open landscape. The historic district contains 160 acres.

The station's buildings are located in a cluster at the end of a quarter-mile long access road that extends northeast from Sir Francis Drake Highway. The three historic buildings, a receiving building, a garage, and a utility building, were built in 1930. All are built of cast-in-place reinforced concrete in the Art Deco style. Architectural features include symmetrical facades with vertical bays defined by fluted or smooth pilasters, and diamond patterns etched into the building atop the pilasters in the roof parapets. An antenna field, a contributing site, surrounds the station buildings, and wooden frames support the lines that stretch between the antennas and the buildings. Contributing structures include the entrance road and a transformer vault. The access road ends in a circular drive in front of the receiving building, with the garage and utility building set on either side. The quarter-mile-long entrance road is lined on both sides with mature Monterey cypress, the upper limbs of which meet to

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form a canopy over the road. The trees are planted in close proximity to each other, and the allée provides a formal and dramatic entrance to the buildings. The site also contains a non-contributing utility building, built in the 1970s, as well as non-contributing satellite pads, built in the 1970s and 1980s.

The receiving station retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The location remains the same. The setting, on the windswept plateau of the Point Reyes Peninsula, within Point Reyes National Seashore and surrounded by dairy ranches, has changed little. Historic design, materials and workmanship are intact. The individual buildings retain integrity to the historic period, though they now accommodate office space or storage for Point Reyes National Seashore. The Art Deco exteriors of the buildings are largely unchanged. The original receiving equipment remains in the receiving building, and the equipment is maintained and operated by the Maritime Radio Historical Society in cooperation with the park. The spacial arrangement of the buildings to the road and the antenna field, along with the cypress allée that creates a formal entrance, conveys the historic character of the site. Antenna fields contain working antennas as well as concrete antenna bases and guy wire supports that convey the historic antenna arrays. They also still serve as cattle pasture, as they did during the historic period, and the grazing helps the field retain its historic appearance.

Narrative Description

See continuation sheet

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The RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station is set on the Point Reyes Peninsula, about three-and-a-half miles due west of Inverness, California. The station's buildings occupy an area about 100 feet above sea level, and the surrounding land gently slopes north and northwest down toward Abbot's Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean. The primary plant community found within the boundaries of the historic district is coastal grassland, a mixture of low-growing, native and non-native species. Coastal scrub vegetation, consisting of low-growing, woody shrubs, is interspersed with the grassland. The vegetation associated with coastal grasslands and scrub, combined with the gentle topography of the land, creates an open landscape.

The station's buildings are located in a cluster at the end of a quarter-mile long access road that extends northeast from Sir Francis Drake Highway. The three historic buildings—a receiving building, a garage and a utility building—were built in 1930. All are built of cast-in-place reinforced concrete in the Art Deco style. Features include symmetrical facades with vertical bays defined by fluted or smooth pilasters, and diamond patterns atop the pilasters in the roof parapets. The antenna field surrounds the buildings, and is counted as a contributing site. A transformer vault is near the buildings, and is counted as a contributing structure. The site also contains a non-contributing utility building, constructed in the 1970s, a non-contributing water tank, constructed after 1959, and non-contributing satellite pads, built in the 1970s and 1980s.

The quarter-mile-long entrance road is lined on both sides with mature Monterey cypress, the upper limbs of which meet to form a canopy over the road. Each row on either side of the road is offset from the road's edge by fifteen feet. The trees are planted in close proximity to each other, approximately 40 feet apart. The allée provides a formal and dramatic entrance to the buildings. The access road ends in a circular drive in front of the receiving building. The garage and utility building face the turnaround on either side. The entrance road/allée is a contributing structure to the district.

Contributing Resources

Receiving Building

The receiving building, built in 1930, is the largest building in the complex. It is two stories tall with a front-facing, T-shaped plan, and it measures 68 by 66 feet. Full-height fluted pilasters divide the southeast-facing elevation into three bays. The central, ground floor entrance is also similar, defined by fluted pilasters that rise from the level of the concrete base to the top of the first story. The metal single-light door has a transom above. Metal lamp standards with spherical globes are set on either side of the concrete stairs that lead to the entrance, giving it a formal appearance. Window openings in the receiving building are centered within the bays on the first and second stories and contain one-over-one-light, double-hung wood sashes. Metal letters spelling out "RCA COMMUNICATIONS INC," have been removed from the front of the building. Aside from this change, the exterior of the building appears as it did during the historic period. The design is similar to the transmitter building at the Bolinas Transmitting Station, an RCA property that worked in tandem with Point Reyes Receiving Station.

Two driveways with parking spaces are located on both sides of the receiving building; they extend from the entrance road and loop drive to the building's side entry doors. The area defined by the circular drive in front of the receiving building is planted in grass. Other landscape plantings include a cypress windbreak that extends around the southwest, southeast and northeast sides of the building cluster. Foundation plantings around the base of the receiving building include a hedge along the front wall, the top of which is clipped to the level of the first floor windowsills. The surrounding grounds are planted with a variety of ornamental trees, shrubs and groundcovers.

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The building remains the last operating Morse Code station on the coast of the United States. The receiving equipment inside the building is operated by the non-profit Maritime Radio Historical Society under the call sign KPH. The group continues to restore the receiving station equipment. The building retains integrity to the historic period. The building retains integrity to the historic period.

Garage

A garage, built in 1930, is located southeast of the receiving building at the northeast edge of the paved parking area. This one-story building has smooth pilasters, which divide its front (southwest) elevation into four bays. Three of the four original sliding wood doors are extant but have been covered with plywood. The asphalt driveway and parking area in front of the garage is as wide as the building itself, providing parking for four vehicles. The National Park Service has converted the interior into a carpenter's shop. This building possesses sufficient integrity to be counted as a contributing building within the historic district.

Utility Building

The utility building, built in 1930, housed a diesel generator and controls for the station's water system. The building measures 22' by 45' and is located southwest from the garage across the parking area. Like the garage, this is a one-story, rectangular building with five smooth-faced pilasters that divide the northeast-facing elevation into four bays. The front elevation contains three entrances, one in each of the three northern-most bays. The northwest side had a central window opening with a multi-light window and a large metal vent in the lower right hand corner. On the rear of the building, at least one new window opening has been cut into the wall at its south end, while an original window opening is located in the center bay. The building is currently used for storage.

A short pedestrian walkway is located in front of the utility building. It is a 3' wide, concrete walk that starts at the southwest side of the loop drive, angles toward the building, and then runs along the front of the building and steps up to a landing in front of the southern door. The landing can also be accessed by a short ramp next to the asphalt parking area. Although this building has sustained some changes, it retains sufficient integrity to be counted as a contributing building within the historic district.

Transformer Vault

The transformer vault, built in 1930, is a concrete pad and vault located east of the RCA receiving building. It is irregular in shape, measuring 12' x 24' overall with two circular openings to a subterranean space or spaces below. A cast-iron manhole cover protects one opening; the other is covered with plywood. Iron bolts protrude from the slab surrounding the manhole cover; coiled cables are visible in the hole covered with plywood. The building is currently unused. Except for the missing opening cover, the structure is in good condition, and is a contributing structure in the historic district.

Entrance Road/Allée

The primary access to the receiving station is a quarter-mile long road that runs in a northwesterly direction from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard. It was built in 1930. Planted Monterey Cypress trees line either side of the roadway and add to the symmetry of the overall site. The straight, fifteen-foot wide road terminates in an oval loop drive at the main entrance to the receiving building. An oval-shaped island at the center of the loop is approximately 40' x 50'. The road is currently paved with asphalt that is in good condition with a few degraded areas. The road and loop drive were originally gravel, and it is unclear when the road was paved. Both the road and the loop drive maintain their original alignment from Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to the building core. A 6" concrete curb

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defines the inside edge of the loop drive, but not the outer edge. A contemporary metal gate is located at the southernmost end of the entrance road and is used to control access into the property. A number of driveways and parking areas branch from the central axis road and loop drive to provide access to the buildings and structures adjacent to the main receiving building. Despite the fact that the road system has been paved with asphalt, it retains sufficient integrity to the historic period to be counted as a single contributing structure in the historic district.

Bollards

Two concrete bollards are set on either side of the entrance road, just before the utility building and garage. The bollards are approximately 2' square in section, 4' 6" tall, with a sculpted concrete cap. Painted white, they are cement-plastered concrete, with the diamond-shaped ornamentation etched into all four sides (the diamonds are painted black). Each bollard has an iron ring protruding on the entrance road side, a fastening point for a chain or cable used to close the entrance drive. The bollards are counted as contributing objects.

Antenna Field

The antenna field surrounds the station buildings. The extant antennas are connected to the building area through wood frames that support lines for sending power and receiving signals. A series of historic wood H-Frames stretch from the receiving building to the north, east, and west; these support the wires that connect to antennas located throughout the property. Historically, the antennas radiated from the building core and included various arrays of antenna poles with arrangement patterns that changed over time according to technological need. Today, these arrays are evident in the existing poles, antenna foundations, downed poles, wires, and other industrial artifacts found within the historic district boundaries. A variety of antenna configurations are discernible in the antenna fields, including the 1930s shortwave rhombic (diamond-shaped) antenna formation created by four tall poles in the field southwest of the building core, a v-wire antenna formation of three tall poles northwest of the building core and a t-wire formation of three tall poles northeast of the core.

Behind the receiving building, the H-Frames line up with a wood antenna support structure known as the transmission line dead end structure, or termination frame. This is where the lines and signals enter the building to connect to receiving equipment. The structure is still intact with ongoing restoration efforts by the Maritime Radio Historical Society and park preservation crew to repair damaged portions for interpretive use.

The wood poles, support structures and antenna remnants that remain in the antenna field and around the building core today provide evidence of the types of configurations that were historically used to receive wireless signals from locations around the Pacific Rim. Cattle graze the field, as they did in the historic period, and the grazing keeps vegetation in check and helps the field retain its historic appearance. The antenna field at the receiving station, including the termination frame and various antenna structures, is counted as one contributing site.

Non-Contributing Resources

Antenna Field Roads

A dirt road network weaves throughout the antenna field and is connected to the building core through a gate located northeast of the receiving building, and also by a road that begins at the southern end of the antenna field, southwest of the main entrance to the property. This dirt road network continuously changed throughout the period of significance as antennas were installed, removed, and relocated. Dirt roads continue to be used by the

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park, ranchers, and Maritime Radio Historical Society to access the antenna fields and pastures. Due to the constantly changing nature of this road system and the growth of vegetation over older road traces, the roads in the antenna field do not contribute to the historic district.

Modern Utility Building

A modern utility building, constructed in the 1970s, is located between the historic utility building and the receiving building. This building is counted as a noncontributing resource.

Redwood Water Tank

A redwood stave water tank, secured with wire bands, is located immediately behind the original utility building. A wood ladder provides access to the metal cover. This structure is believed to have been used in conjunction with the utility building, and was most likely built in the 1960s. This structure was added to the site after the period of significance and is counted as noncontributing resource.

Satellite Pads

Three satellite pads are located within the building core, situated around the Receiving Building. They are constructed of concrete and still have bolts protruding from the top where satellites were attached in the 1970s and 80s. One measures 25'x30', another measures 20'x16', and the third is buried under vegetation and duff and could not be measured. These were installed in the 1970s and 1980s after the period of significance.

| |
|--|
| Summary of Contributing Resources |
| Contributing Buildings |
| Receiving building |
| Garage |
| Utility building |
| Contributing Structures |
| Transformer vault |
| Entrance Road/Allée |
| Contributing Objects |
| Bollards |
| Contributing Sites |
| Antenna Field |
| |
| Summary of Non-Contributing Resources |
| Non-Contributing buildings |
| Modern Utility building |
| Non-Contributing Structures |
| Satellite pads |
| Water tank |
| Antenna Field Roads |

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
-

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- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Communications _____
Architecture _____

Period of Significance
1929-1945 _____

Significant Dates
1930 _____

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

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Architect/Builder

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The district is eligible under Criterion A at the national level of significance, since it is one of only two known extant examples of a shortwave radio station from the early era of shortwave radio communications in the United States. In the 1920s, the discovery that shortwave radio technology could more efficiently and economically power the transmission of wireless telegraph messages spurred the development of shortwave stations in the United States. The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) sought to develop a worldwide wireless communications network with the new technology, and the corporation (as well as other companies) built numerous transmitting and receiving stations in the United States. Shortwave wireless telegraph services proved a wildly successful commercial enterprise, since long distance telephone calls were cost prohibitive and wireless voice transmission was still unreliable. Businesses, governments and private citizens who wanted to send a transoceanic message relied on these stations' services. The Point Reyes receiving station remains as a rare example of a shortwave wireless station from the interwar period; the station's sister facility in Bolinas provides the only other known extant example.

The district is significant under Criterion C at the local level of significance, since the buildings exhibit the distinct characteristics of Art Deco architecture. These are a receiving building, a garage, and a utility building. Along with those built by RCA at the Bolinas Transmitting Station, these buildings are the only representations of Art Deco architecture in Point Reyes National Seashore. Changes to the buildings, which included modifications to support technological advancements, took place mostly on the interior of the buildings. The buildings retain sufficient integrity to the historic period. The period of significance begins in 1929, when the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) began building the station, and ends in 1945, when the United States Army vacated the station at the end of World War II. The station retains integrity to the historic period.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

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The RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The district is eligible under Criterion A at the national level of significance, since it is one of only two known extant examples of a shortwave radio station from the early era of shortwave radio communications in the United States. The district is significant under Criterion C at the local level of significance, since the buildings are the only examples of Art Deco architecture at Point Reyes National Seashore. The period of significance begins in 1929, when the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) commenced building the station, and ends in 1945, when the United States Army and Navy vacated the station at the end of World War II.

The RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A at the national level, since it is one of only two known extant examples of a shortwave radio station in the United States from the early era of shortwave radio communications. In the early 1920s, amateur radio operators made the groundbreaking discovery that shortwaves could transmit wireless messages more reliably than long radio waves. In addition, shortwave radio technology more efficiently and economically powered the transmission of wireless telegraph messages, and this spurred the development of commercial shortwave stations in the United States. In the 1920s, RCA sought to develop a worldwide wireless communications network with shortwave technology by converting existing wireless stations that relied on older, long wave technology, and by developing new sites. RCA and other companies built numerous transmitting and receiving stations along the coasts of the United States during the late 1920s and 1930s. Shortwave wireless telegraph services proved a wildly successful commercial enterprise during the interwar period, since long distance telephone calls were cost prohibitive and wireless voice transmission was still unreliable, and businesses, governments and private citizens who wanted to send a transoceanic message relied on these stations' services. RCA constructed the Point Reyes receiving station between 1929 and 1931; the station worked it tandem with the transmitting station in Bolinas, sixteen miles to the south.¹

The United States military utilized the station during World War II to receive diplomatic and military messages, and also to intercept Japanese radio transmissions. However, by mid-century, as satellite technology evolved and as the telephone became the standard method of overseas communications, the number of shortwave wireless stations in the United States declined. The Point Reyes Receiving Station remains as a rare example of a shortwave wireless station from the interwar period; the station's sister facility in Bolinas provides the only other known extant example. The station retains integrity to the historic period, between 1929 and 1945.

