

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE <b>Massachusetts</b>		2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO.	
3. NAME(S) OF SITE <b>Boston Naval Shipyard</b>		4. APPROX. ACREAGE	
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) <b>Water Street, Boston</b>			
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) <b>Department of the Navy; Paul H. Nitze, Secretary</b>			
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant) <p>The Boston Naval Shipyard, one of the Nation's oldest naval dockyards, has for over 150 years built, repaired and serviced vessels. The installation, furthermore, has established several precedents, some of which possess both national and international significance.</p> <p>Since its birth near 1800, the yard has expanded over a large section in the historic Charlestown section of Boston. A Congressional resolve of January 25, 1797, recommending an appropriation for a shipyard in Boston is apparently the first action taken concerning the installation. About three years later, the United States purchased twenty-three acres of land on the waterfront in Charlestown. The purchase of 1800 cost \$19,350 and included Moulton's Point, where General William Howe and his troops had landed on June 17, 1775, before the battle of Bunker Hill. The development of the yard was underway by March, 1801. By the end of the first commandant's tenure, 1811, the commandant's quarters, a brick storehouse, a marine barracks and several other structures had been completed. The navy bought additional land after 1811 and by 1840 had acquired most of the installation's present-day land. Subsequently, new land was made by filling adjacent parts of the harbor. Today, the yard covers 201 acres of land and includes 161 buildings, 21 miles of railroad, and numerous docks, piers, and shipways.</p> <p>During its existence, the dockyard has been commanded by a number of naval heroes, all of whom have lived in the commandant's quarters. The first three commanding officers deserve special mention. Captain Samuel Nicholson, who supervised the yard between 1800 and his death on December 29, 1811, as its first commandant, had earlier served as the initial commander of U. S. S. <u>Constitution</u>. Captain William Bainbridge succeeded Nicholson. The new commanding officer, whose first term as the yard's commander ran from 1812 to 1815, also was in charge from 1822 to 1824, and from 1832 to 1833. Bainbridge's fame stemmed from his victory over H.M.S. <u>Java</u> on December 29, 1812, when</p>			
8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources; give location of manuscripts and rare works)  <u>[Boston Naval Shipyard], "Boston Naval Shipyard," (n.p., n.d.); Justin Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, (4 vols., Boston, 1881).</u>			
9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)			
10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		11. CONDITION <b>Good</b>	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) <b>Naval yard</b>
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <b>S. S. Bradford</b>		15. TITLE <b>Historian</b>	13. DATE OF VISIT <b>April 1965</b>
		16. DATE <b>1/20/60</b>	

\* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET, 10-317a, AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

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SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

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he commanded the Constitution. It was this combat that produced the sobriquet "Old Ironsides" for the Constitution. As he lay dying on July 27, 1833, in the Naval Asylum in Philadelphia, the brave sailor suddenly sat up and cried out for his men to board the enemy. Then death felled him. During Bainbridge's intermittent supervision, Captain Isaac Hull, who had conquered the Guerriere on August 19, 1812, while commanding the Constitution, acted as the yard's commandant. He served there in 1812-1813, and again between 1815 and 1823. Because of these officers' association with the Constitution, it is especially appropriate that the warship is now docked at the Boston Naval Yard.

During the years of the first three commandants, as well as, in the following decades, the Boston yard built and fitted-out many ships for service. On June 26, 1803, the yard rang with nine booming cheers as the workmen celebrated the recoppering of the Constitution. Paul Revere, incidentally, had supplied the copper. Just over ten years later, on September 11, 1813, the yard launched her first ship, the eighteen-gun sloop Frolic. Subsequently, when the seventy-four gun Independence, slid into the water, the workers enjoyed a feast in the rigging loft "...and spent the day in hilarity."<sup>1</sup> She was the yard's second ship, and was built and launched between August, 1813, and June, 1814. During the War of 1812, master carpenters received a daily wage of from \$3.50 to \$4.00, while ordinary laborers got \$1.00 a day. Regardless of wage, all the men labored from sunrise to sunset. About forty-four years after the completion of the Independence, the yard launched the Hartford, which served as Admiral David G. Farragut's flag ship during the Battle of Mobile Bay. Because the yard's commandant detested spiritous beverages, "...he would not allow the heathen custom of breaking a bottle of wine over the [Hartford's] bows, as a libation to the Gods of Neptune and Bacchus."<sup>2</sup> During the Civil War, the yard was extremely busy, constructing numerous vessels and outfitting many others for the Union. Following the war, a slower pace returned to the navy yard. In 1874, the commandant received orders to demolish a ship, the Virginia, that had been on the stocks since 1824, but that operation remained uncompleted as late as 1881. During both of the World Wars, the yard constructed and repaired many vessels. Since 1946, it has been largely engaged in conversion and repair work.

In addition to the yard's decades of routine work, the installation is responsible for several innovations. On August 21, 1813, Bainbridge wrote to the Secretary of the Navy and suggested that shelters be constructed over the ways at Boston and at the Portsmouth navy yard. The idea received the Secretary's approbation on August 29, he ordering such houses to be erected in all navy yards. The first one built was at Boston, and it enabled work to progress despite ill weather. It stood until 1848.

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Bainbridge's idea was subsequently adopted by the British at their dockyards. The British were also impressed in 1856-57 when they saw the Merrimac. It was the American Navy's first screw steam frigate and had been launched at the Boston yard on June 14, 1855. She had cost \$879,126. This was the vessel that the Confederacy later converted to an ironclad. In 1864, the yard launched the Monadnock, the first ironclad monitor to travel from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean. About ten years later, on March 5, 1874, the Intrepid was launched. She was the navy's first iron-hulled torpedo boat.

Another important innovation at the yard was the construction of a stone dry dock. Loammi Baldwin designed and supervised the construction of two dry docks in the late 1820s, one at Norfolk and the other in Boston. The first load of stone arrived in Boston on August 23, 1827, and workmen began constructing the dock's walls the next day. By June 24, 1833, the dock was largely completed. On that day she received her first temporary tenant, the Constitution. With Vice-President Martin Van Buren and other notables present, the veteran ship became the second man-of-war to be dry-docked in the United States. When she emerged from the dock on June 21, 1834, only her design and dimensions remained the same. The dry dock has been lengthened since 1834, but the original section still remains in use.

Present Condition of the Site

Within the yard at the present time one finds an interesting mixture of the old and new. The oldest structure stands at the yard's entrance and was erected in 1803. A three-story brick building, it first was used as a storehouse and sail loft; now modernized inside, the old building houses an officers' club and bachelor officers' quarters. About five years after the construction of the preceding building, work began on the commandant's quarters. Official records first refer to the house on July 28, 1808, when the Secretary of the Navy forbade the expenditure of any money on the building that had not been authorized. Reputedly designed by Charles Bulfinch, the house was finished in 1809. Outside of a sunporch that was added during World War II, the building's exterior has remained relatively unchanged. In contrast, the interior has been greatly altered over the years.

Among other extant early structures are the ropewalk and Dry Dock Number 1. The ropewalk was erected in 1836. The granite building parallels Chelsea Street for 1,360 feet. Twenty years after the ropewalk's erection, a second story, 746 feet long, was added. The building has a headhouse of three stories' height, it containing the machinery for rope manufacturing. All of the rope for the navy was manufactured here for over a century. The dry dock, as previously mentioned, has been in service

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since 1833. It and the dry dock at Norfolk, Virginia, were the first ones in the Country. At the head of the dry dock is an inscription that commemorates its construction.

<sup>1</sup>Justin Winsor, The Memorial History of Boston, (4 vols.; Boston, 1881), III, 343.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., III, 363.