Dwight T. Pitcaithley  
National Park Service  
North Atlantic Regional Office  
15 State Street  
Boston, Massachusetts 02109-3572  

Dear Dwight:

Enclosed is a copy of PUBLIC PLACE, PRIVATE HOME: A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE COMMANDANT'S HOUSE AT THE CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD, 1805-1974, a special history study prepared by Margaret A. Micholet for Boston National Historical Park.

The study provides valuable information for the human story of the Charlestown Navy Yard. The Commandant's House was occupied continuously as an official residence from the time of its construction to the time the yard closed, a period of nearly 175 years.

The report serves as a complement to the physical history of the house, the yard's oldest extant structure, and it adds much to our knowledge of life at the yard and of the commandant's official duties.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

John J. Burchill  
Superintendent

Enclosure
PUBLIC PLACE, PRIVATE HOME

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE COMMANDANT'S HOUSE
AT THE CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD
1805-1974

SPECIAL HISTORY STUDY
BY
MARGARET A. MICHOLET

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
BOSTON NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
APRIL 1986
PUBLIC PLACE, PRIVATE HOME

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PART 1

HOUSE AND HOME
CHAPTER 1
A HOME FOR THE COMMANDANT

The establishment of the new nation of the United States of America precipitated almost immediate problems on the open seas. Growing mercantile success in international waters led to inevitable conflicts with foreign powers—notably Great Britain, France, and the Barbary States of northern Africa. By the time John Adams became president in 1797, the country had recognized the need for a navy to protect American interests on the oceans of the world. Congress authorized the establishment of a separate Department of the Navy in 1798. President Adams, an advocate of a strong navy, appointed Benjamin Stoddert as the first secretary of the navy on May 18 of that year.1

Although Congress did not immediately act to establish government-owned navy yards, Secretary Stoddert quickly recognized the benefits of having them: reduced cost, increased space for timber storage, and convenience to the government. In 1799 Congress authorized funds for building six 74-gun ships-of-the-line. Stoddert sent the purchased timbers to the areas where the original ships of the U.S. Navy had been under construction.2 One of these places was Boston. Stoddert recommended purchase of land for establishment of a
federal navy yard there to avoid the delays and expense experienced during construction of the USS CONSTITUTION at a private yard. President Adams agreed and authorized the action. The Charlestown Navy Yard was thus established in 1800.

The Commandant's House is Built

Captain Samuel Nicholson, one of the six top-ranking naval officers in the country, was the first superintendent, later called commandant, of the Charlestown Navy Yard. Nicholson built his home as one of the earliest improvements to the Navy Yard.3

The project began in March 1804 when Secretary of the Navy Robert Smith directed Naval Agent Samuel Brown to produce a plan and estimate of expenses to build a "Brick House of suitable dimension for the residence of the Superintendent of the navy yard." The house was to be erected "on the most convenient place on the public ground and upon a substantial scale."4

Responding to Smith's directive, at the end of May, Brown mailed a plan and cost estimates to the Navy Department, but the secretary was not pleased with what he received. In his reply to Brown, the secretary chided that the plan was "upon too expensive a scale" and that no gentleman "with only the pay of a captain in the navy could afford to live in it."5 He indicated that he would soon send Brown plans that he considered more appropriate. This he did five weeks later.
with directions to "have a brick house built on the best terms in your power."\textsuperscript{6}

The plans that arrived from Washington were to provide guidance to local builders of the house rather than a rigid template to be slavishly copied. The secretary was concerned about placement of the kitchen and specifically directed Brown that it be situated in the front cellar. Beyond that, Brown was free to determine the arrangement of the windows in the house and of the rooms on the second floor.

By the fall of 1804, work was in progress on the house. This is evidenced by the hiring of Benjamin White to survey 12,000 feet of plank for the house. The following March, Brown wrote to the department requesting $3,000 to pay for the superintendent's house, then being built. He had to repeat this apparently unheeded request in August 1805. By that time, Captain Nicholson and his family had probably moved into the house. Correspondence between Nicholson and Secretary Smith firmly establishes Nicholson and his family in the house by late September 1805.\textsuperscript{7}

**Grounds and Outbuildings**

Nicholson was concerned with the grounds surrounding his new house. He wanted pasture space; space designated for a garden; and a barn to house four cows, two horses, a chaise for his family, and two or three yoke of oxen hired to work the Navy Yard. In the spring of 1805 he had already begun negotiations, even though the house was not yet completed. He
wrote to Secretary Smith asking him to waive the $100 annual rent for the pasture space he desired in the Navy Yard. The secretary agreed to this request and directed Brown to provide Nicholson with pasture space free of charge so long as the ground was not otherwise in use for any public purpose.

Nicholson's request for a garden met with similar approval. Following direction from the secretary, Brown and Nicholson designated a small area, next to the Commandant's House, to be enclosed and built as a garden. This plot of land, immediately west of the house, served as the commandant's garden from that time until 1974 when the Navy Yard closed.

Although he was successful in these endeavors, Nicholson was unable to build a barn at public expense. Secretary Smith flatly refused Nicholson the $200 needed to erect a barn. Nicholson probably anticipated this reaction as he included an alternative in his proposal in which he asked permission to sink posts in the ground and erect a shed at his own expense. The secretary apparently granted this modest request. Correspondence of 1811 refers to the commodore's stables, and correspondence of 1821 specifically refers to deterioration of posts supporting the shed, suggesting that Nicholson made such an arrangement.8

Grounds Beautification

During the early years of the Navy Yard, commandants began to look beyond maintenance and repair of the official
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residence to the grounds surrounding the house. In 1816, Captain Isaac Hull ordered workmen to plant two rows of poplars, forming a pathway to the south facade, or harbor side, of the house. In 1823, Captain William Bainbridge received permission to purchase 200 to 300 elm seedlings at twenty-five cents apiece. At the end of October, workmen set about digging holes to plant the elms all over the yard. In 1826, Captain William Crane added fruit trees to the scene. During the early months of 1834, Commodore Jesse D. Elliott requested and received authority to use money from the ship fund to "set out trees and to clear up our main avenue." By 1839 Bainbridge's elms had grown sufficiently to attract attention. In the summer of that year, an article in the Bunker Hill Aurora noted the attractiveness of the yard's "young and thriving elms."

The Navy Yard sustained considerable damage during a bad storm in September 1869, including six trees blown down at the Commandant's House. Authorization of a tree and plant fund followed the disaster. In October 1870 the Bureau of Yards and Docks designated the fund to be established from public sale of manure.

Commandant William Rush again took up the topic of trees in 1918. The existence of mature trees in abundance in the yard at that time did not deter him from making additional plantings. In December 1918, W. P. Long, superintendent of trees for the city of Boston, wrote to Rush regarding the care of newly planted trees. Rush had eighteen European or silver
Lindens planted on the street in front of the Commandant's House. Long noted that they would require at least three cultivations yearly and frequent watering during the dry weather.¹²

Less than ten years later, Commandant Phillip Andrews adopted an ambitious beautification plan for the Navy Yard. William Otis, public works foreman, saw to the planting of numerous trees, shrubs, and flowers. The trees included:

- 1 mountain ash
- 25 common ash
- 1 birch
- 2 caltalpas
- 18 Washington thorn
- 3 ulmus parvifolia or parviflora
- 4 juglans nigra
- 3 Japanese flowering crabtrees
- 17 maples
- 9 oaks
- 600 pines
- 9 poplars
- 338 spruces
- 16 apple trees
- 6 pear trees¹³

All this greenery produced an idyllic setting for the Navy Yard as a whole and it enhanced the setting for the Commandant's House. Late nineteenth and early twentieth century photographs show a profusion of large trees lining First Avenue and gracing the southern approach to the Commandant's House. As late as 1929, visitors to the yard still enjoyed Bainbridge's legacy of elm trees. That year a Boston Globe reporter commented that "all who visit the Yard are familiar with the great elms that make leafy arches above the main entranceway." As the twentieth century progressed, however, trees became more sparse in the yard. Starting in
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the 1930s, Dutch elm disease took a toll on the beautiful trees Bainbridge had planted. Preparations for World War II further depleted the yard's trees when many were removed to widen roads. Hurricanes in the 1950s blew down several large trees in front of the Commandant's House along Second Avenue.

Many encroachments on green space took place in the Navy Yard over the years. Space was precious in this yard perched on the border of Boston Harbor, and growing industrialization mandated optimal use of the land. Yet, the land immediately surrounding the Commandant's House remained untouched. The navy saw to it that the house always had an appropriate setting. The cultivated gardens, flowering shrubs, large trees, and open lawns set the Commandant's House off from the rest of the yard, identifying it as a special place.

The Commandant's Greenhouse

During the course of much of the history of the Commandant's House, the occupants enjoyed the convenience of a greenhouse on the grounds for growing flowers and plants year-round. Commandant John Nicolson (1842-1845) built a greenhouse during his administration of the Navy Yard. Twenty-two years later, the Navy Department realized, with some apparent embarrassment, that it had never authorized Nicolson to build the structure. In 1864, Commodore Smith informed Commandant Silas Stringham of this oversight, adding that the department had never known whether the cost of the
greenhouse was carried at government or private expense. Whatever had been the case in the past, Smith directed Stringham to disband the operation of the greenhouse and sell the plants, house, glass, and fixtures to the highest bidder. Stringham carried out Smith's orders, obtaining a total of $564 from the sale, including $525 for the building, $30 for the plants, and $9 for the pots.15

Sometime between the middle and the end of the nineteenth century, builders erected another greenhouse as an addition to the stone stable (Building 21). By 1915, this addition had deteriorated enough to warrant attention. In a requisition to the Bureau of Yards and Docks, Commandant William Rush proposed erection of a new greenhouse in a new location, west of the house. He estimated the cost for this 18 by 42-foot steel-framed, glazed structure at $600 for the framing alone. The bureau replied that it was "at a loss to understand the necessity for a greenhouse of such a greatly increased size," the proposed structure having four times the cubic space as the existing one. The bureau also noted that "no estimate has been presented by the Yard of the cost of erection of this building, including concrete foundation and side walls, installation of heating coils, etc., which will add a very large amount to the estimated cost appearing on the requisition." The answer was no. Captain Rush had no choice but to repair the existing greenhouse.16

The subject of a new greenhouse was not to be put to rest just yet. In 1922, Rear Admiral Henry Wiley raised the issue
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again during a visit to Washington. He came away from a
meeting with the chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks with
the understanding that it was permissable to provide for
relocating or rebuilding the current greenhouse at a cost of
$1,000. He therefore forwarded a requisition for $1,000 for
supplies. Yet, this amount was not nearly enough to cover the
total cost of the project. Undaunted and apparently
determined to utilize the agreed-upon $1,000 toward the cost
of greenhouse work, Wiley proposed to purchase supplies
immediately, and defer the work until the following year. He
would then have the yard work force build the greenhouse and
find the extra $1,100 in the following year's budget.