The station is also significant under Criterion C at the local level of significance for its Art Deco buildings. These include a receiving building, a garage, and a utility building. These buildings, along with those built by RCA at the Bolinas transmitting station, are the only representations of Art Deco architecture in Point Reyes National Seashore. Changes to the buildings, which included modifications to support technological advancements, took place mostly on the interior of the buildings, and they retain integrity to the historic period.

¹ The Bolinas Transmitting Station has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places separately.

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Historic Context

The Radio Corporation of America (RCA) was founded in 1920, nine years before construction began on the receiving station at Point Reyes. The corporation formed after World War I in response to the idea that domestic wireless networks should be owned by American companies. Prior to the war, the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America, a British-based company founded by an Italian entrepreneur, operated a near monopoly on wireless point-to-point communications (sending land-to-land telegraph messages via Morse code). After the war's end in 1918, the United States government, uncomfortable with the fact that a foreign company controlled wireless communications in the United States, and at the urging of the Navy and commercial interests, forced Marconi to sell its assets to the newly formed, American-owned RCA. The Marconi Company sold their California stations—a transmitting station at Bolinas, south of Point Reyes, and a receiving station at Marshall, on Tomales Bay, to RCA in March 1920; in April, the company in the United States was dissolved. The General Electric Company (GE) controlled most of RCA, but in an attempt to gain access to patents owned by competitors, RCA offered smaller interests to the American Telephone and Telegraph Company (AT&T) and Westinghouse Electric Company. Both companies agreed to support this new wireless communications venture by selling their patents to RCA in exchange for stock shares. The United Fruit Company also joined the new corporation, since its fleet of banana boats relied on wireless telegraphy.²

In the 1920s, RCA dominated the international communications field. Like its predecessor the Marconi Company, RCA was a radio communications monopoly, albeit a monopoly sanctioned by the U.S. government. It owned most of the important patents in radio technology, utilized the technical expertise of the former Marconi staff (whom RCA had retained), and operated the only transoceanic wireless stations in the United States. While the public could still send transoceanic messages via undersea cable, wireless service offered faster and cheaper service. By 1922, the company transmitted 23 million messages per year. RCA, via its Bolinas and Marshall stations (the former Marconi stations), carried 40 percent to 50 percent of all trans-Pacific messages in the 1920s.³

In the early 1920s, these messages were still sent via long radio waves, which was groundbreaking technology when Guglielmo Marconi sent the first transoceanic wireless message in 1901. Scientists, engineers and amateurs had worked to harness the power of shortwaves since 1918, but commercial operators generally believed that shortwaves were too unstable to be useful. Amateur operators first proved that shortwaves could be used for trans-oceanic communication, using far fewer watts than long waves required. In 1923 two-way shortwave transoceanic communication, between amateur operators in the United States and France, first occurred. These discoveries by amateurs spurred commercial long wave broadcasters to explore the possibilities of shortwave transmissions. Shortwave stations cost less to set up (as little as 5 percent as much of a long wave station), required much smaller antennas, and transmitted messages more quickly. By 1926, RCA had abandoned long wave technology in favor of shortwaves.⁴

² Dewey Livingston, *Wireless Giant of the Pacific: A History of the Marconi and RCA Radio Stations on the Point Reyes Peninsula*, 1998 (Draft), Point Reyes National Seashore (PRNS) Archives, 50-51.

³ Eric Wenaas, *Radiola: The Golden Age of RCA, 1919-1929*, (Chandler, AZ: Sonoran Publishing Company, 2007), 39-40.

⁴ James Wood, *A History of International Broadcasting*, VI (London: Peter Peregrinus, Inc., 1992), 21-23; Wenaas, 64-65.

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In 1929, RCA embarked on a major expansion of its West Coast operations in response to an increased demand for communications with Asia and the South Seas, and the Point Reyes facility was a key part of their plan. The corporation's goal was to expand the transpacific circuits to include China, Manchuria, Siberia, Java (in modern-day Indonesia), French Indochina (Vietnam), the Philippines, New Zealand, and Australia. The new shortwave technology enabled messages to travel greater distances; RCA's Java circuit at Point Reyes reached an unprecedented 8,646 miles. While cable companies had managed to compete with wireless companies during the era of long wave technology, they could not compete with the new shortwave technology, and most cable companies went out of business by World War II.⁵ Morse code remained the standard for shortwave communications, since it was more reliable than voice transmission. Long distance telephone calls remained expensive and only became widespread after World War II, so telegrams remained the primary form of long distance communications for businesses, people, and even governments.⁶

RCA began construction of the Point Reyes facility in 1929 after company engineers determined that the James McClure Ranch, a 1,472-acre dairy farm overlooking the Pacific Ocean on the Point Reyes Peninsula, offered superior reception. The property extended from Sir Francis Drake Highway to the Pacific shore, on level, elevated topography, in an isolated location, away from natural and man-made atmospheric signals that could have interfered with reception. RCA took possession of the McClure property in 1929 and began construction of its new receiving station.⁷

The Point Reyes Receiving Station replaced the long wave receiving station in Marshall, on Tomales Bay. The Marshall station had worked in tandem with a long wave transmitting station at Bolinas, but it had substandard shortwave receiving capabilities. At the same time that RCA built the new facility at Point Reyes, it also converted the Bolinas facility into a shortwave station so that the two stations could work in tandem, transmitting and receiving wireless messages sent by short radio waves. RCA retained the Marshall station as a ship-to-shore radio transmission facility.

