

April 12, 2022

To: The State Historic Resources Commission

Re: Nomination of the United States Maritime Service Officers School in Alameda, CA for Listing on the National Register of Historic Places

Dear State Historic Resources Commission:

The Alameda Architectural Preservation Society recognizes the historic value of the district and structures belonging to the United States Maritime Service Officers School in Alameda, California. These buildings contain an essential piece of American WWII history, while also exhibiting an example of a unique chapter in the history of California architecture.

AAPS is dedicated to public awareness and appreciation of historic architecture, and to the preservation of historic structures in the City of Alameda, therefore, we support the nomination of the district containing the U. S. Maritime Service Officer School to the National Registry of Historic Places.

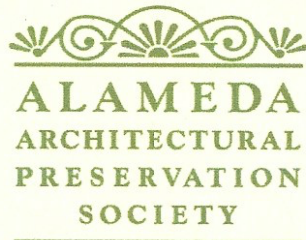
For context, it's important to understand that the US Merchant Marine is a fleet of ships responsible for delivering supplies and personnel to US and Allied bases during wartime. The US Maritime Service, created in 1936, was the official training organization for the Merchant Marine and built training stations that produced officers and crew including the USMS Officers School in Alameda.

When the first class of officers entered Alameda's new USMS Officers School in 1943, the United States had already declared and entered war with both Japan and Germany. It was a pivotal moment for the future of the United States and the world. We were fighting two enemies, on two fronts, in two different oceans.

In response, the United States established a massive and rapid production of more than 2000 Liberty and Victory cargo ships built to supply American and Allied Forces with vital shipments of planes, weapons, ammunition, vehicles, gasoline, food, medicine, and all the other materials for warfare. This powerful war effort by the American civilian's "army at home" has been memorialized at both NRHP districts "Rosie the Riveter Park" and "Kaiser Shipyard #3" in Richmond, California.

The amazing output of the American shipyards however was only half the story. As the 2000 Liberty ships were completed and launched, they still had to be sailed by Merchant Mariners. With an average of ten officers required on a ship, this new Merchant Marine fleet would urgently need more than 20,000 officers trained and readied as fast as possible.

The completion of Alameda's USMS Officer School in 1943 arrived just in time. The training center's condensed course schedule quickly graduated classes of the Merchant Marine officers needed for the huge new Liberty ship fleet. This modern multi-faceted new facility, built with direct access to the bay, offered



training for every aspect and situation the officers might face on their ship or in the water. During the war, more than 20,000 officers graduated from Maritime Service schools, immediately took positions on Liberty ships and bravely served our country. Unfortunately, there were great losses suffered by the Merchant Mariners. More than 8000 died and more than 12,000 were injured as their slow moving and lightly armed cargo ships bravely delivered supplies into every battle zone from Russia to the Philippines while facing fierce attack from above and below the sea.

In addition to the district's WWII story, the new architectural discoveries made by the applicant Carmen Reid pertaining to the USMS Officer School's construction in Alameda, uncover an interesting California architectural history as well. Most important was the discovery of a full set of original blueprints for the entire campus that were hidden in the Alameda Museum. These blueprints reveal that notable and accomplished Oakland-based architect Harry A. Bruno was the supervising architect, showing page after page of specific revisions where Bruno's design influence comes into play. These detailed blueprints produced streamlined buildings designed in the Bay Area's "Second Bay Tradition". The dark brown siding, white ribbon windows and extended roof eaves reflect some of the local architectural trends and the modern influences that came to bear when this campus was constructed in 1942-43.

The gravity of our country's situation is evident when you see the many prominent and groundbreaking Bay Area architects who were also involved in the construction and design of defense and housing facilities needed for the increased wartime activity. As mentioned, among them were Joseph Esherick, Gardner Daily, Carl Warnecke, Donald Olsen and William Wurster. The entire commercial and residential construction industry in the United States had nearly stopped due to the defense construction urgently needed and materials rationed to pursue the war effort. Just like the shipyard workers and the Merchant Mariners, California modern architects also rolled up their sleeves and made important contributions to the defense effort during these years. This was a truly unique chapter in California architectural history.

The US Maritime Service Officer School buildings in Alameda are the last standing structures in the country that served the WWII effort of the Merchant Mariners. As General Dwight D. Eisenhower said at the end of WWII, "When the final victory is ours, there is no organization that will share its credit more deservedly than the Merchant Marine". Fortunately, we still have this opportunity to acknowledge their importance by acknowledging and preserving this important piece of California and American history.

We urge your Commission to unanimously and enthusiastically support this nomination.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ma. C. Perales".

Conchita Perales
AAPS Board Vice President