Again the answer was no. The bureau chief promptly
cancelled the original requisition, and Commandant Wiley was
back where he started with the greenhouse attached to Building
21.17

It was this greenhouse that served the commandants up to
the middle of the twentieth century. The flowers grown in the
greenhouse provided pleasure and enjoyment to the members of
the commandants' families, their guests, and the families of
officers living in the Navy Yard quarters, where flowers were
sometimes sent from the greenhouse. Vice Admiral John McCrea
told of utilizing the greenhouse during his administration
(1952-1953), but in 1963 the structure, again in disrepair,
was finally removed. In the late 1960s, a Chelsea florist
provided the floral arrangements needed for the house.18
The Wooden Barn and Stone Stable

Captain Nicholson's privately-built outbuildings deteriorated quickly. In 1821, a board of survey found the commandant's stable and woodshed seriously deteriorated, "rotten in the posts and sills," and the roof irreparably damaged. It estimated that the cost to repair the structures, originally built of refuse timber, would exceed the cost of replacement.19

Captain Isaac Hull gave the Board of Navy Commissioners estimates both on repairing and on rebuilding the structures. He wished to build a new complex, including barn, woodhouse, and outhouses, at a cost of about $600 if constructed of wood. Hull noted that he could reduce costs further by incorporating the north wall of the barn into the proposed stone wall to be built around the perimeter of the yard.

The navy commissioners approved the money to construct wooden buildings which were to stand next to the Marine Barracks fence. The stone wall around the perimeter of the yard was not yet authorized, so the commissioners rejected the idea of incorporating the barn into it.

Only a few years later, however, money was available for construction of a stone wall. In 1824, Congress authorized construction of a wall from the brick navy store (Building 5) north to the Salem Turnpike (Chelsea Street). In 1825, Congress authorized funds for building a wall paralleling the Salem Turnpike. The same year, in conjunction with building the wall, the navy commissioners ordered construction of a
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stone stable for the commandant. Conforming to Captain Hull's original suggestion, the boundary wall incorporated the north wall of the stable. Large carriage doors in this wall provided the only access from the turnpike into the stable.

The specifications for the stable approved by the navy commissioners called for a stone building 30 feet long and 20 feet wide with the gable ends 12 feet high (flush with the top of the wall). The carriage door was to be 9 feet high. There was to be "one door to manure yard six feet high by three feet wide, five windows below and four windows in hay loft, each five feet by three feet, and four windows in cellar, each three wide and two deep, all glazed, and iron gratings to all cellar windows and lower windows."

The contractor broke ground in August 1825, and completed work by the end of the year. 20

Alexander Parris designed this unimposing but beautiful little building as part of his overall design for the stone wall along the turnpike. In the 1870s, and up to the early twentieth century, the building functioned as a watch house for marine guards. By the first decade of the twentieth century, the greenhouse stood adjacent to it. 21

Maintenance: Keeping the House in Good Order

As early as 1808, the Navy Department resisted funding each and every repair on the house which the commandant deemed necessary or desireable. In that year, Secretary Robert Smith authorized certain repairs, but he warned Naval Agent Francis
Johnnot that he would not pay the additional debts which Captain Nicholson had incurred. Smith sent another warning during the winter of 1808-1809, seemingly without effect. By 1810, Paul Hamilton, secretary of the navy succeeding Smith, noted the enormous costs to repair Nicholson's house, and he consequently ordered Agent Johnnot to expend nothing more on the building without prior clearance. This pattern of thrift was to continue throughout the history of the Commandant's House, especially where a secretary of the navy or bureau chief felt a particular commandant had expended too much money in a given period.

Despite his expenditures, Nicholson failed to convey the Commandant's House in good order to his successor. When William Bainbridge assumed the position of commandant in 1812 following Nicholson's death, he found the house in a state of neglect. Although the naval storekeeper had recommended alterations to the interior of the house, Bainbridge sought only to put it in order by painting the exterior. Yet, painters completed only half the work, leaving the west half of the house unpainted.

Thus, a half-painted house as well as serious structural problems faced Isaac Hull in 1818. He observed that the house had sustained considerable damage for want of exterior paint—the soft bricks used in constructing the house were vulnerable to the decaying effect of prevailing east winds and generally damp weather. Since the paint applied to half of the house five years before was virtually gone, he wished to paint the
entire house. Hull also cited the need to make "such other repairs as are absolutely necessary for preservation."\(^{24}\)

The Board of Navy Commissioners, which had assumed administrative control of the department in 1815, paid attention to Hull's dire report. It directed a board of survey to examine the house and make recommendations. The board found that water had penetrated the east walls, damaging ceiling and plastering inside. The ceiling and plastering would soon be beyond repair if water continued to penetrate the exterior walls. It recommended two coats of exterior paint to seal the walls, and repair and painting of damaged exterior woodwork. The two chimneys on the north side of the house presented another problem. Either cracked or poorly built at the outset, the chimneys allowed smoke to pour through the casings into both lower rooms and the chambers (bedrooms) above. The commissioners agreed to the board of survey's recommendations. Painting costs could be minimized by using left-over paint for the first coat. Captain Hull estimated that $100 would cover the further cost for mason and joiner work to correct the chimney problems.\(^{25}\)

The interior of the house needed attention in 1825. Commandant William Crane sought approval for covering the floors with painted canvas in the manner then used in ships and certain public buildings. Interior walls needed either paint or new paper since it was impossible to match the usable paper already on the walls of the two lower rooms (the two first-floor parlors). In Crane's absence, Acting Commandant
Gwinn requested direction from the commissioners regarding paper versus paint for the interior walls. They hastened to reply that paper was too expensive, and recommended a bright straw color or patent yellow to color wash the walls while preserving the border which was, apparently, salvageable. In a similar vain, the commissioners rejected Crane's request for canvas floor covering as too expensive and approved painting the floors instead.26

Gwinn apparently ignored the commissioners' order to paint, rather than paper, the interior walls. The itemized estimate of costs for materials and work done in 1825 included rolls of paper listed twice, at costs of $14.50 and $43.10.27

**Exterior Painting: A Recurring Need**

Once begun in 1812, exterior painting of the Commandant's House became a recurring job. In 1823, the navy commissioners approved painting the house and adding new gutters. In 1826, the commissioners authorized painting (one coat only) again and approved purchase of eighteen double windows at $21 each. In 1835, the commissioners authorized painting in conjunction with other repairs and upgradings. Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, the house required regular painting, one of the few improvements readily authorized by the Board of Navy Commissioners and later the Bureau of Yards and Docks.28
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Removal of Exterior Paint

The Commandant's House, faithfully painted every few years, assumed a different look in the 1920s. In 1922, Rear Admiral Henry Wiley proposed to strip the house of exterior paint and restore it to its original appearance. He noted that excessive smoke, dust, and dirt of the environment necessitated painting the house every three years and washing it down between painting to maintain a "respectable appearance." Wiley believed that the time had come to consider an alternative. He provided the bureau with an estimate of $1,900 for paint removal and brick repointing and waterproofing.

Wiley proposed a convincing argument for this change. He stated that the initial cost would be greater than one-time painting, but the government would save money in the long run. Moreover, the government could recoup the expense fairly soon --the estimated cost for one coat of exterior paint was $750. Noting that sandblasting "renders a house during such operations practically uninhabitable," he offered to take leave during the two to three weeks time required to do the work. Finally, in a gesture to resolve this question permanently, Wiley suggested the bureau issue "an ironclad order" forbidding painting of brick buildings.

The bureau chief was unimpressed. He stated, not entirely accurately, that the house had originally been considered unattractive, and paint had been applied to improve the exterior appearance of the structure. Apparently, by this
time, navy officials perceived the original reason for painting the house (waterproofing) as secondarily important. The chief defended the policy of periodic painting because "should the paint now be removed, it is believed that the appearance of the structure would be even less attractive than it was originally." In response to Wiley's suggestion regarding an ironclad order against painting brick buildings, the bureau replied that such a policy already existed, "except where there is some very special reason" for painting. The bureau chief evidently considered the potential unsightliness of an unpainted Commandant's House special reason enough. The navy had painted it for 110 years and he would not easily reverse such a long-standing practice.

But Admiral Wiley persisted. He submitted a requisition for paint-burning, sandblasting, repainting, and waterproofing. He acknowledged the bureau's disapproval of his former proposal, but in more recent negotiations the chief had encouraged him to try again. This he did, adding that "restoring the original surface of the brickwork will result in improved appearance." In addition, existing funds were available to do the work.29

The bureau eventually capitulated and authorized returning the house to its original appearance. By 1930, the house stood unpainted again.30

Architectural Changes

Commandant William Crane made significant and lasting
changes to the Commandant's House in 1825. From early views of the house, it is evident that the number and placement of windows in the south facade (the side facing the yard) changed before the mid-nineteenth century. As many as eight of the original twelve windows were probably closed in and/or relocated during 1825. In the summer of that year, Crane notified the navy commissioners that marble caps, sills, window frames, and blinds removed from the house were in storage awaiting sale. The navy commissioners directed that monies obtained from the public sale of these items be applied to repairs being made to the house. Estimates of costs for materials and labor on the house are further evidence of major structural work during 1825. The estimate list includes such materials as bricks, lime, hinges, and shutter-fastenings. It also includes labor costs for joiners and masons.31

Another permanent change made in 1825 was the addition of a gallery or balcony surrounding the east, south, and west sides of the house. The commissioners approved Captain Crane's request provided the change did not exceed the $25 estimate of costs which Crane submitted.32

Interior Alterations, 1827

Commandant Crane's administration saw other important changes to the house. In 1827, Crane initiated a request to "modernize" the interior of the house. The plan involved lowering floors, reducing window sizes, adjusting partitions between chambers, and creating closet space on the second and
third floors by reducing the size of the rooms in the southwest corner. Crane noted that, aside from general modernization, the changes provided for adequate sleeping quarters for servants on the third floor. More generous than usual, the navy commissioners authorized the estimated $3,000 needed for the remodeling in April 1827. The work was scheduled to take three months to accomplish.\textsuperscript{33}

Home Improvements and Central Heating, 1835-1842

By the summer of 1828, the chimneys of the house again needed rebuilding. Whether or not the work was done at this time is unclear. Commandant Charles Morris reported the deficient chimneys, along with the need for another coat of exterior paint, but authorization is undocumented. Seven years later, in 1835, masons rehabilitated the chimneys in conjunction with other home improvements. When Commandant John Downes assumed command of the Navy Yard in 1835, he noted the deterioration of the quarters. He submitted a list of prospective improvements, including interior painting and repapering; repair of chimneys, windows, brickwork, plastering, and roof-slatting; and the inevitable exterior painting. The commissioners agreed to these repairs within a $625 limit. They did not, however, agree to his proposal to run lead pipe from the well and cistern into the kitchen. Running water was still a luxury in 1835. The $80 for laying the pipe was enough to cause reflection over cost versus "real need" for the work.\textsuperscript{34}
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In an uncustomary show of progressiveness, the board allowed Downes to purchase a furnace to heat the Commandant's House. He succeeded in his bid for a furnace by describing the difficulty in heating the house and the resulting cold rooms during the long winter months. The commissioners may have been assisted in their decision by memory of the bitter winter of 1835-1836 when sub-zero temperatures were common and gusting winds added to the problem of keeping warm.

Central heating was practically unknown in the 1830s, particularly in domestic structures. That the naval commissioners were willing to approve central heating for the Commandant's House is an indication of the importance of the house and the high status of the man occupying it.35

Mid-Nineteenth-Century Additions

In 1856, workmen added bays to the Commandant's House on the north facade facing the Salem Turnpike. The bays updated the appearance of the house, by then approached from the turnpike side by a graceful, semi-circular drive. Granite semi-circular wings flanking the drive reached from the stone wall designed by Alexander Parris to the corners of the house. Attractive but "not gaudy" iron rail fencing and gates, also designed by Parris, screened the house at the turnpike's edge and continued the line of the wall. During 1870 and 1871, Commandant Charles Steedman renewed the balcony added by Commandant William Crane. On the west side of the house, workmen added a screened enclosure and a roof to the balcony,
thus setting the stage for further enclosures that were to be done in the twentieth century. By 1872, workers had also installed bathrooms on the second and third floors and water closets throughout the house.

This last addition of indoor plumbing just after mid-century further emphasizes the importance of the Commandant's House. The navy was willing to experiment with home improvements in the house at a time when indoor plumbing was just being introduced. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that most cities, including Boston, had laid sufficient sewer and water lines to make widespread installation of indoor plumbing practical.36

Late Nineteenth Century -- Major Renovations

Waning national interest in all naval concerns after the Civil War seriously affected the Boston Navy Yard. The yard experienced its lowest ebb in the 1880s when a total shut-down of operations seemed at hand. By the end of the decade, however, momentum had resumed. The Great White Fleet was just around the corner, and the Boston yard was soon to receive a major boost in the form of a new and sophisticated dry dock. During the 1890s, a number of repairs and alterations were made to the Commandant's House.

On August 7, 1891, the yard's civil engineer reported to the commandant that the porch around the sides and rear of his quarters was "so old and so much decayed as to be unsafe for use." Half of the porch had already been removed to get at
the "rotten portions," and the remainder was probably in no better condition. Since the regular allotment was not adequate to cover the cost of rebuilding, the civil engineer recommended requesting a special allotment of $1,000 for the project. The department was ready to spend money on the house, and it approved $1,200. The work was completed during the first half of 1892.

The following year, workmen painted the porch and outbuildings. Major work was to come in 1895. During 1894, a careful examination of the house had revealed several problems. The plumbing was sadly inadequate, providing a "very meagre [sic] sanitary arrangement." The steam heating system was "deficient in adequate supply pipes." Interior walls "had been treated at so many different times and in so many ways that all rational appearance of wall surfaces, as to color and finish had been lost...." During fiscal year 1895, craftsmen performed the following work:

New steam heating system installed for entire house.

First and second floors:

- new radiators and fittings installed;
- rooms repapered;
- woodwork repainted;
- electric call bell system installed;
- gas chandeliers and fixtures refurbished;
- stationary plumbing and fixtures removed (second story);
- butler's pantry sink and fixtures removed, defective drain from sink removed and replaced with cast iron drain pipe.

Basement:

- servants' water closet relocated, lighting and ventilation improved;
- woodwork repainted;
kitchen plumbing leading to attic tanks rehabilitated.

Attic:

woodwork repainted.

Roof:

slate and metal roof repaired;
new copper flashings installed.

Three coats of paint, applied to brick and woodwork, improved the exterior of the house. Laborers repaired and painted the greenhouse, summerhouse, grape arbor, and trellises. They replaced the wooden balustrade surmounting the double swells on the south side of the house, the existing balustrade having deteriorated beyond repair.37

The years 1896 and 1897 saw further work. Builders erected a "portable storm porch" (an enclosed porch/stairway) on the west side of the house at the existing side entrance. Workmen removed the gas lantern on the north entrance gate, painted parlor and attic floors, and laid a new yellow pine floor in the butler's pantry. They fitted a new brass hot water coil to the kitchen range; replaced gutters at the upper story; painted the covered veranda and added a skylight to it. In 1897, bricklayers built a short wall between the south swells to conceal drain pipes, thus altering the distinctive appearance of that double-bowed facade. Unlike most of the other changes during these two years, this short brick wall became a permanent feature of the house.38

During 1898 and 1899, the commandant succeeded again in obtaining funds for numerous improvements to the house. Much
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of the attention went to plumbing; in fact the house "had its plumbing overhauled from attic to basement" and included the following:

Attic:

- sink removed;
- new bathroom installed—tub, basin, water closet, steam heat.

Second floor:

- water closet, new basin installed.

First floor:

- new toilet room installed in former closet off pantry, designed to connect with smoking room off main hall.

Basement:

- new laundry tubs installed.

Other improvements included complete repainting and repapering of walls; calcimating and water-color tinting of ceilings; laying of new hardwood floors in halls, parlors, and dining room; and reopening the fireplace in the dining room. The Commandant's House approached its centennial in excellent condition.

Early Twentieth Century

The twentieth century witnessed additional alterations to the house, though the flurry of activity of the 1890s was not matched until the Work Projects Administration did major construction in the 1930s.

A plan of the house dated 1910 proposed glassing in of that portion of the balcony on the west side of the house.
which had been screened in 1871. A new stairway built in 1911 provided outdoor access to this conservatory.  

In December 1914, Commandant William Rush initiated a proposal to add an east wing to the house, 24 feet by 60 feet, with a ceiling height of 15 feet. He sent a rough sketch of the addition to the public works officer who responded with an estimate of costs at $15,000. Such a sum required a separate appropriation which, even if approved, would not have been available until July 1916.  

It is not known whether Rush ever broached this idea to the Bureau of Yards and Docks. In 1915, Commandant Rush was at the end of his career and would soon appear on the retirement list. He may have thought better of the idea given the time it would take to fund the project, much less see it to completion. One thing is certain: the work was not done.

The WPA Adds a Kitchen and Sun Porch

How Rush intended to use an east-wing addition is not known, but when the time came to build a modern kitchen, planners chose the east side of the house for the addition. In 1938, the Work Projects Administration built a brick kitchen and butler's pantry.

Other Depression-era work done on the house included two major features. Workmen added bathrooms for chambers one and two on the second floor. They also constructed a sun porch on the south facade of the house. The arches added at this time under the balcony at the basement level and the outdoor
stairway built up to the sun porch together caused a permanent alteration to the appearance of the Navy Yard side of the house. The porch and stairway further obscured the double bows, a process begun in 1897 with the construction of the short brick wall between the bows.42

The Mid-Twentieth Century

The mid-twentieth century brought the last changes to the Commandant's House. In 1942, workmen altered the interior northwest corner of the first floor. This area had included a library and lavatory at the front of the house (the north facade) and a large pantry behind these two small rooms. The addition of a butler's pantry in the kitchen wing in 1938 rendered the original pantry unnecessary, so this space was converted to a reception room, coat room, and lavatory. Workers moved the wall between the library and the pantry several feet south, creating a reception room at the front of the house and a smaller coat room and connecting lavatory behind it. By 1956, the wall between the coat room and the reception room (now called a study) had been removed and the north door between the study and the main hall had been closed off by built-in bookcases.

Access to the house changed during World War II. In 1941, moved by concerns for tighter security, the navy infilled several of the yard gates with granite blocks and mortar, including that in front of the Commandant's House. Before 1950, the height of the semi-circular courtyard wall
was reduced and a small section of it demolished to allow pedestrian access to the front door of the house.

In 1951, Commandant Hewlett Thebaud had the west side of the house altered. Workmen added a new brick entrance to this side at ground level and a reception area and coat room in the basement (eliminating the need for a coat room upstairs). Along with its new driveway approach, the new entrance provided an alternative to the main entrance on the north facade, rendered practically useless with the 1941 infill of the wall and the construction of the Mystic-Tobin Bridge in the late 1940s. Reflecting on the loss of that entrance to the march of progress, Vice Admiral John McCrea remarked that when he lived in the house (1951-52), he had opened the front door occasionally "just because it was a nice sight" to see that "beautiful walnut door."43

Living in the House

Today the size and number of rooms in the Commandant's House are frequent cause of remark from visitors. The larger nuclear families of the nineteenth century, frequent dwelling of extended families in the same house, and the need for domestic servants to run a large household all contributed to the need for a large house for the commandant. Yet, the navy meant the house to be an imposing structure, beyond requirements of space. The initial order from the secretary of the navy directing it to be built "upon a substantial scale" reflected the stature of the naval commandant. It also
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pointed to the need for an appropriate setting in which to entertain heads of state, diplomats, and foreign naval officers.

Information available regarding how commandants used the spacious rooms of the house confirms the impression that this was always a public place as well as a private home. Specific references to room use in the nineteenth century are sparse, but it is evident from the arrangement and identification of rooms that the basement and third floor (usually called an attic during this time) housed servants and the support services they performed for the family. Such services included preparing food (basement), laundering clothes (basement), and sewing clothes (attic). The basement also provided food and fuel storage. The first and second floors were the living quarters for the commandant and his family. The first floor contained two formal parlors, a formal dining room, a large pantry (equipped with a dumbwaiter by 1872) for serving food brought up from the basement kitchen, and a small library (approximately 8-1/2 by 3-1/2 feet). The second floor contained bedrooms.

As the public area of the house, the first floor easily accommodated large receptions and banquets, such as the breakfast Commodore Isaac Hull gave for two-hundred people in honor of President James Monroe in 1817. It may be conjectured that during the nineteenth century the large parlors on the first floor were sometimes used in everyday living, but these rooms had to be maintained in good order for
official reception of guests, expected and unexpected. As a result, these parlors were probably never used routinely for family living space. Certainly children's activities would have been confined to the nursery. The small library may have provided a certain private retreat for the commandant. Reference to it as a smoking room in a late-nineteenth century report indicates a certain recreational use. On the other hand, a 1907 inventory refers to this space as a waiting room and lists sparse furnishings of desk and office chair.

It is much more likely that the second floor functioned in the nineteenth century as an area for private life. The 1907 inventory lists five chamber chairs, a rocking chair, a sofa, a hat rack, and a table in chamber #1, along with ordinary bedroom furniture. Similar furnishings in chamber #2 included a small desk. These large rooms would have provided ample space for the mistress of the house to receive personal friends, direct the household, and oversee care of the children.44

The pattern of public life on the first floor and private life on the second floor continued during the twentieth century. Official receptions, meals, and parties occurred regularly on the first floor. Everyday life took place on the second floor. In the early 1930s, for example, Mrs. Henry Hough entertained small groups of officers' wives for bridge and mah-jong on the second floor. Other commandants' wives furnished one of the second floor rooms as a sitting room, and by the 1960s, the family television set could be found
It should be noted that during both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was never a prohibition against using the rooms of the first floor to carry on activities of daily life. In fact, the dining room seems to have been used routinely for family meals, as well as for official dinners. However, the very size of the two large parlors as well as their formal appearance discouraged their casual use. This, coupled with the availability of space elsewhere and the need to maintain rooms to receive official guests at a moment's notice, made setting aside these rooms a logical choice.

The Commandant's Office

The study in the northwest corner of the first floor is sometimes mistakenly believed to have functioned as the commandant's official place of business during the early years of the house. There is no evidence to suggest that this was so. The presence of a north doorway off this room to the main hall (now blocked by bookcases) can be attributed to the fact that this would have been the only access to this room when a pantry occupied the rest of the current space. Moreover, the various references and labels for this room—library, smoking room, waiting room, reception room, study—that appeared over the years do not indicate the existence of an office. These labels do indicate that a guest or business caller who appeared at the house may have been shown into this room while a servant notified the commandant or his wife of the call.
They also indicate commandants' use of this space as a private retreat.

The commandants did not conduct their official business from this room, however. As early as 1813, William Bainbridge complained to the secretary of the navy that his office was in "an old wooden building" which also housed the purser's office, slop room, steward's office, issuing room, and medicines. That building, or possibly another one-story wooden structure built as the construction shed for Dry Dock #1 in 1827, was the commandant's office until the 1890s. The Bureau of Yards and Docks finally heeded repeated pleas for new office space in 1893 and the commandant moved into Building 32. By 1913, the office was in Building 39 and continued there through the 1930s. After 1945, with the separation of the positions of commandant and shipyard commander, the commandant maintained his office away from the Navy Yard, first in the North Station Industrial Building on Causeway Street, and, after the late 1940s, in the Fargo Building on Summer Street.47

A Local Landmark--Is It Bulfinch?

The Commandant's House is large by any standards of domestic architecture. It stands on the highest piece of ground in the Charlestown Navy Yard, surrounded by expansive lawns and well-tended gardens. It commands an excellent view of Boston Harbor and even today, despite changes and encroachments from inside the Navy Yard and out, it looks like
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an important place.

Nineteenth-century Bostonians recognized the Commandant's House as a local landmark. The house appears prominently on every map of the Navy Yard, save the original Osgood Carlton map of 1802, made before the house was built. In 1852, it was depicted in Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion. That same year it was mentioned in The Stranger's Guide and Conductor to the U.S. Navy Yard at Charlestown, Massachusetts. An 1874 book entitled Historic Fields and Mansions of Middlesex also included the Commandant's House. The house can be identified in the map of the city of Boston which appears in editions of King's Handbook, a popular reference guide to the Boston of the 1880s and '90s. An 1881 Naval Encyclopedia also features the Commandant's House.

By the twentieth century, people recognized the house for its age and physical prominence, and they became increasingly interested in its history. In 1915, Commandant William Rush noted that it was mentioned in several local guidebooks as "one of the sights of Boston," and in 1922, Rear Admiral Henry Wiley initiated a search of naval records to learn more about the house and its architect. A 1929 article in the Boston Globe referred to it as "a familiar sight to all who pass along Chelsea Street, [a] fine old mansion [upon which] the gentle and softening touch of age lies." In 1968, Vida Benson consented to show the house as part of the League of Women Voters' House Tour along with other elegant homes on Beacon Hill. Winifred Wylie regularly conducted public tours through
the house in the late 1960s and early '70s. Rear Admiral Joseph Wellings once remarked that the house had acted as an inspiration to him as a young naval ensign. His goal to become First Naval District Commandant was symbolized by the home that accompanied the job. 48

The belief that Charles Bulfinch, the celebrated Boston architect of the early nineteenth century, designed the Commandant's House was well established by the early years of the twentieth century. The idea has persisted, and popular belief identifies it even now as a Bulfinch house. 49

The most distinctive feature of the Commandant's House is its double-bowed south facade, undoubtedly the primary reason for its identification with Bulfinch. Bulfinch is known to have used this motif in some of his domestic work of the Federal Period. Lieutenant Commander E. C. Seibert made an effort to tie this circumstantial evidence to documentation in 1931 when he contacted the architectural department at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The response was not encouraging. Like most practitioners of his time, Bulfinch kept few records and probably relied on hasty sketches for his domestic work, especially. The few surviving examples of his domestic architecture provide no direct link with the Commandant's House. Moreover, the extensive exterior work on the bowed facade and interior changes to cornice line and wall treatment further obscure the issue of Bulfinch origins.

At the time of the response to Seibert's inquiry, there was still a possibility that Bulfinch had designed the house.
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stemming from the circumstances of history and the presence of a double-bowed facade. Bulfinch was practically the only architect in Boston at the time who might have produced such a plan. At the very least, if a Boston architect or builder of lesser stature had designed the house, he probably did so under Bulfinch influence.

In the 1950s, a search for the architect of the Marine Commandant's House in Washington, D.C., led investigators to hypothesize Bulfinch as a possibility, based on apparent similarities between the Marine Commandant's House and the Navy Yard Commandant's House, on their closely linked dates of construction, and on the accepted assumption that Bulfinch had designed the house in Boston. This hypothesis led the Washington investigators nowhere. In a more recent, exhaustive investigation into this question, marine historians have arrived at a different conclusion about the house in Washington. Strong circumstantial evidence points to George Hadfield, an English architect working in Washington, as the man responsible for the Marine Commandant's House.

Does this evidence affect the Commandant's House in the Charlestown Navy Yard? It may. In his Historic Resource Study of the Charlestown Navy Yard, Edwin Bearss effectively refutes the Bulfinch claim. The plans for the house submitted from Boston were rejected by the secretary of the navy, who in turn promised to send plans he approved. Bearss believes the plans were the work of a Washington architect. It may be pure coincidence that the Marine Commandant's House in Washington
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was in the process of being built when the secretary sent approved plans to Boston, but it is also the only official residence known to have been built by the navy at the same time as the Commandant's House in Boston. Certainly the connection with George Hadfield deserves further investigation. 50

* * *

The Commandant's House, physically prominent on a high point of land overlooking Boston Harbor, provided a grand setting for daily life and official entertainment carried out by the people who lived there. The prominent naval officers who inhabited the house, and their wives and children who made it a home, were not the only people concerned with its workings. The servants who saw to the running of the household were a separate group entirely, related to its main occupants yet standing apart from them. Living and working in the basement and third floors, they merit discussion in any social history of the structure.
The social status of the families living in the Commandant's House mandated servants. The large size of the house required them. The cooks, the mess attendents, the stewards, the barge crew, the gardeners and chauffeurs, the personal maids, all provided services to the commandant and his family. These were the people who were "in the household but not of it," the downstairs complement to upstairs life. They facilitated order, serenity, and the gracious reception of guests.¹ This support staff, performing numerous menial tasks, kept the household in running order. They washed and ironed clothes, prepared and served meals, cleaned house, minded children, and cultivated gardens. They attended guests at receptions, manned the commandant's barge, and drove his carriage or automobile. At best, they provided these services so well and so efficiently as to be practically "invisible." Such servants were remembered by their employers as indispensible to the operation of the house.² At worst, they were cause for annoyance and distress, vexing matters for a busy commandant to handle among many other responsibilities.

The picture of servants in the Commandant's House is neither complete nor consistent. Only occasional references
to servants can be found in sources from the nineteenth century. This may well be a function of the "invisibility" of servants and their assumed constant presence: without them, a large nineteenth-century household simply could not function. By the early twentieth century, the picture is more detailed, and it is possible to see a number of retainers at work in and around the Commandant's House. Information from the period after World War II and into the late twentieth century provides a still different picture. By this time, the servant class in the United States had changed so drastically as to become virtually nonexistent. This general trend was reflected in the navy. Labor-saving devices and increased trends towards egalitarianism had made a large number of retainers both unnecessary and politically unpopular. Consequently, only a bare minimum of household help provided services to commandants and their families in the late 1960s and early 1970s.\(^3\)

**Number and Type of Servants**

The navy provided servants for the Commandant's House at government expense. Commandants also retained personal servants at their own expense, although personal servants were more in evidence in the earlier years than in modern times. By the mid-twentieth century, only the relatively small staff provided by the navy regularly attended to duties at the Commandant's House. The consequences of the trends toward economy and egalitarianism can be seen in the work that went
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into planning and serving of large receptions. In the 1960s, Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie had to supplement the small standing staff with additional help in order to successfully carry out the many official receptions he was expected to host.⁴

But what was true of the 1960s was not generally true of most of the years in which commandants and their families lived in the big house on the hill. Before World War II, the formal traditions, customs, and ceremonies for which the navy is noted were part of the larger American scene of formality, class distinctions, and a well-defined place in society. For the commandant and his family, that place was the upper middle class, probably further augmented by the commandant's status as a high-ranking naval officer. It was accepted that such a family should be served by others.

A House Built for Servants

The "Brick house of suitable dimensions" built for Samuel Nicholson in 1805 was a house designed for servants. In his analysis of the American serving class, Daniel Sutherland notes the important role played by the architecture of American houses in separating servants from their employers. "Back entrances, back stairways, bedrooms tucked in rear portions of houses and attics, and service areas partitioned from living quarters by halls, pantries, and doors allowed servants to travel inconspicuously from cellar to attic and to enter and leave a house unseen." In sending plans for the Commandant's House to Naval Agent Samuel Brown, Secretary of
the Navy Robert Smith stipulated that the kitchen was to be in the basement of the house. Sutherland states that in the nineteenth century it was deemed necessary to conceal the work of servants, to screen it off as much as possible from the more refined aspects of life in a home, and that the positioning of the kitchen and dining room was one of the most serious considerations in pursuit of this end. Basement kitchens were a typical feature of many urban nineteenth century houses, with dining rooms one floor above. The Commandant's House was built on this plan exactly.

Although some kitchens appeared on the first floor by the 1840s, the change was slow. When the change was made, as it was to the Commandant's House in the 1930s, the kitchen and dining room were separated by a butler's pantry. The butler's pantry provided a transition zone between the noise, heat, and cooking odors of the kitchen, and the quiet formality of the dining room.5

The pantry of earlier times in the Commandant's House was not as vital a buffer zone since separating room functions was accomplished by having the kitchen in the basement. Still, the original pantry, just across the hall from the dining room, served as a staging area for food service. Servants brought up food from the kitchen below on the dumbwaiter, and added finishing touches to the food before its final presentation.

Another feature of houses which separated servants and their tasks from the life of the family was the back stairs.
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While these were not commonly found in urban houses built before 1850, the end points of stairs—attic and basement—were the typical domain of servants. This is reflected in the Commandant's House. The basement of the house included the laundry as well as storage bins for wood and coal. As Commandant William Crane noted in 1827, alterations to the house in that year provided suitable sleeping quarters for domestic servants in the attic. Plans from the nineteenth century identify a sewing room on the third or attic floor, sewing being a typical function of domestics during that period when ready-made clothing was virtually unavailable.

The Nineteenth Century

Aside from the arrangement and identification of rooms, information from the nineteenth century is sparse regarding servants in the Commandant's House. In 1814, the commandant was allowed to retain three servants at $8 per month at government expense. (By way of comparison, the other officers of the navy yard were allowed one servant each.) In 1832 and 1834, that number remained constant, as did the commandant's salary of $100 per month. These servants were civilian personnel.

The Twentieth Century

A pattern emerged by the early twentieth century. Household servants were usually non-white and often
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foreign-born. They were most often military personnel, except for gardeners and the occasional personal servant retained at the commandant's own expense. Chauffeurs and barge crew were usually white. In the early twentieth century, chauffeurs were civilian employees; by the 1950s, chauffeurs were military men, often marines.

In 1913, Commandant Dewitt Coffman requested information on a good mess attendant. He expressed interest in a Japanese or Filipino attendant, but preferred a "Chinaman" over the other two choices. He felt that a Chinese servant would be the best complement to the Japanese cook and Japanese steward already at work in the Commandant's House.9

In 1919, when Commandant William Rush was preparing for retirement, he made arrangements to transport three Japanese servants by rail and steamship from Boston to Japan to accompany him and his wife on a post-retirement trip. The two men were to travel separately by rail to San Francisco at a total cost of $105.93. The Japanese maid, on the other hand, was to travel with Rush and his wife at the same cost as for the Rushes (i.e., double the cost of the men's transportation). Since the maid was to remain in attendance during the train trip, she was needed close at hand and would have similar first-class accommodations. Once the entire party boarded the steamer out of San Francisco, the two Japanese men, booked in steerage, were to be available to serve Rush and his wife during the crossing. The men were military personnel on furlough, evidently taking that
opportunity to travel with Rush and his wife to spend the furlough visiting their families in Japan.

Commandant Rush left a staff at the Commandant's House to be turned over to his successor, Rear Admiral Samuel Robison. He placed several servants in the house on a trial basis anticipating that Admiral Robison would make the final selection himself. The staff included a Japanese and a Filipino steward; a Japanese cook; and one black and two Hispanic mess attendants. All six men were navy personnel.10

Later in the twentieth century, steward positions were usually held by Filipino men. Rear Admiral John McCrea, who was commandant in 1952 and '53, had two Filipino stewards, Epi and Pique, whom he rated highly for their efficiency—especially Epi whom he called a "pro" at entertainment. Rear Admiral John Snackenberg had two Filipino stewards in the late 1950s, and the practice continued into the '60s and early '70s. The number of stewards varied from two to five during the period after World War II. During Admiral McCrea's occupancy of the house the servants lived in separate quarters (Quarters A or possibly over the commandant's garage). In the late 1950s and beyond, they occupied the quarters in the basement of the Commandant's House. An exception to this was McCrea's personal servant, a civilian from Guam named Tony. Tony shared the life of the household more directly than Epi and Pique. He lived on the third floor of the Commandant's House, took care of the McCrea's younger daughter Annie, and looked after the housekeeping on the second floor.
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That a personal servant was closer to the life of the family than the military personnel assigned to the house is illustrated in a 1918 memorandum to the public works officer from Captain William Rush. In it he states that "the family consists of three persons and one servant" (probably Mrs. Rush's Japanese maid). The entire complement of attendants at the house, however, included a six-man barge crew, a cook, a steward, and three mess attendents, all of whom lived in the Commandant's House and in adjacent out-buildings. In addition to this staff were others not living on the grounds--an orderly (probably a marine living in the Marine Barracks) and two gardeners on duty during the day. Thus, while the "family" consisted of three persons and one servant, the domestic staff in 1918 consisted of fourteen people. Rush's chauffeur raised the number to fifteen.

Discipline

Commandants privately appreciated and sometimes publicly praised servants who performed their duties well, but they also disciplined those who failed in their duties. Such was the case of Corporal Victor Warledge, a marine orderly at the Commandant's House in 1917. Captain William Rush had difficulty getting Corporal Warledge to respond to his summons via the call-bell system. On several occasions, he found Warledge off his post and standing about in different parts of the house. At one point Warledge strolled into Rush's bedroom at three o'clock in the afternoon, hands in pockets and hat
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askew. "He made the excuse when he found me there that he came in to see whether the clock was right." Since Warledge's duties did not include wandering about the bedrooms in the house, Rush was neither pleased with his behavior nor satisfied with Warledge's stated reason for being there. He asked that Warledge be relieved of the duty and "replaced by an intelligent private."12

Another servant on Captain Rush's staff, a civilian chauffeur named Carr, failed to obey orders several times. This offender took Rush to the opera one evening but failed to pick him up. Instead, he left a message at the box office that the commandant was to take a taxi home. Rush took the taxi, and learned the next morning that his car was returned at 12:30 in the morning. In addition, the white seat covers were gone from the car and the chauffeur was not to be found in the stable. It was the third time Carr had left Rush stranded in town and had used the automobile without authorization. Rush directed the public works officer to investigate the incident, and to have Carr report to him with the $2 Rush had spent on taxi fare.13

The Commandant's Chauffeur

While servants inside the Commandant's House prepared meals, laundered clothes, and dusted furniture, other retainers performed services outside the home. The commandant's chauffeur or driver drove the commandant in a carriage or automobile to and from both official and
unofficial appointments. In the early twentieth century, the driver was a civilian employee of the Navy Yard. By mid-century, he was a military man, usually a marine, who acted as personal escort, courier, and, when necessary, bodyguard to the commandant.

The driver maintained the appearance of the vehicle. During the days of carriages, he also cared for the horses. When mechanical work was needed, he was responsible for having it done. In modern times, he scheduled repairs and maintenance with the mechanics in the Navy Yard repair shop.¹⁴

The commandant had at least one official vehicle assigned to him and maintained at government expense from the late nineteenth century onward.¹⁵ The transition from carriage to automobile took place between 1910 and 1920. For several years during this decade, the commandant maintained both carriage and automobile.¹⁶

A driver's duties, while not particularly arduous, entailed long hours and subjected him to weather exposure. In 1914, Captain William Rush, noting the bitter cold his carriage driver experienced during winter months, requisitioned a seal fur cape and gloves for him. Rush stated this was a necessary government expense since the driver, paid $2.40 per day, could not afford the garments himself. The Bureau of Yards and Docks denied the request, citing the regulation that "employees of the Government must fit and qualify themselves for the duties they are called upon to perform under their appointments."¹⁷
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From 1956 to 1959, Sergeant William Hughes served as the marine driver and orderly to Rear Admiral John Snackenberg. Hughes lived in the Marine Barracks in the Navy Yard. His working day typically began at 7:30 a.m. when, dressed in full uniform, he drove Admiral Snackenberg's staff car from the commandant's garage to the Commandant's House. There he met Admiral Snackenberg and drove him to the commandant's office at the Fargo Building (495 Summer Street). They arrived at 8:30.

Hughes escorted Snackenberg to his office, brought the commandant his morning coffee, and reviewed the morning mail. He acted as runner and messenger for Admiral Snackenberg, including notifying department heads of meetings with the commandant and briefing them on the subject matter of particular meetings. Hughes also performed a variety of routine tasks, such as making appointments for the admiral at the barbershop and buying his cigars.

Between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Hughes transported Admiral Snackenberg back to the Commandant's House for his mid-day meal and later returned him to his office. Occasionally the commandant hosted a visiting dignitary in his conference room for luncheon, where he served food prepared by his stewards at his quarters and transported to the Fargo Building.

The business day ended at 3:30 p.m. when Hughes drove the commandant to his home in the Navy Yard, arriving there a half-hour later. If the evening included official entertainment at the Commandant's House, as it frequently did,
Hughes returned to serve as a waiter along with the four-man barge crew who also served at evening functions. Such evening work was considered part of the assigned tour of duty: one was not paid extra for the service. There was compensation for the evening work, however. Hughes had what he termed "good liberty hours"; Admiral Snackenberg frequently allowed Hughes to go off duty when his services were not needed.18

The Barge Crew

The commandant's barge crew, like his chauffeur, served the commandant primarily outside the Commandant's House. The crew numbered between four and six men. They lived on the grounds of the Commandant's House: in the early twentieth century behind the greenhouse and by mid-century in the basement quarters of the house itself. The crew maintained and manned the commandant's barge, which was a personal vessel provided for the commandant's use and berthed behind USS CONSTITUTION, the commandant's flagship.19 The barges varied somewhat in size over the years. In the early twentieth century, the barge was 50 feet long with a draft of 6 feet. After World War II, it was a 40-foot inboard motorboat that could sleep four. In the 1960s, it was a 40-foot boat fitted out with a canopy, but containing no sleeping accommodations.

The commandant used this small craft for his own pleasure and for the entertainment of guests. While a commandant might occasionally man the controls himself, it was the barge crew's task to operate, navigate, and dock the barge. In the 1950s,
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that crew included a chief boatswain's mate who acted as coxswain and pilot, an engine man, and two bow hooks. When necessary, they, like the commandant's driver, attended guests at receptions in the Commandant's House.20

Gardeners

Captain Samuel Nicholson had a garden created for his use in 1805. This garden, west of the Commandant's House, was in continuous use during the historical period of the house (1805-1974). Records indicate that at least one employee of the Navy Yard was always assigned to the care of the garden and the grounds surrounding the house. Over the years, the number of gardeners varied, ranging up to five or six. The man identified as "the gardener" was a civilian employee, but his assistants were sometimes enlisted men as well as civilians. They did not live in the Commandant's House or on the grounds of the house.

The gardener and his assistants worked the garden west of the Commandant's House and tended the flower beds on the grounds. They grew decorative flowers as well as vegetables for the commandant's table. In the early twentieth century, they regularly boated over to Hingham during the summer, where the navy maintained an ammunition depot. There they cultivated a large vegetable garden customarily referred to as "the farm." The commandant had only to make his wishes known to the gardener and his assistants for beets, cauliflower, peas, apples, and other produce he desired for his use.

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James Downes was gardener to Commandant William Rush before and during World War I. He supervised the Hingham "farm" and the smaller vegetable garden at the Commandant's House. He also saw to the care of decorative plants and flowers including geraniums, primroses, tulips, gladiolas, roses, and snapdragons.

In the 1920s, William Otis, a trained civil engineer, was gardener to Rear Admiral Phillip Andrews. Otis carried out an ambitious program of grounds beautification including the planting of flowers, shrubs, and trees. His assistant was William Donnell, a former cavalryman noted for his ability to handle men and direct work. Together, with the further assistance of three other men, Otis and Donnell planted 466 trees and perennials throughout the yard. Apple and other fruit trees, lattices supporting hedges of Dorothy Perkins roses, and arbors crossed with mature vines all graced the grounds of the house on the harbor side. Otis saw to their care as well as to the cultivation of the vegetable garden on the west side of the house.

Tom Little, Rear Admiral John McCrea's gardener in the 1950s, raised tomatoes and other vegetables and grew carnations in the greenhouse. He also made use of the small outbuildings on the grounds near the vegetable garden west of the house. Under McCrea's direction, Little raised chickens and turkeys for the commandant's table. McCrea funded this project himself and paid Little for his after-hours work of butchering and dressing the poultry.

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During the 1960s, environmental pollution took its toll on the grounds of the Commandant's House, and added an unusual duty to the staff's work. Winifred Wylie, Commandant Joseph Wylie's wife, saw to the cultivation of the two large gardens with the help of one of the household stewards, but the flowers from her gardens were so coated with grime that she regularly had the steward cut and wash them before allowing them inside the house. Mrs. Joseph Wellings faced a similar problem. She frequently had the stewards wash the potted plants she had installed on the window shelves of the sunporch.

Attitude Towards Servants

Commandants and their families appreciated the services provided them by well-trained retainers. The very size of the Commandant's House and the complexities of a commandant's responsibilities required the work of many hands. The workers of the household, however, occupied a different social class from the commandant and his family. Both master and servant were conscious of the difference. In the case of military personnel, the difference took the form of rank: the commandant did not treat a barge handler as an equal, nor did the barge handler expect it. The lower-ranking men deferred to the higher-ranking officer. In the case of civilian personnel the distinctions were more subtle, but present nevertheless. Attitudes toward non-white or foreign-born servants were most complicated of all, and the attitudes very
much reflected the times. The persistence of the term "houseboy" applied to grown men well into the 1960s is but one indication of pervasive, unexamined stereotypes. Yet, commandants were not alone in supporting traditional class distinctions. In 1974, when Rear Admiral and Mrs. Richard Rumble hosted one of the last parties at the Commandant's House, they invited the gardener as a guest. The gardener refused the invitation, which he considered improper.22

* * *

The commandant's household subordinates provided the services necessary to the smooth running of a large official residence. These people, comprising the work force of the household, discharged their duties on a daily basis in and around a house required to present its best appearance to the public at large. Keeping the house at its best called for constant efforts by the staff. But watchful planning on the part of commandants themselves was key to the adequate upkeep of the house. Naval regulations regarding official residences and adverse environmental conditions presented constant challenges to commandants.
CHAPTER 3
CATS, DOGS, AND REFRIGERATORS

The naval officers who occupied the Commandant's House understood the importance of public image. As the ranking shore officer for New England, the commandant himself was a symbol of the navy to the civilian public. His home was also a symbol, and thus required first-rate maintenance. Yet gaps between the requirements of image and the realities of insufficient funds and an industrial environment were sometimes too large to bridge. The gaps remained, in one instance leaving the occupants literally without a pot to cook in. The external environment, the condition of interior furnishings, even the animals and pests in the Navy Yard, all affected the quality of life inside the Commandant's House.

The Environment

When Captain Samuel Nicholson built his house in 1805, he erected a city-style house in a pastoral setting. Early paintings and prints of the house depict it surrounded by land, not just on the Navy Yard side where that space would be purposefully maintained, but to the north as well. Crowded city conditions had not yet encroached in the early nineteenth-century, but the expansion of both Charlestown and
Boston soon transformed the tranquil setting to a bustling one. The Salem Turnpike, which ran directly in front of the house on the north, was the major road between Boston and towns on the North Shore. As population and industry grew, this country road became a major commercial artery. In 1874, Samuel Drake featured the Commandant's House in his book on the historic fields and mansions of Middlesex County. But the fields were fast disappearing and the Commandant's House, like other mansions, was soon squeezed by urban development. Originally a town in Middlesex County, Charlestown became part of Suffolk County when it was annexed to Boston in the 1870s.  

Industrial growth and development within the Navy Yard matched development outside. During the course of the nineteenth century, the Navy Yard grew from approximately 25 to over 100 acres. By the turn of the twentieth century, over one-hundred buildings constructed on a city grid pattern, and numerous other improvements had replaced the few original structures. Modern ships, steel-hulled and steam-powered, required a larger, more mechanized industrial base. With the full flowering of the new naval age came industrial dirt and grime.

Noise, soot, dust, unpleasant odors, and vibrations from heavy traffic impinged upon the stately Commandant's House and the well-tended gardens surrounding it. Early in the twentieth century, traffic on Chelsea Street (formerly the Salem Turnpike) was congested and loud. Streetcars of both the Boston Elevated Railway Company and the Bay State Street
CATS, DOGS, AND REFRIGERATORS

Railway Company passed frequently on tracks running in front of the house. Rail cars and heavy trucks moving at high speeds over the rough granite blocks set off vibrations that shook the house to its very foundations. China and glassware rattled in place on their shelves, and masonry and interior plaster work showed signs of the strain.

The enormous amount of traffic on Chelsea Street coupled with the narrowness of the street produced a dust-choked atmosphere in front of the house. But there were other offenders in the neighborhood. The Navy Yard power plant belched cinders and dust; coaling plants in the yard and surrounding areas added their share of soot; city stables immediately beyond the Navy Yard wall produced airborne debris of straw, feed, and dust. It was impossible to keep the noise and grit outside. A servant dusting a table in the Commandant's House could expect to find it again covered with a fine layer of black, sooty dust within an hour's time.3

Commandants and their families were not oblivious to the unfavorable conditions. But like most Americans of the time, they probably viewed the noise and grime as a necessary by-product of prosperity. Thus, they did not complain about the conditions themselves, but rather sought appropriate remedies for the wear and tear the conditions inflicted on the Navy Yard quarters. Ever conscious of the importance of a respectable appearance for the house, commandants battled with the Navy Department for sufficient funds for upkeep, sometimes overspent what monies were officially allotted, and responded
to the department's incredulity that monies spent were really necessary to the decent appearance of the house. Commandants did not always argue successfully, but the arguments themselves provide a context for understanding their perspective: by the 1910s, the Commandant's House was old; it had large, old windows and doors—poor barriers to external dirt; it sat exposed on a hill; it was in constant use for public entertainment; it stood in the middle of a big, industrialized city.  

Animal odors and stable debris gradually disappeared, but not until the mid-1930s. Evelyn Williams, who spent four childhood years living in the Navy Yard, remembered the stables behind her house as one of the Depression-era "remnants of the old days." When the wind shifted from offshore to onshore, the odor and debris made her backyard a distasteful place to be. But while she balked at the stable's presence, she adjusted easily to the industrial noises surrounding her. She was so accustomed to the noise from the building, repair, and movement of ships in and out of dry dock, that she could not sleep at night during an occasional lull in activity.  

Effects of industrialization continued unabated during the remainder of the yard's history. During the World War II era especially, Commandants Tarrant, Brown, Theobald, and Gygax had little time to think of interior household conditions during the gigantic naval build-up of World War II. But the fifty thousand yard employees, working around the
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clock, produced and repaired ships at record-breaking speed, creating noise, dust, and grit as inevitable by-products.

For the twentieth century, constant wear and tear on the interior of the Commandant's House is well-documented. Incoming commandants noted the shabbiness of the interior or the inadequacy of household furnishings. Rear Admiral Joseph Wellings accomplished major interior refurbishing in the early 1960s with the $80,000 he obtained. Still, the effects of the environment could only be slowed, and cost played a large part in decisions to redo or make do. In the early 1970s, Winifred Wylie wanted to replace the worn draperies in the living rooms and dining room but thought better of the idea when the estimate came back at $218 per window.

The Wylies in the 1970s noted that it was "uncommonly dirty here." The combination of industrial work inside the Navy Yard and big-city traffic immediately outside was similar to conditions of the early twentieth century. The addition of the Mystic-Tobin Bridge and its elevated access in the late 1940s had only exacerbated the traffic problem. But the Wylies adjusted to the environment. They used the third-floor bedrooms for their frequent houseguests despite the noise from the highway; they kept storm windows up all year on the north side of the house to protect against gravel flying off the highway; and they avoided giving garden parties to escape the grimy fallout that fell everywhere outside.6
Furniture

The furniture allotted to fill the commandant's quarters was generally of good quality. Records from the mid-1830s indicate that a system for acquiring furniture had not yet been established. In 1835, Commodore John Downes found himself in an embarrassing position when he learned that furniture he had ordered was suddenly disallowed by the comptroller as an illegal purchase. Downes eventually solved the problem and obtained clearance for the furniture, but this was a one-time incident unregulated by policy. A policy was in place by the late nineteenth century. By then, the Navy Department had established regulations for furnishing the quarters of commandants, other commissioned officers, and warrant officers assigned to the various navy yards and stations. As might be expected, the navy allowed commandants to have furniture of higher quality than other officers. The department also allowed commandants to have more furniture for their presumed larger quarters.

Regulations specified quality furniture primarily because quality furniture could withstand years of hard use. Stipulations for the use of hardwood in wooden furniture construction, a certain thickness of brass plating on metal bedsteads, and leather upholstery for dining room chairs illustrate the extent of specificity in furniture regulations. A good piece of furniture was expected to last ten years, but commandants commonly used certain pieces much longer. In 1911, for example, Commandant John Fremont had a number of...
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items over forty years old, including a mahogany veneer card table, a black walnut sideboard, and a black walnut sofa. In 1972, Rear Admiral Richard Rumble still used the dining room table purchased in 1915 and six walnut dining room chairs bought in 1894. The bedsteads and mattresses in a second-floor bedroom were over thirty years old in the 1970s. The Howard regulator clock, originally purchased in 1883, was still in the house when the Navy Yard closed in 1974.9

The Navy Department expected officers to care for the furniture in their quarters and it held them accountable for their furniture. The commandants had inventories of their furniture made upon occupying the Commandant's House and upon vacating it. They saw to the strict disposition of unusable pieces which had been classified as too worn for officers' use. They usually assigned such pieces to servants' rooms within the house.

Inventories of furniture in the Commandant's House indicate nothing surprising or extraordinary about individual items or where they were placed in the house. Furniture regulations dated 1913 did allow an extra perquisite for commandants of the principal navy yards in the form of portieres and lace curtains for main first-floor rooms. The Commandant's House in Boston included these then-fashionable furnishings. Arrangement and locations of furniture followed the pattern of public-use area on the main floor and private-use area on the floors above. Thus, from the early twentieth century to the closing of the active Navy Yard, the
parlors contained comfortable sofas and numerous chairs, and
the dining room included a large dining room table capable of
seating a dozen or more people. Second-floor rooms, arranged
informally, functioned as bedrooms and sitting rooms; in
modern times, one room served as a television room.

Furnishings

Furnishings included curtains, kitchen appliances, and
smaller items like china and silverware. These incidentals--
their condition, procurement, and use--add to our
understanding of life in the Commandant's House and further
reinforce the picture of a large official naval residence,
expensive to keep and much-used for official entertainment.

Early supply allotments for cordwood and candles reflect
the commandant's higher status relative to the other officers
of the station and his needs for heating and lighting his
large house. In 1814 and 1823, the commandant was allowed 28
cords of wood annually, supplied at government expense. In
1834, the Navy Department increased the allotment to 30 cords
of wood. By comparison, the next highest ranking officer's
allowance was 20 cords of wood. In 1823 and 1834, the
department allowed the commandant $65 annually for the
purchase of candles to illuminate the Commandant's House, and
$40 per year for candles for the home of the master
commandant, next in rank.

Keeping the Commandant's House supplied with basic
kitchen utensils was not a simple task. The items were not
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replaced routinely and, at least until the early twentieth century, the commandant actively involved himself in procuring the utensils necessary to cook his food. When he occupied the Commandant's House in 1835, Commandant John Downes found the kitchen supplied with a variety of pots, pans, kettles, pot hooks, racks, and other kitchen tools, but most were in bad condition or completely worn out. In 1896, Commodore Joseph Miller wrote to the chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks regarding four agate stew pans he had ordered, noting, "We are greatly in need of these and the cook is bothering me about them." Rear Admiral John Fremont wrote the Bureau of Equipment in 1910, "When I went into the house last Friday, there was absolutely nothing in the kitchen to cook with." In 1914, Captain William Rush justified his seemingly modest request for four pressed tin dish covers by noting that food passing near the coal cellar in transition from basement kitchen to first floor dining room needed protection from dirt and heat loss.

Kitchen appliances, specifically the range and refrigerator, reflected the commandant's role as official host to a large number of guests. In 1915, the number of holes in the kitchen range was increased from six to nine. The Wylies reported that they had "a mammoth stove" in the late 1960s, an eight-burner capable of cooking large quantities of food. 10

Refrigerators were another matter. In the early years of refrigerator availability, the question of appropriate size for the Commandant's House refrigerator came up several times.
In 1910, Admiral Fremont rejected the refrigerator issued according to the schedule of allowances as entirely too small for use in the house, in fact only one-third the size needed. Five years later, Captain Rush also had difficulty obtaining a refrigerator of adequate size. The bureau questioned his requisition for a refrigerator costing $126.33, the average allowable cost for a commandant's refrigerator being $30. Rush shot back, with some exasperation, that the bureau's constant questioning of his recommendations had become "distinctly noticeable," that he found it "difficult to realize what assistance, if any, the Bureau of Yards and Docks had been to the Commandant in his administration of the affairs of the Yard." On a calmer note, he justified his request by explaining the demands on a refrigerator in the Commandant's House:

The most suitable and necessary refrigerator for these quarters is a small hotel refrigerator capable of supplying the needs of what is practically at times a hotel, due to the entertainment of official and semi-official guests.

Rush compromised with the bureau. He ordered a $75 refrigerator and retained and repaired the two small refrigerators already in the house.\textsuperscript{11}

In more recent times, the refrigerator, no longer a novel appliance, was no longer an issue. In the late 1960s, the Commandant's House contained at least two freezers in the basement and three large refrigerators in the kitchen.\textsuperscript{12}

Curtains, china, and silverware, supplied with the house, were not always in top condition. Commandants had special
difficulty with curtains and draperies, primarily because of the extraordinary size of the windows in the house. Several commandants noted they had nothing among their personal effects suitable to cover such large windows, and so required special funding from the Navy Department to help defray window-covering expenses for the house Admiral Fremont called a "palatial residence." Keeping curtains and draperies respectable looking was also expensive. Winifred Wylie deferred replacing main-floor draperies because of the prohibitive cost.

Navy silverware and china, included in household supplies, were not always adequate in number or appearance. In 1910, Admiral Fremont found the silver worn out and the china "pretty well broken up." In 1918, Captain Rush thought the silverware might be salvaged by having it resilvered. Mrs. Wylie noted that the house was supplied with navy silver, which she did not use, and "just too much china," which she did use, in entertaining.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Animals}

Cats, dogs, horses, oxen, rats, mice, and roaches were all part of the Navy Yard environment and they were found both in and around the Commandant's House. Oxen and horses were the work animals of the yard in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The horses pulled carriages, delivery wagons, and fire trucks; oxen provided the great power needed to move heavy timbers and granite building blocks. Cats and
dogs were kept as pets or appeared as strays. They helped control the rat and mouse populations, but also brought their own form of trouble as disease and vermin carriers. The residents and workers in the yard accepted animals as a part of everyday life. They were as much a part of the scene as the yard employees or ships in the dry dock.

One working animal, a small skye terrier named Junk, was a famous ratter in the yard in the 1870s. Samuel Cochran, Junk's owner and a yard employee, made sport of the terrier's hunting instincts. Cochran collected rats caught in traps in a storage shed which housed provisions taken off ships. When he had twenty or more rats, he would appear in the stationery room in Building 33--his so-called "rat pit"--and invite the officers of the station in for a demonstration of Junk's prowess. Junk always dispatched the rats quickly, thus ensuring his popularity with officers and workers alike.

As valuable as a dog like Junk was, unattended and unclaimed dogs were a nuisance. In 1890, Captain Thomas Selfridge issued an order stating that no one in the yard would be allowed to keep a dog without his specific permission. Regulations applied to officers of the station living in the Navy Yard as well as to civilian employees. In 1891, Selfridge issued another order that prohibited unmuzzled dogs off their owner's premises, adding, "The Captain of the Yard will please see this order enforced and that it does not become a dead letter." In 1894, Selfridge issued the same order, again emphasizing that it "not become a dead letter."
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Commandants were worried about rabies and other diseases that the animals spread. A 1925 circular specifically prohibited unmuzzled or unleashed dogs not vaccinated against rabies. A circular issued at the turn of the century directed that screens be installed over open windows on the ground floor of all quarters to prevent rodents and stray cats from entering basement kitchens.

Disease

The deadly diseases of the past which could not be eradicated but merely contained surfaced often enough in the yard. The commandant had a grave responsibility to do whatever possible to keep such diseases under control. In 1826, Captain William Crane first dealt with an outbreak of smallpox among the marines by quarantining the sick men in a separate building. But the Charlestown authorities, upon hearing reports of the smallpox outbreak, raised a storm of protest, stating the remedy was not strong enough. Crane consequently removed the men to Rainsford Island and had the room they occupied fumigated and their clothes burned. Such measures were necessary. In 1880, Commodore George Ransom directed a medical survey "on such articles of furniture pertaining to House C . . . as may have become infected by a recent case of Diphtheria." A more chilling account of a scarlet fever outbreak comes from an 1888 request for medical survey:
The youngest child of Civil Engineer Craven was sick with scarlet fever in House "D" - and to prevent the other members of his family from having the disease, they removed into House "C" - and whilst there five other members of his family were striken [sic] with the same sickness.

More than most other places, the Navy Yard was a place where one could be exposed to disease carried from many parts of the world. In 1914, an Argentine sailor on a ship docked in the Navy Yard became seriously ill. His commanding officer requested and received emergency medical help from the Chelsea Naval Hospital. The sailor, suffering from spinal meningitis, entered the hospital on September 8th, but died nine days later in spite of treatment.

Not all of the health problems in the Navy Yard were serious or potentially fatal. One 1917 letter from Captain William Rush to Mrs. R. D. Hasbrouck, wife of the captain of the yard, inquired after Captain Hasbrouck's health. "I hate boils," the letter states, "I had thirty-six once all on the back at the same time."

Pets

Animals kept as pets or sources of food could be found in the Navy Yard throughout the historical period. Captain Samuel Nicholson obtained pasture land near the Commandant's House before the structure was completed; Captain William Rush kept a cow on the Commandant's House grounds in the 1910s; Rear Admiral John McCrea raised turkeys and chickens in the 1950s. When the Mystic and Hoosac Docks near the Navy Yard
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were used for loading cattle onto ships in the late nineteenth century, the cattle occasionally jumped ship, swam to the yard, and gained entrance by way of the slip at the yard's lower end. A roundup of sorts would thus ensue when yard workers left their tasks to chase cattle. Like their civilian counterparts, Navy Yard cats chased rodents and produced kittens interminably, but they sometimes conducted their activities with particular navy flair. Evelyn Williams' cat chose USS CONSTITUTION to bear her litter of kittens in the early 1930s. In the 1970s, Patches, one of the Yateses' white cats ("constantly gray" because of the yard environment) took a daily outing around the yard's perimeter. Returning home, Patches always entered through Gate 4 where he was routinely saluted by the marine guards.14

One of the more famous pets of the Navy Yard was a parrot kept by Commodore Foxhall Parker, Jr., in the 1870s. The parrot customarily perched on one of the posts at the entrance to the commandant's garden. When Parker approached the Commandant's House from his office the parrot would call out, "Shinnie hain, big snatch block, here comes the old man," using the words the yard crew themselves used to warn of the commandant's approach.15

The most exotic animals in the yard appeared with Rear Admiral Richard E. Byrd when he returned from his first Antarctic expedition. Evelyn Williams and other navy juniors of the yard were on board the RUPERT S. MOLER, eager to be part of whatever excitement was about to happen:
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In the locker, it would be equivalent of a freezer for us, really cold storage, they [the marines] opened up the big door that was like a huge refrigerator, and out walked the penguins! Lots of penguins! We had to hustle and get those penguins back in. We were allowed to go in, I guess the marines didn't care, and play with the penguins! Right there in the Boston Navy Yard:16

* * * *

Inside the Commandant's House, a curious combination of elegance and shabbiness prevailed. The old house, surrounded by industrial activity and snarled urban traffic showed wear and tear in cracked plaster, dingy walls, and soot-covered furniture. The navy allotted good quality furniture for its commandants, but sometimes skimped on items like draperies which did not last as long. Some commandants found that just keeping an adequate complement of kitchen equipment in the house could be a challenge. Animals and vermin directly and indirectly affected conditions in the house and the lives and health of the people living there.
PART 2

THE COMMANDANT AND HIS FAMILY
[A naval officer] should be . . . a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honor . . . he should be conversant in the usages of diplomacy, and capable of maintaining . . . a dignified and judicious correspondence . . . He must be of affable temper and a master of civilities. He must meet and mix with his inferiors of rank in society ashore . . . though constantly preserving the distinction of rank.¹

In August 1817 Commodore Isaac Hull called on Secretary of State John Quincy Adams at his Quincy home. Adams had just returned after eight years in Europe and sought to renew old friendships and associations. A week later, Hull invited Adams, his wife, and his three sons to dine at the Commandant's House. Captain and Mrs. Hull hosted twenty-three people for dinner that evening with Adams as guest of honor.²

* * *

For commandants of the Charlestown Navy Yard and later the First Naval District, with the administrative and management responsibilities for building, repairing, and outfitting ships came the additional duty of using a gentleman's skills. Commandants represented the United States Navy to the world at large, specifically to foreign officers and dignitaries visiting Boston, and to the civilian community of Boston and New England. If the navy expected all of its
officers to present a polished, educated, and genteel appearance to the outside world, it expected even more of its high-ranking officers in strategic, and sometimes politically sensitive, positions. 3

Overview: The Commandants as Men

The individual men who occupied the position of commandant varied in their professional abilities and personal histories. In the early years of the United States Navy, the commandant was one of a small number of high-ranking naval officers. By the late twentieth century, the commandant shared his flag rank with a hundred or more other officers, and the First Naval District was one of up to seventeen separate naval districts in the country. But the difference in size and sophistication of the navy between 1800 and 1974 did not necessarily have a direct bearing on the ability of the men who occupied the office of commandant. Thus, Captain Samuel Nicholson, first commanding officer of USS CONSTITUTION and before his death highest ranking officer in the U.S. Navy, was by some accounts a limited officer and manager. In contrast, modern commandants like Rear Admirals John Snackenberg and Joseph Wellings distinguished themselves with a succession of increasingly complicated line and staff responsibilities. Both served with particular distinction during World War II, Snackenberg in ordnance research and Wellings as a hand-picked naval observer with the British before the United States entered hostilities. 4
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Although the relative importance of the position of commandant changed over time, high-ranking officers always filled the job. This is an important concept directly related to an understanding of how this position functioned, both during the early years of the navy and in modern times. Thus, during the first half of the nineteenth century, all commandants were captains in the navy, the highest rank at that time. During the twentieth century, with few exceptions, commandants were rear admirals. The only period when commandants were not among the highest-ranking naval officers was for approximately thirty years after the Civil War when the Navy Yard declined in activity and the bureau system fragmented the commandant's authority within the yard, sometimes eclipsing it altogether.5

Early commandants such as Samuel Nicholson, William Bainbridge, and Isaac Hull, appear prominently in the annals of our early naval history.6 Both Bainbridge and Hull were heroes of the War of 1812 and both were energetic administrators. Hull was one of three officers appointed by the secretary of the navy to the Board of Naval Commissioners in 1815, the board being the administrative arm of the navy from 1815 to 1842 when the bureau system was created. Bainbridge was also a member of the board, serving as its president from 1824 to 1827. In 1815, Bainbridge established at the Charlestown Navy Yard the first school for midshipmen, the direct forerunner of the U.S. Naval Academy. In the 1810s, Hull introduced the British innovation of shiphouses at
the Portsmouth yard and Bainbridge quickly followed by building a shiplhouse at the Boston yard. Both Bainbridge and Hull were commanding officers of USS CONSTITUTION, as was Samuel Nicholson. In all, eight commandants commanded CONSTITUTION, including Charles Morris, Jesse D. