

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Original U.S. Naval War College

AND/OR COMMON

U.S. Naval War College

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Coasters Harbor Island

CITY, TOWN

Newport

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

first

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Newport

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☒ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☒ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

U.S. Navy/ President, Naval War College

STREET & NUMBER

Naval War College

CITY, TOWN

Newport

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Newport Court House

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Square

CITY, TOWN

Newport

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

National Register (Luce Hall)

DATE

1972

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE
D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

First called "Weenachasett" the island was sold by the Indians to John Greene and Benedict Arnold on May 22, 1658. From this early date until 1881 when the Navy bought it, the island remained undeveloped except that in 1716 a hospital was authorized to be built there and in the early nineteenth century a quarantine house was built to accomodate persons suspected of having smallpox. Later this structure served as a deaf and dumb asylum as well as poor house for the city.

In 1862 the Naval Academy was moved from Annapolis to Newport as a safety measure because of the advancing Southern troops, and at that time there was a good possibility that the Academy would remain in Newport permanently. In fact, Commodore George S. Blake, Superintendent of the Naval Academy, in 1863, had George Mason, a Newport architect and Lt. Commander Stephen B. Luce, head of the Department of Seamanship, accompany him to Coasters Harbor Island to look for a site appropriate for a new building to house the Naval Academy. Later, referring to that first visit to the island, Luce said:

As we stood on the highest point of the Island. . . , and I looked upon the broad expanse of waters of Narragansett Bay. . . , the very favorable impression made upon my mind at that time was never effaced.²

Sixteen years later, in the summer of 1880, Captain Luce was a member of a board ordered to find a suitable place for a Naval Training Station. In December 1880 it reported in favor of Coasters Harbor Island and the site was accepted by Act of Congress August 7, 1882 under the Sundry Civil Act. At the time of transfer, the appraised value of the island was \$190,000, consisting of 92 acres of land, an old asylum building and a house. The asylum and other buildings on the island were vacated in June 1884.

May 30, 1884 Secretary of the Navy Chandler appointed a board of officers, composed of Commodore Stephen B. Luce, Commander William T. Sampson, and Lt. Commander Casper F. Goodrich to:

. . . report upon the whole subject of post-graduate course, or school of application, to be established by the Department for officers of the Navy, giving in detail the reasons for establishing such school, the scope and extent of the proposed course of instruction, and an opinion as to the best location therefor.³

June 13, 1884 this board recommended that the proposed war college be located at Newport, Rhode Island, on Coasters Harbor Island and be housed in the old Asylum building there. An article in the Newport Daily News of April 14, 1896 described what the Asylum was supposedly like when the Navy first bought it:

The building consisted of a small churchy chapel, with parlor organ, plain pulpit, and comfortable seats for Sunday services. The dining hall was very clean and tidy, much of the food being raised on the island. The Asylum had performed the dual position of Asylum for the indigent and a reformatory.

By General Order 325, October 6, 1884 the Naval War College was established on the

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE
☐ 1600-1699	☐ ARCHITECTURE	☒ EDUCATION	☒ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER
☒ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION
☒ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)
		☐ INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1884-

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On October 6, 1884 the Secretary of the Navy issued General Order No. 325 which ordered that "A College is hereby established for an advanced course of professional study for naval officers, to be known as the Naval War College," describing the first military service training facility to be called a "war college." Thus General Order No. 325 ranks as one of the most important steps ever taken by the Navy.

The institution was put under the Bureau of Navigation, with Commodore Stephen Bleeker Luce as its first president, and the old Poor House on Coasters Harbor Island, Rhode Island, became its first home. The college's initial term began on September 3, 1885 and eight officers formed the student body. Even though the first term was short, ending on September 30, the school had begun, in spite of its numerous enemies. While Luce started the college, it was Alfred Thayer Mahan who as head of the college after 1886, gave to its teaching the influence and stature that affected naval policy, not only of the United States, but of practically every major power in the world during his day.

Coasters Harbor Island is a slightly elevated piece of land of about 100 acres in Narragansett Bay, connected by causeway with the old northwestern end of the city of Newport. Building #10 which first housed the U.S. Naval War College from 1885 until 1889, and Luce Hall, the first building constructed for the War College and the administration center since 1892, are situated side by side on a hill on the southwest end of the island facing Newport Harbor.

It cannot be said that the whole of the Navy cheered the creation of the war college, and the man most responsible for the rejection of the school by most old-line officers was Commodore Stephen Bleeker Luce. An exceptionally gifted educator, Luce served as the commanding officer at the military academy at Annapolis for four terms. During those years he evolved the idea that the Navy should have a post-graduate school where officers "could profit by a philosophic study of naval history." Perhaps such study could enable commanders to avoid the mistakes of others. In a talk before the Newport Branch of the Naval Institute on April 4, 1883, Luce specifically suggested that the navy establish post-graduate study of military science. This idea only irked the chiefs of the various naval bureaus, but it stimulated the Secretary of the Navy, William Eaton Chandler, who appointed a group to consider Luce's plan. This board subsequently reported favorably, leading to the issuance of General Order No. 325.

If Luce fathered the Naval War College, Alfred Thayer Mahan gave the college a sound philosophic basis, as well as great prestige. Mahan, "the great evangelist of modern sea

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Crowell, George T. Sr., Colonel USAF. Milestones of Naval War College History,
Memorandum, December 31, 1959 in the archives of the U.S. Naval War College,
Newport, R.I. (mimeographed).
Eure, Leroy T., M. Sgt. Home of the Naval War College. Newport, R.I., Archives of
the U.S. Naval War College, December 1960 (mimeographed).
Harrington, Richard B. Luce Hall, National Register form prepared July 29, 1972. (cont'd)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 305640 4597400
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

As indicated on the accompanying U.S. Navy guide map for Coasters Harbor Island the national historic landmark boundary includes the original war college building and Luce Hall, but excludes a communications station building located in between. Luce Hall and Building #10 are situated on the highest elevation on the island, with an excellent view to the south, of the southeasterly portion of Narragansett Bay. A narrow road is being constructed in front of Luce Hall to connect with Admiral (cont'd)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Blanche Higgins Schroer, Landmark Review Project; S. Sydney Bradford, 1963

ORGANIZATION

DATE

January 15, 1975

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

Boundary Certified:
LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-668),
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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

Landmark
Jan 29, 1975
date
Boundary Certified:
LOCAL
DATE
1/13/78

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island with the Asylum building as its headquarters. An 1884 inspection report and survey stated that it would cost the government \$36,000 to clean, renovate and repair the building, build quarters for the president, install furniture and equipment, sewer, electric lights, etc. Again March 5, 1885 the property was surveyed and inventoried and described as follows:

Asylum (stone) 116' x 38'. Built 1820, cost to date \$20,000, estimated value \$13,500.

Annex 147' x 21', built 1867, cost to date \$3,500, estimated value \$1,600.

The inventory also listed a stable built in 1867, and an ice house built in 1879, which the war college tore down sometime later.

Admiral Luce moved into the old Asylum in September 1884 although no funds for renovation and no furniture or equipment for the building had been received. Renovation of the building started in July 1886 and by September the building was ready to accomodate the staff and student body. After remodeling for War College use, the first floor consisted of two end wings sub-divided into five rooms and a hall with closet space, one sitting room and one dining room with kitchen. The second floor was devoted to the lecture room (formerly a chapel) and several offices for the staff. The basement was reserved for use of the servants. Captain Mahan and his family, upon arrival in August 1886, occupied some of these rooms on the west side of the second floor as an apartment, until they were turned into offices. For many years the Naval Base Commander occupied the office at the end of the corridor in the easterly half of the building. This office was appropriated by President Dwight D. Eisenhower when he came to Newport and used the Naval Base and the residence of the president of the War College nearby as a summer retreat.

Coasters Harbor Island was originally acquired for use as a Naval Training Station, but the Training Service had primarily remained afloat. However, in 1888 it was determined that more naval training would be conducted in barracks on shore. At this time the Naval War College was forced to move to nearby Goat Island and in January 1889 it was consolidated there with the Naval Torpedo Station.

Although it took months of planning and renovating to prepare the old Asylum building for Naval War College use, the school only occupied the structure for three years. From 1889 until 1905 the building quartered seamen from the training facilities, then from 1905 until 1974 it was headquarters of the Naval Station, and since 1974 it has been occupied by the Naval War College Foundation, a non-profit organization of friends of the college.

The original Naval War College structure, now called Building #10, was built c.1820. Constructed of thick, roughcut stone, this structure has a four-story gable roofed central section and a large three-story wing on either side of it. An annex, built

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 College

in 1867 runs parallel to the front section. Comparison of the present exterior with that seen in c. 1900 photographs shows that the exterior of the building has not been changed at all in the past 75 years except for a new set of stairs, replacement of some windows, a small annex, of temporary nature on the west end, and small porches on the east end. The only decorative features on this very sturdy old institutional building are the octagonal cupola, wooden porch which spans the first floor of the central section, and the semi-elliptical window under the peak of the gable in the center front. Only a small portion of the interior is occupied presently, but continued use of the building is planned by the naval base. The interior stone walls are still exposed in many rooms, and much of the early floorplan is apparently intact.

In the Naval Appropriations Act approved March 2, 1889, Congress provided \$100,000 to design, erect and furnish a building for the Naval Torpedo School and War College. The school, then situated on Goat Island, was to remain there according to specification in this act, however the site of the building was changed in 1890 to Coasters Harbor Island where there was much more space.

Plans for the internal arrangement of the War College building (Luce Hall) were prepared by Captain Alfred T. Mahan and Civil Engineer George Mackay. The plans for the exterior and the general specifications of the building were made by George C. Mason and Son, architects of Newport, R.I. and Philadelphia. The contract was awarded to Ashton S. Tourison of Philadelphia who submitted a bid of \$82,875.

Ground was broken in September 1891 and the structure was completed and accepted by the Navy May 28, 1892. The new building was erected west of the old Asylum building, at the same elevation, also facing south to Narragansett Bay. The building was constructed of rock-faced ashlar, with Fall River granite backed with brick, on a wooden frame. The building, when constructed, was described as somewhat Flemish in style, with three stepped gables across its front facade. It is a long oblong, and much like many large institutional buildings of the nineteenth century.

Luce Hall is 210 feet long and 47 feet wide and has two-and-one-half stories above a high basement. Beneath each of the three gables on the front is an entrance with a pedimented wooden porch with Tuscan columns and a flight of stone steps. The slate roof has low shed dormers all around the building and at the center of its peak there is an octagonal cupola with a steep roof, flanked by two smaller glassed-in octagonal cupolas which function as skylights. On its long elevation, the central section of thirteen bays has a gable roof and at either end of this wide central portion is a slightly projecting terminal, hip-roofed pavilion of four bays in width.

The central part of the structure was devoted to the college proper. A set of quarters was placed at each corner of the building, making four sets in all, to

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accomodate members of the staff and visiting lecturers. The western portion of the first floor was used for the library and on the second floor there was a large lecture room at each end. The basement served as quarters for the employees, storage areas and workshops.

To accomodate the greatly enlarged classes after World War I, extensive improvements and rearrangements were made in the main building in 1919 and additional rooms were constructed on the third floor. In 1904 an annex for the library and archives was completed to the north of Luce Hall, and connected to Luce by a bridge in the center of the rear wall. Pringle Hall, connected to Luce on the west by two bridges was completed in 1934. These wings copied Luce Hall in style and were faced with pink Milford granite, a close match to the Fall River granite used for Luce Hall.

