NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)
OMB No. 1024-0018

**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 USS Edson (DD-946)
other names/site number

## 2. Location

street & number Intrepid Square, foot of 46th Street ☐ not for publication
city, town New York ☐ vicinity
state New York code NY county New York code 061 zip code 10036

## 3. Classification

| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| ☒ private | ☐ building(s) | | buildings |
| ☐ public-local | ☐ district | | sites |
| ☐ public-State | ☐ site | | structures |
| ☐ public-Federal | ☒ structure | 1 | objects |
| | ☐ object | | Total |
| | | 1 | |

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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)
Military (Naval)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Museum

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
N/A

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation Steel
walls (hull) Steel
roof (deck) Steel
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The 1958 destroyer USS Edson (DD-946), the 13th (of 18) and the last of the Forrest Sherman class destroyers to remain in commission, was decommissioned in 1989. She is now a historic vessel moored as a public exhibit at the Intrepid Air-Sea-Space Museum in New York, New York.

**USS EDSON AS BUILT**

USS Edson is essentially the same vessel laid down in 1956 and launched in 1958. As built, Edson is a welded steel vessel 418.6 feet in length overall, with a 44-foot waterline length, a 44-foot, 11-inch beam and a 17.4-foot draft. The ship has a 25.2-foot depth. Edson displaces 3,990 tons (4,916 full load). [1] Designed for speed and manueverability, Edson fits the naval description of destroyers as the "greyhounds of the fleet." Edson's twin screws are propelled by 70,000-shaft horsepower Westinghouse steam turbines fired by four Babcock and Wilcox boilers that drive the vessel at 33 knots. Edson's fuel capacity was 750 tons of diesel oil; Edson's endurance was 4,500 miles at 20 knots. The armament of the vessel consists of three shielded MK 42 5-inch/54-caliber gun mounts, one fore and two aft, twin-mounted 3-inch/50-caliber guns forward, "hedgehog" depth charges, and a track-mounted depth charge battery at the stern. Fire control is provided by a MK 68 (forward) and Mk 56 (aft) gun director; the ship is also equipped with an SQS-4 sonar. The ship's sonar is dual MCC, or "dual maintenance of close contact," combining attack and search sonar functions. The ship has a single tripod mainmast, which mounts the ECM (electronic counter measures) equipment.

[x] See continuation sheet

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
[X] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [ ] A [ ] B [X] C [ ] D NHL 4

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Architecture (Naval)
XVIII-B: Technology, Transportation

Period of Significance
1956-1960

Significant Dates
1956

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Bath Iron Works

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

The 1958 destroyer USS Edson (DD-946), one of 18 built Forrest Sherman-class destroyers, is, along with USS Barry (DD-933), the subject of a separate study, one of two surviving members of the class. Of the two, both slated for preservation, Edson is the only unmodified Forrest Sherman destroyer, and as such retains the highest level of integrity. The destroyer, the oldest ship-type to have seen continuous service in the U.S. Navy, and the most built type of major surface warship in the history of the U.S. Navy, was the focus of considerable design effort, planning, and construction from the mid-1880s through the Second World War. The ultimate, last class of destroyer, was the Forrest Sherman class. Reflecting combat lessons of the Second World War and operational characteristics specified by destroyer commanders during that war, the Forrest Sherman-class destroyers were built to be effective anti-submarine warfare platforms and screening escort vessels for fast carrier task forces. The Forrest Sherman class destroyers, many later modernized for more effective anti-submarine (ASW) and anti-aircraft (AAW) warfare, served as the major U.S. all-gun and general purpose destroyers during the

[X] See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE FOOTNOTES IN TEXT.

☐ See continuation sheet

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State historic preservation office
☐ Other State agency
☒ Federal agency
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other

Specify repository:
US Naval Historical Center

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
|---|---|---|---|
| A | 18 | 584420 | 4512840 |
| B | | | |
| C | | | |
| D | | | |

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that area encompassed within the extreme length and beam of the ship as she floats at her berth.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary incorporates the entire area of the vessel.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By


name/title James P. Delgado, Maritime Historian
organization National Park Service date January 8, 1990
street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone (202) 343-9528
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20013

USS EDSON'S PRESENT APPEARANCE

USS Edson was maintained in excellent condition by her naval crew throughout her career. She was recently received by the Intrepid Air-Sea-Space Museum in this condition. Painted standard grey, the vessel retains all of her armament. All original equipment is in place. The enginerooms are in excellent condition, with the machinery intact and in operational condition; shore power is channeled through the ship's electrical systems. The propellers have been removed and the shafts locked, however. Interior spaces contain original equipment in all areas, including the bridge, galley, wardrooms, infirmary, ship's store, offices, berthing spaces, and officers' staterooms. In all respects, Edson appears exactly as she did when in active service and retains an exceptionally high degree of integrity.

NOTES

1
U.S. Navy, Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships, Volume 1. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959) pp. 101, 326. Also see Norman Friedman, U.S. Destroyers: An Illustrated Design History (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1982), p. 422.

2
"Welcome Aboard Edson (DD-946," (1983) Pamphlet handed to visitors on board USS Edson. Also see Friedman, op.cit.

Vietnam Conflict and through the 1970s. They were in turn replaced by the frigates and cruisers of the modern, nuclear Navy. USS Edson served with distinction from 1960 to 1989. Her service included extensive Vietnam War gunline duty between 1964 and 1974, and training duty from 1977 until she was retired and placed on display in 1989. Last of her type, this all-gun destroyer's high degree of integrity exemplifies her significance as the best example of her class and the end of the destroyer type.

The preceding statement of significance is based on the more detailed statements that follow.

## POST WORLD WAR II DESTROYER DESIGN AND THE FORREST SHERMAN CLASS

The destroyer is the oldest ship-type to have seen constant service in the United States Navy. "Conceived as a specialized and rather fragile auxiliary to the battle line, the destroyer grew into an invaluable general purpose warship, known in both world wars for its combination of compactness, hitting power, and toughness." [1] Destroyers were the lineal descendants of torpedo boats built as a result of the operational success of Lt. W.B. Cushing's spar torpedo boat attack on, and sinking of the Confederate ironclad Albermarle in October 1864. Post Civil War interest in the spar torpedo led to the development of the U.S. Navy's Torpedo Station at Newport, Rhode Island, and the design and construction of automobile torpedoes soon thereafter. Boats to launch these deadly new weapons were conceived as early as 1875, and by 1886, the U.S. Navy, then in the process of reorganization, commissioned its first torpedo-boat, USS Cushing. Though at first thought of as a coastal defense weapon, the torpedo boat evolved into a torpedo cruiser, capable of carrying the war to the enemy in foreign waters, and sinking enemy torpedo boats; hence, these cruisers, when built, received a name from their role as torpedo boat "destroyers." Subsequently, the torpedo boat destroyer designation was dropped as the ships grew larger, and in time, these vessels were designated simply as "destroyers."

The first "destroyer," USS Bainbridge, was commissioned in 1901. In the aftermath of Bainbridge's construction, the Navy built

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fifteen others that set the pattern for subsequent destroyer development. Thenceforth, up to the Second World War, the United States focused considerable attention on destroyer design and function. By 1922, the U.S. possessed the largest destroyer fleet in the world. [2] Refinement of the destroyer resulted in the setting of the basic pattern of the destroyer later used in World War II destroyer by 1934, when the Farragut class was introduced. Through this time, the emphasis had been on hitting power and sea-keeping ability. Speed and endurance were stressed, particularly with the Mahan class of 1935-1936. The Mahan destroyers "incorporated prototypes of a new generation of destroyer machinery, with combined increases in pressure and steam temperature with a new type of lightweight, fast-running turbine." [3] Thus was introduced a class "whose long endurance was so important for Pacific warfare." [4] Increased torpedo armament needs resulted in the pre-war Gridley, Bagley and Benham class destroyers, and just prior to the war, maximum dual-purpose firepower, torpedoes, anti-submarine warfare gear, combined with a desire for greater speed and endurance resulted in the Sims, Benson, and Gleaves classes. Later destroyers, the Fletcher and Sumner/Gearing classes, introduced war-inspired changes.

The hard-won lessons of naval combat in the Second World War were underscored as early as October 1943, when Rear Adm. M.S. Tisdale, USN, reported that

> Based upon the generally accepted concept that a destroyer's paramount duty is, and will be, offensive with secondary duty as a screening vessel; that it is the Navy's primary surface torpedo carrier, that anti-aircraft guns, as such, are defensive, the greatest importance of which is to fight the ship to the torpedo firing point, and secondarily to protect a convoy against attack.... The destroyer is the nearest approach to the "all purpose" vessel of any combatant type. [5]

Torpedo and gun battles around Guadalcanal and the Navy's shift to highly effective fast carrier task forces in the Pacific, in which destroyers played an integral screening and escort role, heavily influenced this view. The need for effective anti-

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submarine warfare sound gear was also underscored by Second World War experiences against German U-Boats in the Atlantic; post-war destroyers would require an array of "sonic," "super-sonic," and low frequency passive sonar systems. At the same time, the development of a new deck weapon, the 5-inch/54-caliber gun. proceeded to replace the earlier 5-inch/38-caliber gun. [6]

At war's end, therefore, the Navy focused its attention on a new, "ultimate destroyer" that would embody the combat lessons of the war while meeting the needs of the "new" Navy. The process of finding the ultimate destroyer was sidetracked for a while by the desire for a large fast destroyer escort, which led to a short-lived experimental vessel, the Mitscher class destroyer. Expensive to build and eventually reclassified as frigates, the Mitscher class proved impractical. Following considerable debate and consideration, a new design was selected for a 2,800-ton vessel mounting three 5-inch/50-caliber guns and twin 3-inch/50-caliber weapons with a primary task of denying "enemy submarines unopposed penetration" and extending "detection ranges of the screened body" while destroying "enemy aircraft approaching the screened force." Culminating five decades of design and development of the gun and torpedo-armed vessel, this would be the Navy's ultimate destroyer. [7]

Designed to be mass-produced, the new class commenced with USS Forrest Sherman, authorized in 1951, laid down in 1953, and commissioned in 1955. [8] The Forrest Sherman class embodied a design "to fill the need for [a] prototype general purpose destroyer, incorporating the latest proven technical developments and avoiding features which have proven unsatisfactory." [9] Eighteen Forrest Sherman-class destroyers were built between 1953 and 1958. "The Forrest Sherman was the last all gun destroyer...." [10] The eighteen ships of the class were Forrest Sherman (DD-931), John Paul Jones (DD-932), Barry (DD-933), Decatur (DD-936), Davis (DD-937), Jonas Ingram (DD-938), Manley (DD-940), Du Pont (DD-941), Bigelow (DD-942), Blandy (DD-943), Mullinnix (DD-944), Hull (DD-945), Edson (DD-946), Somers (DD-947), Morton (DD-948), Parsons (DD-949), Richard S. Edwards (DD-950), and Turner Joy (DD-951). The success of the Forrest Sherman design was realized through the long use and facility of

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modernization of the various vessels. In the late 1950s all Forrest Sherman-class destroyers were slated for conversion into AAW missile destroyers. The program was halted by Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara because of the high cost. Those Forrest Sherman-class destroyers not modified as missile destroyers were then refitted for improved ASW capabilities with better sonar arrays and the installation of ASROC. [11] Only five Forrest Sherman destroyers--USS Forrest Sherman, Mullinnix, Hull, Edson, and Turner Joy were not modified during their operational careers.

The Forrest Sherman destroyers were replaced by new, often nuclear-powered, larger vessels. These DLs, DDGs, and CGs, as well as the FFGs, are the modern "destroyers." The frigates and cruisers, however, armed with vertical-launching systems, powered by nuclear reactors, are vastly different from pre-war, World War II, and post-war gun and torpedo-armed destroyers that culminated in the Forrest Sherman class. Nonetheless, they are the next step in the design history of the "destroyer" type that began with a wooden launch ramming an ironclad with a "torpedo" lashed to the end of a spar at its bow, in October 1864.

