

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Motor Torpedo Boat PT 617

other names/site number "Big Red Cock," Dragon Lady

2. Location

street & number Battleship Cove

not for publication

city, town Fall River

vicinity

state Massachusetts

code 025

county Bristol

code 005

zip code 02721

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
<u>1</u>	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
_____	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Government (Naval)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/Awalls N/A

roof N/Aother N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Electric Boat Company (Elco), PT-103 class, 80-foot motor torpedo boat PT 617, "Big Red Cock," is a museum vessel displayed at Battleship Cove in Fall River, Massachusetts. Displayed in a specially constructed building ("Newberry Hall") that protects the boat, PT 617 rests on a steel frame set on a white gravel bed and is surrounded by a concrete walkway that leads to an elevated wooden platform on the starboard side; view ports in the starboard side of the hull provide visual access to the boat's interior. PT 617 may be boarded only by museum staff, PT boat veterans, and their families.

PT 617 As Built

As built in 1945, PT 617 is a PT-103 class, 80-foot Elco motor torpedo boat. It is constructed with two layers of mahogany planking laid diagonally over laminated spruce, white oak, and mahogany frames, and reinforced with longitudinal battens, secondary transverse frames, and clamps. [1] "A layer of airplane fabric, impregnated with marine glue, was ironed on between the two layers of planking. The result was a light, strong hull, resilient enough to stand up in heavy seas." [2] Navy specifications called for a "hard chine stepless bottom... with lines formed with a view to minimizing stress on the hull The lines shall also be formed to insure easy maneuvering of the boat and a small turning circle at full speed.... The sides shall flare outward from chine to gunwale." [3] Constructed to the standard dimensions of the Elco-type PT boat, 617 is 80 feet long, with a 20-foot beam and a 5.6-foot draft. When fully loaded PT 617 displaced 55 tons. [4]

Below decks, PT 617 is divided into several compartments. Farthest aft is the lazarette, used for stowing spare engine parts and 5 gallon cans of oil. Next is the engineroom, followed by the crew's day room, which holds two bunks. The boat's gas tanks are below the day room. Forward of the day room are two officers' cabins to port, separated by a head. In the same space, to starboard, are the wardroom, armory, and galley. Forward of these compartments are the crew's quarters, which also

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D NHL CRITERIA 1,4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture (Naval)
Military
NHL VIII-B: World War II: The War in
the Pacific

Period of Significance
1945
1945

Significant Dates
1945
1945

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Electric Boat Co., Bayonne, New Jersey

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Though an early 20th century development of the Royal Navy, the motor torpedo boat gained international fame following its adaption and use by the United States Navy during the Second World War. The PT boats were highly effective craft built in large numbers to interdict enemy supply lines and harass shore installations and landings on the various islands and atolls of the South Pacific. PT boats were credited with sinking numerous enemy ships, shooting up landing barges, rescuing downed flyers, landing partisans, and attacking remote outposts on isolated islands. PT boats and their daring crews early captured public attention and admiration, helping shoot down attacking planes at Pearl Harbor and providing the means of Douglas MacArthur's escape from Corregidor. The PTs were involved in nearly every Pacific campaign, even extending their operations into the Aleutians, the English Channel, and the Mediterranean theaters of war. The PT boats were vital partners in the United States victory over Japan. PT boats gained additional fame after the war following the successful political career of John F. Kennedy, skipper of the famous Elco PT 109.

Early in the war, the United States Navy standardized the design and construction of the PT boat. During the war two basic and distinctly different types of PT boat were built for combat use-- the predominant PT, the 80-foot "Elco" boat and the 78-foot "Higgins" boat. Most of these vessels were destroyed at war's end or were sold abroad; today only four World War II PT boats

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

PLEASE SEE FOOTNOTES IN TEXT.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

PT Boats, Inc., Memphis, TN

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property .1 acre

UTM References

A

1	9
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3	2	0	1	8	0
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4	9	1	9	0	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that area encompassed within the extreme length, beam, and draft of the vessel, incorporating the entire area of PT 617 as she rests in her dry berth.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary incorporates the entire area of the vessel.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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organization National Park Service (418) date June 28, 1989
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served as the crew's mess, with bunks, lockers, and table. Forward of the crew's quarters is a small compartment that serves as a passage to the crew's head and the forepeak. This passage was used to stow lifejackets and other gear. A ladder from the wardroom leads to the charthouse, which houses the radio room and radarscope. The ladder continues to the cockpit on deck. [5]

PT 617 is powered by three Packard 4M-2500 Marine engines specially designed for PT boat use. The 4M-2500 "is a liquid cooled, supercharged, 12 cylinder...engine operating on a 4 stroke cycle. It is normally furnished as a complete marine power plant with a direct connected reverse gear in which is embodied a double cone type clutch and positive forward drive." [6] The engines each drove a single screw to develop a maximum horsepower of 4,050. The boat carried 3,000 gallons (9 tons) of high octane (100) aviation fuel in the tanks that gave it a maximum cruising radius of 500 miles. The maximum speed of the boat was rated at 40 knots, though most PTs, hampered by difficult maintenance and fouled hulls, often operated below 30 knots. The engines were equipped with mufflers that exhausted into the water to permit a quiet approach on enemy vessels or positions.

PT boats were designed as fast attack craft that provided a platform primarily for torpedoes but also for other weapons. Typical of late World War II Elcos, 617 was capable of mounting Mark XIII torpedoes, short range weapons that ran at 45 knots and carried a 600-lb. warhead. PT 617 also represents the late war development of the PT as a heavily armed gunboat, carrying a 37MM rapid-fire and two 20MM machine guns at the bow, two twin .50 caliber machine gun mounts on both sides of the cockpit, and a 40MM gun at the stern. The weapons were employed for anti-aircraft defense and for shooting up Japanese barges, transports, and other small craft, as well as beach positions. The 40MM "was the best antibarge gun the boats ever had, and eventually became standard on all boats. It was accurate, automatic, and sufficiently powerful to blast holes in the heaviest armored barge." [7] PT 617 also carried two depth charge racks at the stern, each carrying one charge of 300 lbs. of TNT per can, should a PT "cross the path of a submerging submarine." [8] The depth charges were also used against pursuing destroyers. Also aft was an Elco smoke generator, a

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steel bottle filled with titanium tetrachloride which formed fog when mixed with moisture in the air, used to mask the boat with a smoke screen. [9] Two Mark 50 rocket launchers and a 60MM mortar were also installed on the Elco boats in 1945. [10] Small arms were also carried. Each crewmember was issued a .45 caliber pistol, and the boat carried a BAR, U.S. Rifles, Cal. .30, Model 1903, Thompson submachine guns, 3-inch rockets, and grenades.

Present Appearance and Condition of PT-617

When found by the museum, PT 617 was a stripped hulk employed as a diving barge in Florida. Fully restored to wartime appearance and condition, PT 617 was repaired with in-kind replacement of wood and other materials and equipment. The restoration included the installation of authentic engines and equipment, including most of the armament. 617 mounts 4 torpedo tubes, two depth charge racks, one 37MM at the bow, a single 20MM, the two twin .50 caliber machine guns, a single 40MM and a smoke generator aft. The .50 caliber mounts and the 40MM have tubular guards installed; these prevented the gunners from firing into their own boat. [11] Also on deck is the radar mast, which connects to the radar equipment in the charthouse.

The interior spaces on PT 617 were carefully restored and furnished. The original bulkheads, wardroom benches, crew's quarters lockers, and heads were retained. The vessel appears combat ready and is fully outfitted. The boat is painted in a camouflage scheme found in the Southwest Pacific and the Philippines during the war; the grey hull gives way to a mottled blue-green superstructure that blended with the jungle shores of the islands. Meticulously restored and well-maintained, PT 617 possesses remarkable integrity as befits the boat's role as sole survivor of the predominant type of the PT class of warship.

NOTES

1
United States Navy, Motor Torpedo Boat Manual. Washington, D.C.: Navy Department, February 1845. p. 367.

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- 2
Robert J. Bulkley, Jr., At Close Quarters: PT Boats in the United States Navy (Washington, DC: Naval History Division, 1962), p. 33.
- 3
Ibid., p. 57.
- 4
United States Navy, Division of Naval Intelligence, ONI 222-US (Standard reference manual on United States men-of-war) Confidential release of 1 September 1945, p. 135. Hereafter cited as ONI 222-US
- 5
"Contract Plan, Motor Torpedo Boat, PT 565-624," Navy Department, Bureau of Ships, No. PT 565, S0101H, 408117, ALT.0, February 15, 1944. Original plans on file, Battleship Cove, Fall River, Massachusetts.
- 6
Packard Motor Company, Operating Manual, Packard Marine Engine 4M-2500, Types W8 Through W17 (Detroit: Packard Motor Company, Inc., 1944), p. 101. Also see J.G. Vincent, Development of the Packard Marine Engine During World War II (September 1938-April 1945) (Detroit: Packard Motor Car Co., 1945) p. 10.
- 7
Bulkley, op.cit., p. 35.
- 8
Ibid., p. 38.
- 9
Robert Ferrell, The United States Mosquito Fleet (Memphis: PT Boat Museum and Library, 1977) pp. 23-24.
- 10
ONI 222-US
- 11
Mark Newton, Description of PT 617, (1988), manuscript on file, Battleship Cove.