Other large buildings have been constructed directly north of Luce Hall, and most of the island is developed for a variety of Navy facilities. A large modern complex for the war college is presently under construction north of the Luce Hall complex. There is also a temporary structure, a communications center, located in between Luce Hall and the original War College building, however there are no intrusions between the two buildings and the bay. The huge Newport Bay Bridge now spans the harbor only a short distance south of the island.

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power," succeeded Luce as president in 1886. Under his leadership, the school grew in reputation between 1885 and 1888, despite the continued activity of opponents. They were responsible for Congressional failure to appropriate funds for the institution in 1886, forcing Mahan to resort to various tactics to prevent the collapse of the college. Oil lamps had to be used for the Poor House, for example, even though a power line to the adjacent Torpedo Station ran within a few yards of the school. Making its hostility all the more obvious, the Bureau of Ordinance built a barricade around the Torpedo Station's property, to keep the college's students off its grounds.

Beyond keeping the college alive, Mahan presented a remarkable and very influential series of lectures on the role of sea power in history. Convinced that not only there should be a war college, the new president also believed that the institution should combat the tendency for officers to become little more than human machines as technical advances worked a revolution in ships. As he put it, the Naval War College, through the study of history, should enable an officer to become "the artist in war. . . (acquiring) intuition, sagacity, judgement, daring, inspiration which place great captains among creators, and war itself among the fine arts."¹

After studying for a year in the New York Public Library, Mahan presented a series of lectures to a class of twenty officers in the fall of 1886. The naval historian began his discussion with the early Dutch navy, then carried the story of naval history to the end of the American Revolution. Eventually, further study and lecturing led to the publication in 1890, of Mahan's classic work, The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783.

Mahan may have impressed his students, but his brilliant work did not still his critics. Opponents in 1887 persuaded Congress not to appropriate funds for the school. One Congressman in the hostile camp reminded his colleagues that the college was "not far from the Newport casino." Mahan continued to fight in behalf of the school, but in 1889 it was consolidated with the Torpedo Station. Fortune soon turned, however, and in 1890 Congress voted money for a war college building on Coasters Harbor Island, which was completed in 1892. A new threat appeared in 1893 when the Secretary of the Navy sought to abolish the institution. But while traveling to Newport, he read Mahan's The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire and the book made him a supporter of the school. The college continued to grow in stature after 1893, even though many in the service remained suspicious and hostile.

Admiral William Snowden Sims led the college to new achievements between 1919 and 1922, expanding and improving its courses. Moreover, the Navy fully recognized the school's value after World War I by adopting a policy of conferring the higher commands on graduates of the college.

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Mitchell, Donald W. History of the Modern American Navy. New York, 1946.
West, Richard S., Jr.. Admirals of American Empire. Indianapolis, 1948.
Westcott, Allen, ed. American Sea Power Since 1775. Philadelphia, 1952.

Footnotes

¹Richard S. West, Admirals of American Empire (Indianapolis, 1948).

²Lecture, "History of Naval War College" by Rear Admiral S. B. Luce USN (Ret), August 20, 1906 (unpublished) Newport, R.I. Archives of Naval War College.

³Senate Executive Document Nr. 68, 48th Congress, 2d session. Document filed in Archives of Naval War College, Newport, R.I.