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF USS EDSON

DD-946, the thirteenth of 18 Forrest Sherman class destroyers, was laid down at the Bath, Maine, shipyard of the Bath Iron Works on December 3, 1956. Bath, one of the nation's primary warship builders, constructed eight Forrest Shermans. The destroyer was launched on January 4, 1958, and was christened USS Merrit A. Edson (DD-946) by the widow of Maj. Gen. Merrit Austin Edson, USMC (1897-1955). [12] A native of Rutland, Vermont, General "Red Mike" Edson enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserve when the United States entered the First World War in April 1917. In 1941, prior to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Edson conducted experimental operations and training with destroyer transports that led to the formation of the 1st Marine Raider Battalion in January 1942. With an elite group of Marines, Merritt Edson molded the concept of a hard-driving, manueverable, "can do" fighting force that served as the prototype of every Marine Raider and Army Ranger battalion formed during the Second World War.

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Merritt Edson led the 1st Marine Raider Battalion into battle in the Solomons for the invasion and capture of Tulagi in August 1942, and then to Guadalcanal, where 800 of Edson's raiders dug in on the ridge overlooking Henderson Field, and held off waves of attacking Japanese troops intent on retaking the field and the island on the evening of September 13-14, 1942. For leading his troops to victory under arduous circumstances in the best tradition of the Marine Corps, Merritt A. Edson was awarded the Medal of Honor. Edson served with distinction in the Pacific, notably at Tarawa, and in 1944 was appointed Chief of Staff, Fleet Marine Force. After serving in the office of the Chief of Naval Operations and at Marine Corps headquarters in Washington, D.C., General Edson retired in 1947.

In his career, Merritt Edson received, in addition to the Medal of Honor, two Navy Crosses, a Silver Star, two Legion of Merits, the Presidential Unit Citation with two bronze stars, numerous service medals for among others the Mexican, China, Asiatic-Pacific campaigns, and the Distinguished Service Order of the British Empire. He committed suicide on August 14, 1955, at his Washington home. [13] The memory of this dedicated officer was honored by naming the latest Forrest Sherman destroyer for him. After fitting out, USS Edson was commissioned at Boston Naval Shipyard on November 7, 1958, with Cmdr. T.J. Moriarty, USN, in command. In March 1959, Edson arrived at her homeport of Long Beach, California.

From 1959 until 1964, Edson served in the Western Pacific as an escort and screening vessel for the Pacific Fleet carrier force. In 1964, Edson was sent to Vietnam. As a member of Naval Task Group 77.5, Edson was deployed with the aircraft carrier Ticonderoga (CVA-13), and the destroyers Berkeley (DDG-15), Harry E. Hubbard (DD-745), and Samuel N. Moore (DD-747) in the Gulf of Tonkin in early August 1964 when U.S. Naval vessels responded to a reported attack on USS Turner Joy and USS Maddox by North Vietnamese torpedo boats. The task group was commended by the Secretary of the Navy "for exceptionally meritorious service.... By participating in immediate, determined, and successful air strike counterattack operations against the North Vietnamese torpedo boats and supporting facilities, Task Group 77.5 demonstrated the firm intent of the United States to maintain

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freedom of the seas and to take all necessary measures in defense of peace in Southeast Asia." [14] This incident signalled the beginning of major American involvement in Vietnam in response to perceived North Vietnamese aggression.

In 1965, Edson was again deployed in Vietnam, this time as a naval gunfire support ship off the southwestern coast of Vietnam. The ship was again commended by the Secretary of the Navy in December 1967 for her gunline service between February 26 and July 5, 1967, during Operations Sea Dragon, Union, Beacon Hill, Beau Charger, and Hickory. In these operations Edson, "in the face of intensive hostile gunfire from coastal defense sites...succeeded in inflicting severe damage to military installations, lines of communication, waterborne logistics craft, and storage sites in North Vietnam." Edson sustained a direct hit, "which caused material and personnel casualties," but was able to complete her mission while rendering "effective fire to supress enemy batteries before retiring from the scene." [15] Edson returned to Vietnam in 1968; before retiring the destroyer had fired 23,000 rounds on targets in North and South Vietnam, rescued a downed pilot, "suffered minor damage from enemy gunfire, and had been named "Top Gun" destroyer by the Naval Gunfire Spotters." [16]

In 1969-1970, Edson participated in antisubmarine warfare (ASW) exercises and special surveillance operations off Vietnam. In April 1971, Edson was named flagship for DESRON (destroyer Squadron) 35. After a goodwill tour of Southeast Asia, Edson returned to Vietnam for ASW deployment and gunline service. Edson served as command destroyer for the screening escort of the attack carrier Midway in the Gulf of Tonkin. During her 1971 gunline deployment, Edson averaged a round fired every five minutes; a total of 55 days were spent on the gunline, "with 8,874 rounds of 5"/54 ammunition being expended in 1,200 missions." [17] Edson's Vietnam career exemplified her motto, "Three Guns, No Waiting." Another notable deployment was in 1974, when Edson participated in Operation Eagle Pull during the Cambodia-Vietnam crisis. As American involvement in the Vietnam War declined, Edson shifted from the Pacific to the Atlantic. In March 1977, the destroyer was shifted to DESRON 28 at Newport, Rhode Island, where Edson served as "Surface Warfare Officers School Training Ship" and as a training vessel for Naval reservists. [18]

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Edson remained in service as training ship for 11 years. Highly rated and frequently commended, the destroyer ranged into the Atlantic, Caribbean, and the Great Lakes on cruises. Edson's retirement was announced in 1982 along with all remaining Forrest Sherman destroyers, thirteen of which had been modified since their construction. By 1988, only Edson remained in service, and after the new year's begnning, the ship was decommissioned, ending the saga of the Forrest Sherman class. The ship and her sisters had not only ended a tradition; they had begun a new one, that of the modern frigate and cruiser, vessels that have assumed the destroyer's place. The Forrest Shermans were "the first of the modern postwar destroyers, they pioneered much that has become the standard of today's Navy. They served a Fleet in transition and they served it well in every corner of the globe." [19] The United States built 951 destroyers between 1901 and 1959, more than any other type of major surface warship. The last of the conventional destroyers, and the end of the line, were destroyers number 931 through 951, the Forrest Shermans. Of the eighteen Forrest Shermans built, only Barry and Edson now remain to represent this significant class of a significant type of naval vessel.

NOTES

1
Norman Friedman, U.S. Destroyers: An Illustrated Design History. (Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1982), p. 1.

2
Roger Chesnau, ed. Conway's All The World's Fighting Ships, 1922-1946 (New York: Mayflower Books, 1983), p. 125.

3
Friedman, op.cit, p. 88.

4
Chesnau, op.cit, p. 126.

5
Friedman, op.cit, p. 235.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

6
Ibid. p. 236.

7
Ibid., p. 247.

8
U.S. Navy, Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1959 ), Vol. 1, p. 325.

9
Friedman op cit. pp. 247-248.

10
Ibid., p. 249.

11
Ibid., pp. 250-251.

12
Commissioning Pamphlet, Edson, November 7, 1958. Copy in ship's history file, Ships' Histories Division, U.S. Naval Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C.

13
Biographical entry for Maj. Gen. Merritt A. Edson, USS Edson's ship's history file, Ships' Histories Division.

14
Commendation, SECNAV to Task Group 77.5, August 20, 1964, in USS Edson ship's history file.

15
Commendation, SECNAV to USS Edson, December 19, 1967, in ship's history file.

16
Ship's history, USS Edson (1971), ship's history file.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

17
USS Edson Command History for 1971, ship's history file.

18
USS Edson Command History for 1977; also see "USS Edson: 29 Years of Faithful Service to Our Fleets and Nation," Newport Navalog, June 19, 1987, p. 10.

19
Rod Redman, "Farewell to the Forrest Shermans!" Sea Classics. Vol. XXi, No. 3 (March 1988) p. 59.