RCA constructed the new buildings in the Art Deco style, as they had at the Bolinas transmitting station. The main building in the complex, the receiving building, was a two-story, reinforced concrete structure with an Art Deco façade of fluted columns adorned with brick details. The T-shaped building required a special foundation system because it was located in an area with a high water table and sandy soil. The lower floor contained generating equipment, battery banks, a lunchroom, locker rooms, restroom, and a boiler room and distillery (used to produce water that was cycled through a heat exchanger and used for cooling equipment). The station, with its receivers, tuning apparatus, and office, filled the second floor. The company's name—RCA COMMUNICATIONS, INC—appeared in large letters across the front of the building. Two white spherical fixtures stood on pillars at either side of the entrance stairs. The

⁵ Laszlo Solymar, *Getting the Message: A History of Communications* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 158; W.J. Baker, *A History of the Marconi Company*, (London: MacMillan and Co, 1971), 228-229.

⁶ Richard John, *Network Nation: Inventing American Telecommunications*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 3.

⁷ RCA originally offered to buy 500 acres of ranch, but the McClures rejected the offer. The company responded by suing to condemn the property. The McClures lost the suit, and the entire ranch was condemned and sold to RCA.

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Continuation Sheet

RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station

Marin, CA

Section number 8 Page 4

corporation built a four-bay garage, a utility building, a transformer vault, and storage buildings in the same Art Deco style.

Corporation architects designed a formal and fairly dramatic approach to the building cluster. They constructed a long entry road that led from Sir Francis Drake Highway to the station complex, and planted two columns of closely-spaced Monterey cypress trees along the road. The road passed through a formal gateway, ending in a landscaped circle. The historic buildings at the receiving station site are arranged symmetrically around a circular automobile court at the end of the road.

RCA erected an antenna field that stretched from all sides of the receiving building. Large antenna fields were typical of shortwave wireless stations during the 1930s; the fields were so extensive they were often called antenna farms.⁸ At Point Reyes, the antennas radiated from the receiving building and included various arrays of antennas and poles.

The new receiving station on the Point Reyes Peninsula went into operation in 1931, and the station became an integral part of a worldwide communications network. Long distance shortwave telegraph services played a vital role in meeting the increasing need for global communication during the interwar era.⁹ RCA communicated with forty-seven countries out of the Point Reyes station, and operators received messages from all corners of the globe. The corporation established domestic communication networks to compete with landline telephone services beginning in 1933; the company operated wireless stations in Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, New Orleans, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco and Washington D.C by the end of the decade. Messages received at the Point Reyes station could be relayed via other RCA stations across the United States. In the 1930s, sending a message via RCA was often the fastest, most reliable, and least costly way to get a message overseas.¹⁰

By the 1930s, a number of companies had established transoceanic or ship-to-shore wireless services, and shortwave stations proliferated. Mackay Radio, Globe Wireless, American Telegraph & Telephone, Tropical Radio Telegraph, Dollar Radio and Press Wireless all established stations, often located along the coasts. Along the West Coast, multiple stations operated in San Francisco and Seattle, as well as Portland, Hillsboro (Oregon), Long Beach, and Mussel Rock (California). Long distance telephone calls were still cost prohibitive for most people, so wireless communications remained the dominant form of long distance communication. While these stations proliferated during the 1930s, almost none are extant in 2012 except for the Point Reyes receiving station and its sister station, the Bolinas transmitting station.¹¹

The Point Reyes receiving station remained an important communications facility even after commercial operations virtually halted for the duration of the war. The government did not take over all wireless stations as it had during World War I, but RCA volunteered its coastal stations and personnel to the

⁸ Stanley Leinwall, *A History of Radio Communication*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1979), 141-143.

⁹ John Bray, *Innovation and the Communications Revolution: From the Victorian Pioneers to Broadband Internet*. (London: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 2002), 80.

¹⁰ George P. Oslin, *The Story of Telecommunications*, (Macon, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1992), 287; Ralph Williams, "Report from Radio Central," *Quarterly Bulletin of the Antique Wireless Association*, 20:1 (Spring 1992).

¹¹ Maritime Radio Historical Society website, online resource at <http://www.radiomarine.org/>; Personal communication with Richard Dillman, Maritime Radio Historical Society, April 3, 2012.