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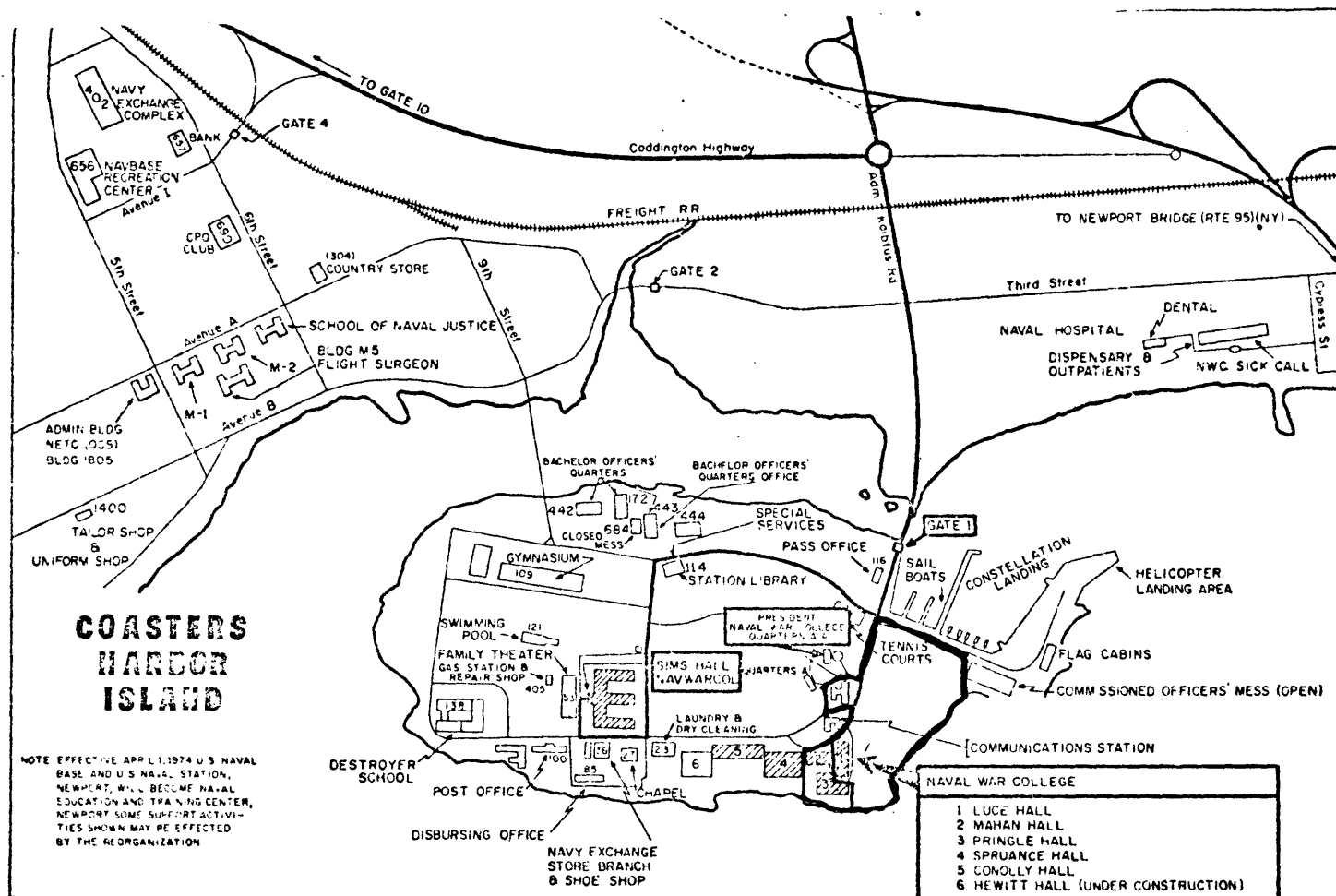
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College

Kalbfus Road and south of it the lawn stretches down the long slope of Dewey Field to the waterfront.

Beginning near the Commissioned Officers' Mess, the boundary follows the coast line along the southwest corner of the island, then northward between Mahan Hall and Spruance Hall to Admiral Kalbfus Road in a northeasterly direction, excluding the communications building, then to include Building #10 it runs along the northside of a driveway westerly, then northerly, then easterly to Admiral Kalbfus Road. Follow Admiral Kalbfus Road in a northern direction until it intersects with the the road running to the southeast corner of the island; follow this road until it reaches the Officers' Mess, then south to the point of origin.



Adjusted Boundary in Red