

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

For NPS use only

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

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic SS Jeremiah O'Brien

and or common

**2. Location**

street & number Pier 3, Fort Mason Center not for publication

city, town San Francisco vicinity of

state California code county code

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name National Liberty Ship Memorial Association

street & number Fort Mason Center-Building A

city, town San Francisco vicinity of state California

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Domestic Shipping

street & number US Maritime Administration

city, town Washington state DC 20230

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title National Register Nomination Form has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1978  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division

city, town Washington state DC 20013-7127

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

SS Jeremiah O'Brien is a World War II-vintage cargo ship designated in U.S. Maritime Commission nomenclature as an EC-2 type ("E" for "emergency," World War II being the emergency which caused design and construction of the type; "C" for "cargo," and "2" designating a large capacity). She was the product of a standardized design, adapted from the design of an old and timeproven British tramp ship which originated in 1879. Based on plans obtained from Sunderland, England, the New York naval architect firm of Gibbs and Cox and the U.S. Maritime Commission drew the detailed plans for liberty ships. When shown the plans in 1941, President Franklin D. Roosevelt approved the efficiency of the proposed design but commented that the resulting ship would be "a real ugly duckling," a comment picked up and disseminated by the press and adopted by many.<sup>1</sup>

The standard liberty ship, including the SS Jeremiah O'Brien, was 441 feet and 6 inches in length, with a beam of 56 feet, gross tonnage about 7,176, and displacement tonnage 14,300. The ship was designed to carry 9,146 tons of cargo with a full load of fuel. Commonly they carried more, with holds filled and in addition a deckload of planes or tanks, crated aircraft or trucks, heavy machinery or railroad locomotives, or a combination of these cargoes, loading them down to their Plimsoll marks or beyond with a 10,000-ton payload. On occasion the ships were used as troop transports. The ship was designed for a crew of 44, but frequently had in additional naval armed guard of ten or twenty or more, making the quarters cramped.

SS Jeremiah O'Brien is a cargo vessel with a raked stem, flush deck, and cruiser stern. Her machinery is amidships. There are five cargo holds, three forward of and two aft of the machinery space. Salt water ballast or dry cargo can be carried in deep tanks provided in Nos. 1 and 4 holds. Cargo handling was by steam winches with booms stepped at the masts and at a center line kingpost. Natural ventilation ducts lead to all holds.

The main propelling machinery consists of a triple expansion steam reciprocating engine, size 24-1/2 x 37 x 70 x 48 inches, manufactured by General Machinery Corporation, developing 2500 IHP at 76 RPM and supplied with steam at 220 lbs. per square inch pressure and 440°F temperature at the throttle operating on 27" vacuum. The steam was created by two oil-fired water-tube boilers, manufactured by Foster-Wheeler, of the cross-drum, sectional header type. She is equipped with three reciprocating steam driven 20 K.W. generators, two Worthington designed boiler feed pumps, an enclosed crank-case type reciprocating engine driven forced draft fan and main circulator. Fire, bilge, ballast, general service, and fuel oil service pumps are principally of Worthington design and/or manufacture.

SS Jeremiah O'Brien is in excellent condition, retains her World War II integrity, and is mechanically operational.

# 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	X military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1943-1946 Builder/Architect New York Shipbuilding Corporation

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Liberty Ships" were an emergency response to a critical shortage of maritime cargo ships in World War II. Their construction was a significant accomplishment in engineering design for mass production, and the ships were built to a high standard of performance for the time and under the conditions of wartime emergency. Manned by merchant seamen for the most part, they carried all kinds of wartime cargo, including food, fuel, ammunition, weapons and all kinds of supplies, through the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, the Mediterranean Sea, the Persian Gulf and elsewhere. Approximately 2,742 liberty ships were built during the war. By 1945 liberty ships comprised the greatest standardized fleet in world history.<sup>2</sup>

Some liberty ships were operated by the U.S. Navy and used to supply landings such as the Invasion of Normandy where some of these ships were deliberately scuttled to form breakwaters called "gooseberries," while others supplied the troops on the beaches. Others were used by the Army Transport Service. A few were converted to serve as hospital ships. During the war they typically were armed for defense and many participated in combat involving attacks by enemy submarines and aircraft. More than 200 were sunk by enemy torpedoes or bombs or in storms at sea, while others survived attacks with varying amounts of damage.

SS Jeremiah O'Brien represents the class of liberty ships that contributed to victory in World War II for the following reasons:

1. SS Jeremiah O'Brien is the sole operative unaltered survivor of 2751 liberty ships built during World War II. She thus represents the largest single class of ships ever built in the world.
2. SS Jeremiah O'Brien was built in 1943 and served with distinction during the war. She carried ammunition, grain, and other dry cargo from the United States to Great Britain, took part in the D-Day invasion of France in June 1944, and later carried cargo to ports in South America, Australia, India, and the Philippines.
3. In recognition of her excellent condition and historic integrity SS Jeremiah O'Brien was made a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark in 1984 by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers.
4. SS Jeremiah O'Brien is in excellent condition and retains her World War II integrity.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9

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FOOTNOTES

1. The descriptive material in this section was adapted from the following source.

T. J. Patterson, Jr. and Gordon Chappell, "National Register of Historic Places Inventory SS Jeremiah O'Brien" (San Francisco, California: U.S. Maritime Administration, 1978)

2. Ibid.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bunker, John Gorley. Liberty Ships--The Ugly Ducklings of World War II. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1972.

Patterson, T. J. Jr., and Chappell, Gordon. "National Register of Historic Places Inventory SS Jeremiah O'Brien." San Francisco, California: U.S. Maritime Administration, 1978.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name San Francisco North

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	0	5	5	0	3	0	0	4	1	8	4	4	8	1	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

N/A

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 Harry A. Butowsky

organization National Park Service

date May 1985

street & number Division of History

telephone (202) 343-8168

city or town Washington

state DC 20013-7127

# 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

title date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration