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 Utah (BB-31 and AG-16) Wreck
   other names/site number USS Utah

2. Location
   street & number Off Ford Island, Pearl Harbor
   city, town Honolulu
   state Hawaii code 15 county Honolulu code 003 zip code

3. Classification
   Ownership of Property
   Category of Property
   Number of Resources within Property
   Contributing Noncontributing
   building(s) ______ ______ buildings
   district ______ ______ sites
   site ______ ______ structures
   structure ______ ______ objects
   object ______ ______ Total
   Name of related multiple property listing: ____________________________________
   Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register ______

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 ____________
The hulk of the battleship USS Utah (BB-31 and AG-16) lies in some 40 feet of water off Ford Island in Pearl Harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Located at the berth (F-11) to which she was moored on the morning of December 7, 1941, when she was sunk by attacking Japanese forces, USS Utah is merely mentioned, and then not specifically, as a contributing element in the documentation of the United States Naval Base, Pearl Harbor as a (1965) National Historic Landmark. More recent studies (1978) resulted in the determination that the modern Utah memorial, as well as the USS Arizona Memorial, are contributing elements to the Pearl Harbor National Historic Landmark District. Yet the hulk of Utah has not been assessed or documented under the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks. Recent detailed maritime archeological assessment and documentation of the submerged remains of USS Utah reveals her to be substantially intact. This study therefore addresses the hulk of USS Utah as a property of exceptional national significance worthy of individual designation as a National Historic Landmark.

USS Utah Before the Japanese Attack

As built in 1909, USS Utah (BB-31), the first and only United States warship to bear her name, was a steel-hulled battleship of the Florida class. Utah was 521.6 feet in length, with a 88.3-foot beam, and a 28.4-foot draft. [1] Displacing 21,825 tons, Utah and her sister Florida class battleships represented the United States' first "modern" battleships built in response to the British battleship Dreadnought. The American "dreadnoughts," of which Utah was a member, followed the British model in winning sea battles through superior firepower and speed, with twin turrets mounting 12-inch guns and new steam turbines developing then unheard of-speeds. [2] Utah's armament consisted of 10 12-inch guns, 16 5-inch guns, 45-caliber machine guns and 51-caliber
### Statement of Significance

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

- [ ] nationally
- [ ] statewide
- [ ] locally

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

<table>
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<th>Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)</th>
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<td>1914, 1917, 1941</td>
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<td>Architecture (Naval)</td>
<td>1909-1941</td>
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#### Significant Person

<table>
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<th>Significant Person</th>
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<td>Peter Tomich</td>
<td>New York Shipbuilding Co.</td>
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The battle-scarred and submerged remains of the battleship and target ship USS Utah (BB-31 and AG-16) are the focal point of a shrine erected by the people of the United States to honor Utah's crew, some of whom lost their lives while trying to save their torpedoed ship during the Japanese attack on the United States Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Along with the submerged hulk of USS Arizona on the other side of Ford Island, Utah is a frozen moment of time, lying much as she did in the immediate aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack. While Pearl Harbor and its surrounding bases were repaired and ultimately modernized after the Japanese attack, Utah, like Arizona, was not. As a surviving, unaltered casualty of December 7, 1941, and as a national shrine and memorial to the memory of her dead crew, USS Utah is of exceptional national significance. Utah's career as both a battleship and target ship spanned three decades and included nationally significant service with international implications, including the American landings at Veracruz, Mexico in 1914 and World War I. Utah's alteration from battleship to target ship because of conditions dictated by the Washington Naval Treaty of 1922 was part of a nationally-significant program with a considerable impact on the U.S. Navy, as well as many other nation's navies. The intact battleship's hull, armed with then state-of-the-art weapons, is a unique well-preserved entity with considerable architectural integrity, and as one of only two surviving early American "dreadnoughts," as well as the only unaltered pre-World War II target ship, Utah's exceptional national significance is enhanced.
9. Major Bibliographical References

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:
USS Arizona Memorial

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

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<tr>
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</table>

☑ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

All that area encompassed by the extreme length, breadth, and draft of the vessel.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the entire area of the vessel as she lies submerged but does not include the adjacent memorial.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James P. Delgado, Maritime Historian
organization National Park Service (418) date July 9, 1988
street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone (202) 343-8144
city or town Washington state D.C. zip code 20013
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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anti-torpedo guns, eight 3-inch AA guns, and two 21-inch torpedo tubes that were later removed. [3] Utah's four shafts were driven by Parsons turbines and four Bureau Express boilers that enabled Utah to reach a speed of 20.75 knots. The vessel was distinguished by a "cage" style foremast and a pole-style mainmast.

