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# UNITED STATES NAVY AND MARINE CORPS BASES, DOMESTIC

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1965. The project involved launching missiles from vertical floating launchers dropped into the water either by warships or a special Hydra launching surface effects ship. The feasibility of the project was proven, and such firing is easily adaptable for use by both merchant and combatant warships.

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#### PORT ALTHROP, ALASKA, NAVAL AUXILIARY AIR FACILITY, 1941-1944

Port Althorp (58°08'N., 136°20'W.), is on Chichagof Island, seventy-two miles northwest of Sitka. Part of the prewar expansion of the Sitka subsector, Point Althorp became a section base in July 1941, then an auxiliary air facility in March 1943. Used for local patrol, the base could beach a few seaplanes and handle minor repairs to aircraft and small vessels. No longer necessary as Alaskan operations centered on the Aleutians, Port Althorp was disestablished in June 1944.

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#### PORT ARMSTRONG, ALASKA, NAVAL AUXILIARY AIR FACILITY, 1941-1943

Port Armstrong (56°08'N., 134°39'W.), on Baranof Island, lies fifty miles southeast of Sitka. Like Port Althorp, it became a naval section base in the Sitka subsector in July 1941, then an auxiliary air facility in March 1943. Port Armstrong had a landlocked inner basin and the best anchorage in the area. Small craft and patrol planes could get minor repairs there. The base was decommissioned in July 1943.

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#### PORT HUENEME, CALIF., NAVAL CONSTRUCTION BATTALION CENTER, 1942-

Port Hueneme, Calif., is a deep-water port fifty-five miles northwest of Los Angeles at the edge of the Oxnard Plain. The seaport itself originated in 1871, when Thomas Bard, owner of most of the land in the area and a future U.S. Senator from California, built a 1,000-foot-long wharf and began importing lumber and exporting grain. In 1874 the federal government built a lighthouse at Port Hueneme on land donated by Bard, but the first real naval installation there was a radio direction finder station built in 1920 and abandoned as obsolete in 1931. In 1938 Richard Bard, a son of Thomas, in association with local businessmen and farmers, organized a harbor district and raised public funds for the building of a modern seaport at Port Hueneme. The last was completed on 318.59 acres in June 1940. Soon thereafter Rear Adm. Ben Moreel, Chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, created the Naval Construction Corps and was soon seeking a West Coast port to serve it during World War II. After survey teams inspected various sites, the Navy decided upon Port Hueneme, which it acquired in February 1942 for \$2 million and to which it added 1,273 acres of privately owned land. Construction began on 9 March 1942 by the firm of Atkinson and Pollock, and Capt. Louis F. Thibault, USN, was recalled from retirement to oversee the base's construction and establishment. The Advanced Base Depot (ABD) was officially established on 15 May 1942. Until the end of the war the private contractors, Pacific Naval Air Bases, administered the base on a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract that cost the Navy more than \$1 million per working day. By 1945 the base contained thirty-three miles of railroad lines and sidings with a capacity of 1,997 boxcars; sixty-five miles of paved roads; tent cities, barracks, and messing facilities for 21,000 military personnel; a complex of warehouses; and an expanded inner harbor that could handle nine cargo vessels and two tank landing craft simultaneously. About 20 million measurement tons of supplies and equipment were shipped out during the war, four times as much by ships as by rail because of the need to deliver them to fighting men in the Central, South, Southwest, and North Pacific.

The ABD at Port Hueneme originally served as a receiving barracks for

transient Construction Battalion (CB) personnel and to relieve overcrowding in the large California ports of Oakland and Los Angeles. The men were quartered at three camps named Holliday, Rousseau, and Thomas in honor of deceased civil engineers. The quartered men used their facilities to purchase, unpack, test, fabricate, assemble, crate, transport to shipping points, and load advance base material on ships. To some shipping facilities already at Port Hueneme others were added by the same contractor who was building the Fleet Operating Base at San Pedro (q.v.), while quonset huts were shipped from the ABD at Davisville, R.I. (q.v.), for use as barracks and small shops. Part of the materials shipped out in 1944 and 1945 came from the Central Spare Parts Warehouse at Joliet, Ill., which was disestablished in November 1945. In addition, Port Hueneme offered operational (team) training for ACORNS, that is, all the equipment and skills needed to build a small air base. Until 12 August 1944 it also provided a specialized outfit called ARGUS—a shore-based unit whose function was to provide fighter direction, air warning, surface warning, combat information service, and coordination of all radars of base's defenses. On 30 September 1944 U.S. Naval School (Port Director) was established; on 29 June 1945, a Naval School, Naval Justice; and on 21 September 1945 a Naval School, Naval Officers Intake Station Advance Base Receiving Barracks.

By the end of the war Port Hueneme had a storage area of about 600 acres and fourteen major and minor warehouses with a total area of 719,000 square feet. In addition, there were 19 million square feet of improved open-area storage. The Ninth Avenue Pier at Oakland served as part of the main depot, but nine ship berths and loading ramps for LSTs at Port Hueneme proper were able by the end of the war to ship out up to 225,000 long tons a month.

Unlike the three other ABDs, in which the depots as well as the materials they held were transferred to the Bureau of Supplies and Accounts, Port Hueneme retained its active status and had various activities transferred to it. On 30 June 1945 more than 10,000 of the 24,000 men in the four ABDs were at Port Hueneme. One year later, with the Navy now assuming command of the base, 5,000 of the 5,800 CBs were there.

On 19 October 1945 the Advanced Base Proving Ground at Davisville was transferred to Port Hueneme, and on 11 December 1945 the Naval Base there was redesignated a naval station. Encompassed by the station were the Naval Construction Battalion Center and its subordinate activities, the Naval Training and Distribution Center (the former receiving barracks), and the Naval ABD. On 21 August 1946 the School of Civil Engineer Corps Officers was transferred from Newport, R.I., and on 19 December 1949 the Naval Civil Engineering Laboratory was transferred from Solomons, Md.

One new task for Port Hueneme was to outfit supply ships for Arctic contractors. At the Advanced Base Proving Ground, which had an officer-in-charge, tests were made on such projects as sleds for hauling cargo over the ice, snow, and tundra found in the Arctic, and on amphibious vehicles. It was from Port Hueneme on 12 April 1947 that arrangements were made to establish an Arctic

Test Station at Point Barrow, Alaska, for testing experimental machinery, material, and equipment in extreme sub-zero temperatures. Meanwhile, as of 1 April 1947, there were 2,400 men in a training program that for three months taught 400 men a month the skills of construction work at the Naval Training and Distribution Center. For civil engineer officers there was the Naval School, a sub-unit of the CB Center under its own officer-in-charge. Here lectures on 108 different subjects were delivered on a quarterly schedule. The School of Justice, also under an officer-in-charge, had a normal student load of eighty-nine officers and forty-eight enlisted men. The Naval Ammunition Depot at nearby Fall Brook, Calif., extremely busy during World War II, was placed in caretaker status on 1 July 1947.

From the late spring of 1946 to April 1950, Port Hueneme engaged in the roll-up operation that brought 600,000 tons of equipment and supplies from the Pacific and stored them on 200 acres of outside storage space. It also accommodated 22,000 returning veterans who could not be taken care of in the large West Coast ports. Yet from the end of the war to the beginning of the Korean War, it had to get along with a skeleton crew.

The Naval Justice School was returned to Newport on 15 March 1950, and on 8 August 1951 a reorganization occurred in which the naval station was disestablished and its functions assumed by the Naval ABD, to which was added the Naval Advanced Base Tactical Training Center. In 1952 came the Naval CB Base Unit, which served as a pool for CBs awaiting assignment to an established unit and provided training during their waiting period. Meanwhile, five of the new CB units formed during the Korean War were assigned to Port Hueneme.

For the decade after the end of the Korean War, routine operations at Port Hueneme were modified by various special undertakings. In 1960 Port Hueneme established a Mobile Base Recovery Force Training Program centered on nuclear attack or accident recovery measures and trained both Regular and Reserve officers and men in detection, decontamination, and rescue operations. When MCB-103 Detachment B built a Project Mercury telemetry and ground instrumentation station at Canton Island, a Pacific CB battalion had for the first time entered the space age. Port Hueneme also engaged in a number of PHIBLEX exercises in which Marines used its facilities to embark and backload enough material and personnel to support a Marine Air Group or wing. In addition, it trained Materiel Take-Off Teams for the CB battalions and was responsible for funding and procuring all construction supplies used by MCBs in the Pacific. In 1963 it began sending CB Assistance Teams to South Vietnam and Thailand to try to help improve the standards of living and of defense in those countries. By 1965, in its third great period of activity, Port Hueneme reached its highest level of operations since World War II in supporting the Vietnam War. A peak of 657,824 measurement tons (MT) were shipped out in 1968. In 1973, only 55,553 MTs were shipped out, and the seven CB battalions of 1968 had been reduced to four in 1973.

Like many other military installations, Port Hueneme suffered cutbacks and



budget cuts as the Vietnam War wound down, but it gained as a result of reductions and transfers at other facilities. For example, it assumed responsibility for the logistic support of Operation Deep Freeze and for construction being undertaken at the island of Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean; maintained a huge Prepositioning War Reserve Stocks program; and continued to provide logistic support to the naval construction force and to the many tenant activities it had on board. By 1974 it used 2,451.89 acres of land, 792 of which were leased; had a plant value of \$101,658,000; had six deep-water berths extending for 4,208 linear feet from which it could ship 125,000 tons per month; and had diversified storage areas, some temperature and humidity controlled, some not, some under cover. It had 47 single officers' quarters, 1,947 housing units for single men, and 500 family housing units. Its financial impact upon nearby communities was estimated to approach \$100 million annually. Much of its work was connected with construction at Diego Garcia and its storing of prepositioned stocks and also of Peace-time Operational Stocks, the last two being valued at almost \$100 million.

With the transfer of the Proving Ground at Davisville in 1945, Port Hueneme had acquired a new mission: "To undertake research leading to development and evaluation of construction materials, equipment, and techniques assigned by the Bureau of Yards and Docks, in order to promote the efficiency of continental and overseas construction and the usefulness of naval construction forces." With Davisville and Solomons being closed and Port Hueneme deemed permanent, it began fulfilling its new mission by supporting the Arctic Test Station established in 1946 at Point Barrow, Alaska, to test construction equipment, structures, and materials under Arctic conditions. At Port Hueneme, meanwhile, a civil engineering laboratory was established that, rather than engaging only in engineering research, has conducted research as well in mechanical, chemical, electrical, electronic, nuclear, and sanitary fields. From its cold-weather program have come new developments in snow removal and packing snow to serve as runways on ice, the D-2 snow tractor, the Wanigan, cargo toboggan, and 12-foot-high Arctic Shop Building. In amphibious operations it developed a ship-to-shore bulk fuel delivery that deleted the need for fuel drums, and a 21-foot-wide pontoon causeway, and conducted experiments in unloading a container ship in the absence of beach unloading facilities. In the field of construction equipment and techniques, it has devised five anchors exerting improved holding power, tested earth-moving equipment in rugged terrain, and built protective shelters useful during an atomic attack, as well as nuclear power stations for overseas bases. Among the subjects at symposia and conferences it has hosted have been the marine borer, airfield pavements for jet aircraft, and equipment for amphibious operations. While it has sought methods to reduce the cost of painting and roofing naval buildings, it has also tested techniques for deep ocean salvage, tested various concrete structures on the sea floor, and developed hydraulic and pneumatic underwater tools. Last, it seeks ways to combat Navy-generated pollution. And for good measure it has worked on early versions of

ship-borne guided missiles, homeported five ships for missile tracking, and edits and issues *The Navy Civil Engineer*. About 70,000 people per year visit the Navy Civil Engineer Corps and Seabee Museum located on the premises.

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#### PORTSMOUTH, N.H., NAVY YARD, 1800-

The harbor of Portsmouth, N.H., approximately half way between Boston and Portland, Me., is formed by the mouth of the Piscataqua River. Its entrance is shielded by the Isle of Shoals; it is well marked and easily entered in clear weather. Portsmouth has been a major port since colonial times. Shipbuilding and the export of mast timber for the Royal Navy began in the seventeenth century. Between 1694 and 1749 Portsmouth builders launched three vessels for the King's service. During the Revolution they built the ship-of-the-line *America*, frigate *Raleigh*, and sloop-of-war *Ranger*. Between 1797 and 1799 they added the frigate *Congress*, sloop-of-war *Portsmouth*, revenue cutter *Scammel*, and the Algerian gift sloop-of-war *Crescent*.

Portsmouth was naturally one of the sites inspected by Josiah Humphreys in 1800 when he surveyed the New England coast for possible navy yard locations. He recommended that the government acquire Dennett's Island, two and a half miles from the sea on the Kittery, Me., side of Portsmouth harbor. As a result of this geographic oddity, the yard has sometimes been referred to as the Kittery Navy Yard. In arguing for the location, Humphreys pointed out that the harbor entrance could be fortified at small expense and that the yard could be easily reached from the sea. Its drawbacks were the small size of the harbor, fogs, and currents. Dennett's Island, he reported, was both better and appreciably cheaper than Badger's Island, upon which the *Congress* and *Portsmouth* had been built.

Navy Agent Jacob Sheafe purchased the 58-acre island for \$5,500 on 12 June 1800. The farmhouse on the island continues in use to the present as the core of Quarters A, the yard commandant's house. Following the purchase the government-owned property on Badger's Island was moved to the yard, where in 1801 a timber shed and basin were added. The timber collected was intended for use in a 74-gun ship-of-the-line authorized in 1799 that was never built. In the Republican retrenchment of 1801 the naval constructor, clerk of the yard, and naval storekeeper were dismissed and not replaced. Although a marine barracks was constructed in 1803, the first Marines did not arrive until three years later. Prior to the War of 1812 the yard remained undeveloped, although a gunboat was stationed there in 1809.

No naval officer appears to have been assigned to the yard until Lt. Thomas Macdonough took charge in 1812. He left a few weeks later to take command