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station

Marin, CA

Section number 8 Page 5

government during the war, and the military had exclusive use of the Point Reyes facility. Because it considered the Point Reyes Peninsula particularly susceptible to enemy attack, the Army set up a command post inside the receiving station, and they built barracks and cooks' shack for the Coast Guard beach patrol at the facility.¹²

The Army and Navy proved secretive regarding their activities at the Point Reyes receiving station and its sister facility, the Bolinas Transmitting Station. The Army undoubtedly used the Point Reyes facility to receive military and diplomatic messages. RCA employees (retained by the military to operate the station) also likely monitored Japanese transmissions from the facility, and they reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) on a daily basis. Few other details are known about the extent of military operations at the site. The military vacated the station in 1945, after the war ended.¹³

The Point Reyes Receiving Station, 1946-Present

The Point Reyes station (along with its sister station in Bolinas) went back into commercial operations in 1946. RCA permanently closed the Marshall station, which formerly handled ship-to-shore messages; the corporation moved the ship-to-shore equipment to the Point Reyes station and established a Radiomarine division, for ship-to-shore messages, at the site.¹⁴ The ship-to-shore facility occupied a small corner of the receiving station's lower floor, while the point-to-point operation used the rest of the facility.

After World War II, however, new technologies rendered shortwave wireless services less important than they had been during the interwar period. The company did continue to provide wireless services, and it even expanded its global reach during the 1950s. By 1964, the Point Reyes and Bolinas stations had sixty-five circuits that communicated with other shortwave stations across the Pacific. More than forty of these circuits served countries in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the South Pacific, including China, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Tahiti, Australia, and New Zealand.¹⁵ However, improved technology on undersea telephone cables made transoceanic telephone calls more economical, and this reduced the need for shortwave wireless transmissions. By the mid-1960s, communications companies were using satellites to facilitate telephone service; satellites did not require expensive networks of transmitting and receiving stations or cables, and they had an extraordinary capacity to facilitate the transmission of messages, compared to shortwave wireless stations. Telephone calls, rather than telegrams, had become the dominant form of long-distance sound communications.¹⁶

By 1970, wireless point-to-point service was nearly obsolete. As a result, RCA removed all of the point-to-point circuits at Point Reyes by 1974. The company installed three 33' by 44' satellite dishes and built

¹² Personal communication with Richard Dillman, Maritime Radio Historical Society, September 6, 2012; Livingston, 72.

¹³ Personal communication with Richard Dillman, Maritime Radio Historical Society, September 6, 2012; Livingston, 72.

¹⁴ Eric Dollard, "Radio Archeology: Life and Death of an American Marconi Station," *Journal of Borderland Research* 54:1 (1988).

¹⁵ Lewis Coe, *Wireless Radio: A Brief History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 1996), 62.

¹⁶ John Bray, *Innovation and the communications revolution: From the Victorian Pioneers to Broadband Internet*. London: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 2002), 80.

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RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station

Marin, CA

Section number 8 Page 6

a new power plant building at the site, in an attempt to remain relevant in the communications industry. The conversion to satellite communications—a decentralized system that utilized satellites as relay stations—meant that the company no longer needed its vast antenna fields for transmitting and receiving messages. As a result, RCA sold the antenna fields to the National Park Service as part of Point Reyes National Seashore, which had been established in 1962. RCA retained twenty-three acres around the buildings as an inholding within the seashore boundaries. In 1977, RCA sold most of its Point Reyes and all of its Bolinas properties to the Trust for Public Land, a conservation organization. The receiving station buildings were sold to a succession of corporations that continued to operate the station as a satellite facility.¹⁷

The ship-to-shore services at the station had continued during this time, but by the mid-1990s, most ships had become equipped with satellite communications technology. In 1997, the station received its last message; when it closed, it was part of the oldest maritime radio station on the West Coast of the United States.¹⁸

The Point Reyes receiving station remains as a rare example of a shortwave wireless station from the interwar period; the station's sister facility in Bolinas provides the only other known extant example. The numerous other shortwave stations that operated in the United States in the interwar period have been obliterated. The receiving station also retains a high level of integrity. When the NPS acquired the facility, the buildings retained much of their operating equipment. The facility was restored by the by the Maritime Radio Historical Society, a non-profit organization that operates the station under the call letters KSM. The station remains fully operational and as of 2012, is on the air each Saturday morning.¹⁹

¹⁷ Livingston, 101-105.

¹⁸ Livingston, 108-109.

¹⁹ Maritime Radio Historical Society website, online resource at <http://www.radiomarine.org/>.

Rca Point Reyes Receiving Station
Name of Property

Marin, CA
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Rca Point Reyes Receiving Station

Marin, CA

Name of Property

County and State

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # CA-312-A _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Rca Point Reyes Receiving Station
Name of Property

Marin, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 160

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Zone: 10 | Easting: 504,589 | Northing: 4,216,900 |
| 2. Zone: 10 | Easting: 505,160 | Northing: 4,216,215 |
| 3. Zone: 10 | Easting: 504,628 | Northing: 4,215,937 |
| 4. Zone: 10 | Easting : 504,032 | Northing: 4,216,777 |

Rca Point Reyes Receiving Station
Name of Property

Marin, CA
County and State

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary for the RCA Receiving Station corresponds to a rectangle incorporating roughly 160 acres, drawn to enclose the area that contains the building cluster and the former antenna fields.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries include all extant buildings as well as the former antenna fields. The boundaries do not include all land owned by RCA. However, RCA never developed their land outside of the developed area core and antenna fields; instead, they leased it to local ranchers for cattle grazing.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Christy Avery, Historian
organization: National Park Service
street & number: 909 1st Ave
city or town: Seattle state: WA zip code: 98104
e-mail Christine Avery@nps.gov
telephone: 206-220-4127
date: _____

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Rca Point Reyes Receiving Station
Name of Property

Marin, CA
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station Historic District

City or Vicinity: Inverness Vicinity

County: Marin State: CA

Photographer: Debra Suarez

Date Photographed: 11/5/2010

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: (12 photos)

Photo # 01 (CA_Marin County RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0001)
RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station building complex from Entrance Road, camera facing northwest.

Photo # 02 ((CA_Marin County_RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0002)
Monterey cypress allee along Entrance Road at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing southeast.

Photo # 03 ((CA_Marin County_RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0003)
Southwest elevation (left) and southeast façade (right) of Receiver Building, camera facing north.

Photo # 04 ((CA_Marin County_RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0004)
Southwest façade (left) and southeast elevation (right) of garage, camera facing northeast.

Photo # 05 ((CA_Marin County_RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0005)
Northeast façade (left) and northwest elevation (right) of Utility Building at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing southwest.

Photo # 06 (CA_Marin County_RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0006)
Redwood Water Tank at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing northwest.

Rca Point Reyes Receiving Station

Name of Property

Marin, CA

County and State

Photo # 07 (CA_Marin County_ RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0007)

Southeast façade of southwestern-most Bollard at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing northwest.

Photo # 08 (CA_Marin County_ RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0008)

Transmission Line Dead End Frame at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing northeast.

Photo # 09 (CA_Marin County_ RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0009)

H-frames and T-poles in Antenna Field at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing southwest.

Photo #10 (CA_Marin County_ RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0010)

H-frames in Antenna Field at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing northeast.

Photo # 11 (CA_Marin County_ RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0011)

Antenna Poles in Antenna Field at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing north.

Photo # 12 (CA_Marin County_ RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station_HD_0012)

Transformer Vault (center) and H-frames (background) at RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station, camera facing northeast.

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

RCA Point Reyes Transmitting Station

Marin County, California

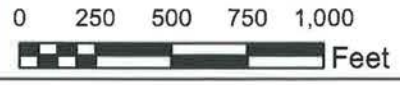
Section number 10 Page 1





RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station



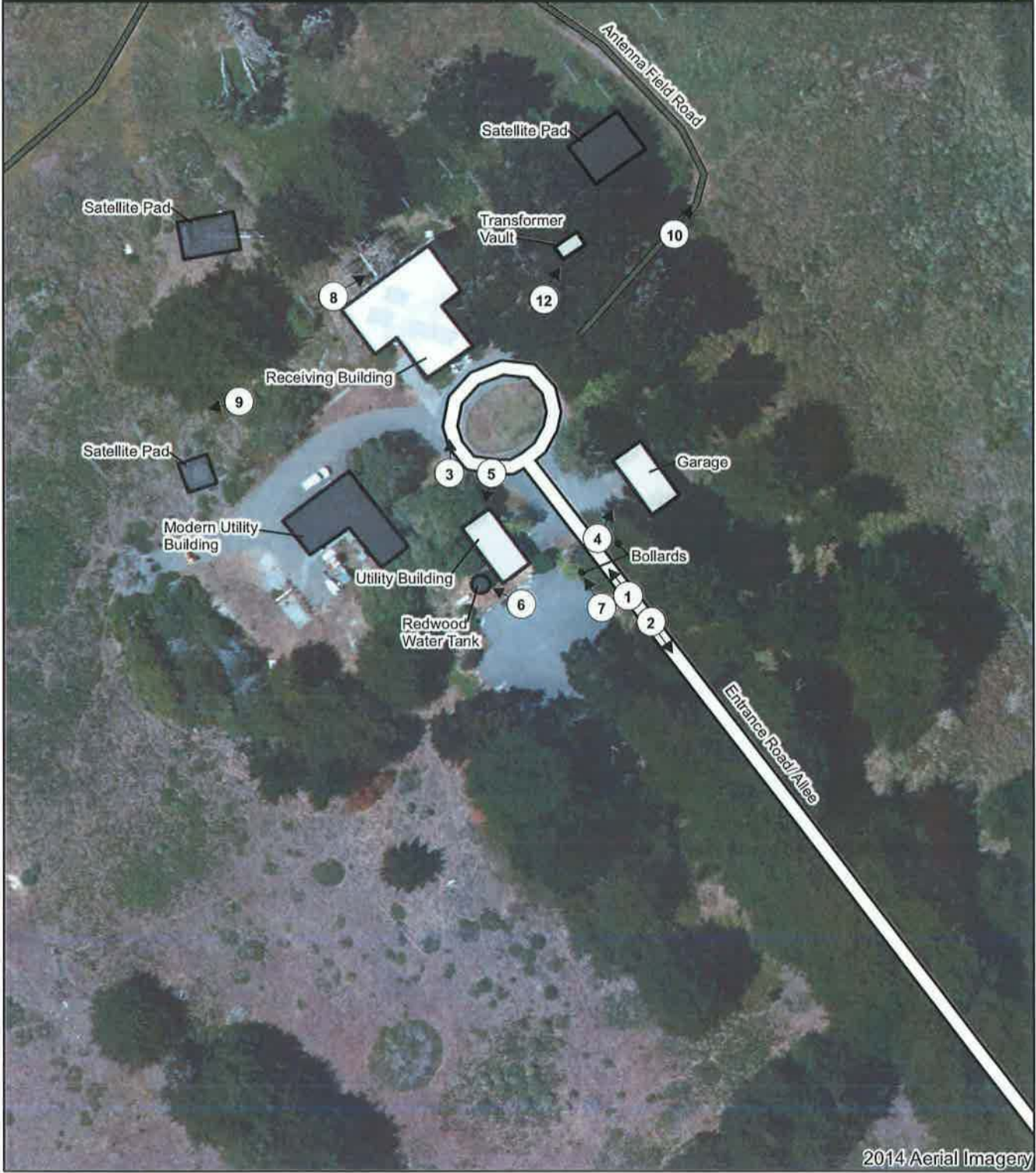
National Park Service
Point Reyes National Seashore
Marin County, CA



Legend

-  Contributing
-  Non-Contributing

RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station Detailed Map



| | | | |
|--|--|----------|--|
| | <p>National Park Service Point Reyes National Seashore Marin County, CA</p> <p>0 50 100 150 200 Feet</p> | <p>N</p> | <p>Legend</p> <p> Contributing</p> <p> Non-Contributing</p> |
|--|--|----------|--|



PU























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station

Multiple Name: _____

State & County: CALIFORNIA, Marin

Date Received: 1/9/2018 Date of Pending List: 1/29/2018 Date of 16th Day: 2/13/2018 Date of 45th Day: 2/23/2018 Date of Weekly List: _____

Reference number: SG100002109

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 2/23/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station is nationally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Communications and locally significant under Criterion C for Architecture. Completed in 1929, the Point Reyes receiving station remains as a rare example of a shortwave wireless station from the interwar period, reflecting the important transition from long to short wave transmissions that facilitated the more efficient and economic transmission of wireless messages worldwide. The Point Reyes Station was an integral part of RCA's nationwide system. This site is one of only two known extant examples of a shortwave radio station from the early era of shortwave radio communications in the United States. Architecturally, the buildings exhibit the distinct characteristics of Art Deco architecture and represent the common design vocabulary of such installations.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criterion A and C.

Reviewer Paul Lusignan Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229 Date 2/23/2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : **Yes**

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053
calshpo@parks.ca.gov
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov



August 16, 2017

Ms. Joy Beasley
Federal Preservation Officer
Deputy Associate Director
Park Programs and National Heritage Areas
Washington Office
1201 Eye St., NW, Room 804
Washington DC 20005

RE: RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station Nomination for the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Ms. Beasley:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) nomination for RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station. I concur that the property identified and evaluated in the nomination is eligible for listing in the National Register. The nomination clearly associates the property with the historic context of Communications (Criterion A) at the national level of significance for its role as one of only two surviving shortwave radio stations from the early era of shortwave communications in the continental United States, the station's broadcasting facility in Bolinas being the only other example. This receiving station formed part of a worldwide communications network, receiving transmissions from across the Pacific Ocean. The property is also eligible under the historic context of Architecture (Criterion C) as a locally significant example of Art Deco architecture.

I have signed the application as commenting authority. If you have any questions, please contact William Burg of my staff at (916) 445-7004 or wburg@parks.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Julianne Polanco".

Julianne Polanco
State Historic Preservation Officer



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
Point Reyes National Seashore
Point Reyes, California 94956

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H4217

SEP 26 2017

Ms. Joy Beasley
Federal Preservation Officer
Deputy Associate Director
Park Programs and National Heritage Areas
Washington Office
1201 Eye St., NW, Room 804
Washington DC 20005

Subject: Marconi/RCA Bolinas Transmitting Station and RCA Point Reyes Point Reyes
Receiving Station Nominations for the National Register of Historic Places

Dear Ms. Beasley,

Please find enclosed concurrence letters from the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), the first two pages of the National Register nominations with signatures from the SHPO as commenting official, and archival CD-Rs with nomination documents and photos for the two above-named National Register of Historic Places nominations.

We request your review of the enclosed documentation and, if approved, request your signature on the nomination form and recommend the nominations be forwarded to the Keeper of the Nation Register of Historic Places.

We appreciate your review. Please contact Archeologist Paul Engel at 415-464-5287 or paul_engel@nps.gov if you have any questions or require further information.

Sincerely,

Steve Mietz
Acting Superintendent



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20240



DEC 19 2017

H32(2280)

Memorandum

To: Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

From: Acting Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science,
and NPS Federal Preservation Officer *J. Spradley*

Subject: National Register Nomination for RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station,
Point Reyes National Seashore, Marin County, CA

I am forwarding the National Register Nomination for the RCA Point Reyes Receiving Station in Point Reyes National Seashore. The Park History Program has reviewed the nomination and found it eligible at the national and local levels of significance under Criteria A and C, with Areas of Significance of Communication and Architecture.

The State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and chief local elected official(s) were sent the documentation and within 45 days, the SHPO x supported supported with comments did not respond. Any comments received are included with the documentation.

If you have any questions, please contact Kelly Spradley-Kurowski at 202-354-2266 or kelly_spradley-kurowski@nps.gov.