Utah was modernized in 1925-1926; she was reboilered, changing from coal to oil-fired, received additional anti-aircraft armament, and her "cage" foremast was replaced with a single pole mast and additional armor was installed on some decks. [4] In 1931, Utah was converted from battleship to target ship. This work included removing her 12-inch guns and installing radio-control apparatus by which the ship could be controlled at varying rates of speed and changes of course--maneuvers that a ship could conduct in battle. Her electric motors, operated by signals from the controlling ship, opened and closed throttle valves, moved her steering gear, and regulated the supply of oil to her boilers. In addition, a Sperry gyro pilot kept the ship on course. [4]

The modified battleship, now designated AG-16, served as a platform for the testing of experimental weapons. In 1936 and 1937 new quadruple 1.1-inch machine guns were mounted, and in May 1941 the ship received 5-inch/38 caliber guns in single mounts with gunshields "similar to those fitted on the more modern types of destroyers then in service." [5] At the same time Utah also received 20-mm Oerlikon and 40-mm Bofors guns, the latest and most effective anti-aircraft guns, which replaced the already obsolete 1.1-inch machine gun. Bristling with a variety of weapons for her use as a floating test platform, and with her decks covered by 6x12-inch timbers to protect them from the impact of practice bombs dropped on the ship, Utah looked vastly different than when she was a battleship.

Hit by two torpedoes during the Japanese attack on December 7, 1941, Utah capsized. The submerged hulk was partially righted, coming to rest on her port side. Salvage of the vessel was attempted, but Utah was eventually left at her berth off Ford Island, her rusting hulk serving as a tomb for 58 of the 64 members of her crew who died in the attack.

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USS *Utah* Today

Listing some 38 degrees to port and resting on her port side parallel to Ford Island, with the decks facing away from shore and some 100 feet of her starboard side and decks awash, *USS Utah*’s intact hull lies in the silt of Pearl Harbor. On shore, and overlooking the exposed portion of the ship is a modern (1971) whitewashed concrete viewing platform that serves as the *Utah Memorial*. Archeological survey of *Utah* in 1986 disclosed that salvage efforts focused on attempting to right the vessel in a similar fashion to the successful work on the capsized *USS Oklahoma*, which was righted, partially freed of water, and towed to drydock. The *Utah* effort failed; the hull is festooned with two sets of wire cables which run from holes cut into the torpedo blister below the original waterline. The cables are attached to frames and run along the starboard side of the ship to attachments on the deck.

The most striking feature of *Utah* is that the vessel was abandoned after the effort to right her failed; not all of the ship’s armament was removed. Two of her original turrets, one at the bow and the other aft are in place, though the 12-inch gun tubes were removed when *Utah* was converted to a target ship. Platforms for single 5-inch/38-caliber gun mounts rest atop turret 1, the mount for turret 2, and the mounts for turrets 4 and 5. The guns themselves are mounted with the exception of that atop turret 1; only the mount itself is left. Abaft the turret 2 gun mount on the port side a quadruple 1.1-inch gun is mounted; its tubes are twisted, in the words of one archeologist, like "bent spoons." [6]

Other major features of the wreck include the anchor chain and *Utah*’s anchors, which rest inside the hawses. Moving aft from the bow, several small holes cut to rescue trapped crew members from inside the hull can be found at the waterlevel on the starboard side. The area of the superstructure (which was reduced during conversion) is clearly outlined; a mass of twisted wreckage and loose plate lies in this area. The base of the stack is clearly discernable. Moving aft, past turret 3 the single pole mainmast of *Utah* lies broken, angling down into the silt; immediately abaft the mast is a hatch leading below decks. Aft of the mounts for turrets 4 and 5 is a towing arrangement for targets.

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The hull of Utah is intact and shows little distortion; one of the most striking features along the starboard hull below and above the water surface are the rows of portholes, many with the deadlights, complete with glass in place. NPS scientific illustrator Jerry Livingston, who prepared the archeological drawings of Utah, noted during project work in 1986 that "the ship is eerie. It has the air about it of people having dropped what they were doing very quickly. It looks kind of like a deserted town with the dishes still left on the table." [7]

While extensively fouled with a layer of sea grass, oyster shells, barnacles, and anemones and covered with approximately 1-1/2-inches of rust, Utah seems in good shape, apparently stable and only slowly corroding except in an heavily rusted area where the tidal and wave action alternately leaves her exposed decks and hull wet and dry. Nonetheless, Utah is an intact, well-preserved entity in better condition and with greater integrity of 1941 appearance than the remains of USS Arizona (BB-39) on the other side of Ford Island.

NOTES


5. Ibid., p. 424.


7. Ibid.
The preceding statement of significance is based on the more detailed statements which follow.

USS Utah's Career Before the Pearl Harbor Attack

The construction of USS Utah was part of an early 20th century arms race at a time when military supremacy was determined by control of the seas. The rise of the battleship as the super weapon of the world's navies had commenced with the combat between USS Monitor and CSS Virginia during the American Civil War, though the first true American "battleship" did not slide for the ways until 1895. The first battleships, of which the famous USS Maine was one of four, were key in the United States' victory in the Spanish-American War and were in turn followed by other vessels, many built during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, whose 16-vessel "Great White Fleet" circled the globe in a show of American naval might. Despite the great number of American battleships, new developments in the years just preceding the First World War rendered them obsolete. These developments—steam turbines, multiple turrets mounting increasingly large-bore rifled guns (from 10- to 12- to 14-inches) and improvements in armor made the battleship an even more formidable weapon and the focus of naval arms races.

British plans to construct a new battleship, HMS Dreadnought, which would embody the new developments with ten 12-inch guns and steam turbines driving the ship at 22 knots alarmed the United States and other naval powers. Even as the last of Roosevelt's Great White Fleet slid from the ways and embarked on their world tour, plans for new American "dreadnoughts" were on the drawing boards. Named for the first vessel of the new class, USS Florida, these new battleships mounted multiple 12-inch guns and with turbines (and unfortunately in some cases with old-fashioned reciprocating steam engines) proved a match for the European dreadnoughts and in concert with the British proved their mettle in the First World War. [1] One of the first of the Florida class, USS Utah was laid down on March 6, 1909, at the Camden, New Jersey yard of the New York Shipbuilding Co. Completed just nine months later, Utah was launched on December 23, 1909. Work to ready the ship for sea took longer, and Utah was not placed in commission until 1911. After a shakedown cruise south along the coast, into the Gulf and then the Caribbean, Utah was assigned to the Atlantic Fleet in March of 1912. For the next two years the battleship was assigned to regular duties in the Atlantic Fleet, drilling, and engaging in training cruises.

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In 1914, Utah played an important role in the American landings at Veracruz, Mexico. Mexico, torn by civil war and revolution, was the scene of considerable American intervention, much of it centered at Veracruz and with Brig. Gen. John J. Pershing's forays into northern Mexico. Utah was deployed twice at Veracruz, first in February–April 1914 when she anchored off Veracruz and transferred refugees to nearby Tampico, and again in late April–June 1914 when Utah joined other American ships in an attempt to contravene the landing of arms shipped from Germany to Mexican general and president Victoriano Huerta, who had succeeded the assassinated legal president, Francisco I. Madero. President Woodrow Wilson, eager to support Madero backers and anti-Huerta revolutionaries as part of his international campaign for human rights, and seeking the means to stabilize war-torn neighboring Mexico, by force of arms if necessary, sent in troops. Marines landed from the U.S. Naval vessels, including Utah, took Veracruz on April 21, 1914, seized the customhouse and prevented the landing of the arms. In the action, seven members of Utah's crew distinguished themselves and received Medals of Honor. Considerable Mexican casualties embarrassed the United States and led to an American withdrawal, but the action was one of a series of maneuvers that led to Huerta's downfall and the installation of a new government. [2]

Between 1914 and 1917 Utah trained and cruised the Atlantic seaboard and in the Caribbean. Following the United States' entry into the First World War in April 1917, she served as a gunnery and engineering training ship on Chesapeake Bay until August 1918, when she was dispatched with other battleships to Ireland to protect and support convoys to Great Britain. Utah served as flagship for this group of American dreadnoughts until the armistice. Along with another future Pearl Harbor victim, USS Arizona (BB-39), Utah served as an honor escort for George Washington when that vessel carried President Woodrow W. Wilson to France. Returning to the United States at the end of 1918, Utah served in a variety of missions, including a stint as flagship for the United States Navy's European Squadron in 1921 and diplomatic missions to South America. Meanwhile the naval arms race had resulted in negotiations to limit warship production. After two years of negotiations, proposals from President Warren G. Harding's administration limiting capital ship strengths for the United States, Great Britain, Japan, Italy, and France were accepted in 1922. This

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agreement, the Washington Naval Treaty, limited the U.S. to 18 capital ships—several older vessels were scrapped, and two battleships, USS Wyoming and Utah, were to be converted into target ships. [3] Utah's conversion, however, would not take place for nearly a decade. Modernized in 1925, Utah continued in her regular duties, including transporting President-elect Herbert C. Hoover from South America to the United States in December 1928-January 1929. [4] Finally decommissioned in 1931, Utah underwent conversion to a target ship at Norfolk Navy Yard, re-emerging in 1932 as a target ship and redesignated AG-16.

Transferred to the Pacific Fleet in June 1932, Utah spent the remainder of her career as a target ship and as mobile platform for the testing of new weapons. Towing targets during fleet maneuvers and mock battles, Utah also served as a target for practice bombs dropped on her decks by aircraft. At the same time Utah also tested new 1.1-inch machine guns, single mount 5-inch/38-caliber guns, and .50 caliber machine guns on drones and balloons. After additional modifications and the installation of new antiaircraft weapons, including new Bofors and Oerlikon guns in May 1941, Utah made a cruise along the Pacific Coast, headed into the Pacific, and engaged in antiaircraft and target training in Hawaiian waters. The training many men received aboard Utah was put to excellent use in the coming war, with antiaircraft gun crews trained with Utah's weapons being put to good use in the naval air to ship actions. Ironically, Utah was to be an early victim of the war. [5]

The Attack of December 7, 1941, and Utah's Sinking

Nationalistic and militaristic fervor in Imperial Japan and a strong belief in Japan's destiny and divine right to rule all of southeast Asia brought Japan and the United States into increasing diplomatic confrontation throughout the 1930s. Compounding the matter was a bloody undeclared war the Japanese were waging in China and the weakening of European control in Asian colonies as a result of the Second World War. American diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions and a feeling that the time was ripe to conquer American, British, French, and Dutch territories in Asia pushed militaristic factions in Japan closer to war with the United States. Fearing that the United States' Pacific Fleet would pose a formidable obstacle to Japanese conquest of Southeast Asia, Adm. Isoroku Yamamoto, Commander-in-Chief of the Japanese Combined Fleet visualized a bold attack on
the Pacific Fleet while it lay at anchor at Pearl Harbor. Such an "surprise strategical" attack, bold and daring in its execution, would secure the Pacific and initiate the war in the tradition of the Japanese naval victory over the Russians at Port Arthur in 1904. [6]

The actual plan of operation, formulated by a young tactical genius in aerial warfare, Cmdr. Minoru Genda, was agreed to after months of internal dissension and disagreement among the ranks of command in the Japanese Navy. When negotiations with the United States were deemed unlikely to continue to the satisfaction of the Japanese government of Prime Minister Hideki Tojo, a task force of 33 vessels—most notably the carriers Akagi, Hiryu, Soryu, Kaga, Zuikaku and Shokaku sailed for Hawaii. Arriving at position 200 miles north of Oahu early in the morning on December 7, 1941, the Japanese forces launched two waves of fighters, high-altitude and torpedo dive bombers. At 7:55 a.m., Hawaii time, the first wave, under the command of Cmdr. Mitsuo Fuchida, hit Pearl Harbor, Hickam Air Base, Wheeler, Ewa, and Kaneohe Air Base, catching the Army, Navy, and Marine forces off guard. The second wave, under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Shigekazu Shimazaki, struck Bellows Airfield, Kaneohe, Hickam, and Pearl Harbor approximately one hour later at 8:50 a.m. Japanese torpedos, bombs, and projectiles slammed into ships, aircraft and men, wreaking a terrible toll.

One of the first vessels attacked was Utah. Genda and Fuchida, planners of the attack, had ordered their pilots to ignore Utah, which as a non-combat ship was not worthy of attack, but eager pilots dropped two torpedoes aimed at Utah and the nearby light cruiser Raleigh. One torpedo slammed into Utah's side at 8:01 a.m. as her crew raised the flag on the fantail. This action infuriated Lt. Heita Natsamura, flight commander for the torpedo bombers from the carrier Hiryu, who, following his orders had "specifically instructed his men to avoid Utah." Nonetheless Matsamura's men attacked, and following the first hit, Lt. Tamotsu Nakajima, "young and inexperienced...followed suit." [7]

With the second torpedo detonating on the port side, Utah rolled onto her beam ends. The capsizing ship trapped many men below decks, particularly as the heavy timbers laid on the decks to protect them from the practice bombs shifted and blocked hatches and filled the water with crushing deadly debris. The senior officer aboard, engineering officer Lt. Cmdr. Solomon S. Isquith,

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET
worked to save his men, plunging below decks and barely escaping with his own life. Other heroes included Fireman John B. Vaessen, who remained at his post in the dynamo room, keeping the lights on to aid escapees, and Chief Watertender Peter Tomich, who also stayed at his post, securing the boilers and making sure his men had escaped. Both Vaessen and Tomich, along with many other men, were trapped in the ship when she capsized; only 10 men, including Vaessen, who made his way to the bottom of the ship with a wrench and flashlight, were rescued by several of their mates who cut into the hull while under attack from strafing Japanese planes. Watertender Tomich never made it out and remains entombed in the ship to this day. For his heroic actions, Tomich posthumously received the Medal of Honor. [8]

American losses at Pearl Harbor totalled at least eight battleships, three light cruisers, three destroyers and four auxiliary craft either sunk, capsized or damaged, 188 aircraft lost and 159 damaged, and 2,403 killed or missing and 1,178 wounded. [9] Among the casualties were 64 men from Utah--six officers and 58 crewmen--of whom only six were ever recovered. The remaining 58 lost members of Utah's crew remain inside their ship.

The aftermath of the attack witnessed the United States' entry into the Second World War determined to win the absolute, unconditional surrender of Japan. Admiral Yamamoto's summation of the attack, a fear that the Japanese had "awakened a sleeping giant and filled him with a terrible resolve," was realized. Four of the six attacking carriers—Akagi, Kaga, Hiryu, and Soryu—were sunk in combat at Midway just six months after Pearl Harbor. Adm. Yamamoto was shot down over Bougainville on April 18, 1943, and after four years of bloody combat waged hand-to-hand on Pacific islands and at sea, Japan surrendered following the detonation of two nuclear bombs in 1945.

Utah After the Attack

In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attack the United States Navy commenced repair and salvage work and succeeded in raising all of sunken vessels with the exception of USS Arizona and USS Utah. Of the vessels raised, all were salvaged and returned to duty with the exception of USS Oklahoma, which sat in drydock through the war, was sold for scrap, and sank while under tow in 1947. Efforts to right Utah in the same fashion as Oklahoma
failed. The vessel was pulled partly upright, but slid in the mud and stuck. With the exception of some light salvage of a few guns, Utah was abandoned. [10] National attention focused on USS Arizona's remains, with a major memorial built to span her hulk in 1961. Veterans of Utah as well as other Pearl Harbor survivors argued that Utah not be neglected, and in 1971, following extensive lobbying, a memorial was dedicated on the shore of Ford Island overlooking the exposed portions of the "forgotten" victim of the attack on December 7, 1941.

NOTES


5 Ibid., p. 424.


7 Prange, At Dawn We Slept, p. 506.


SEE CONTINUATION SHEET
9
Prange, *At Dawn We Slept*, p. 539.

10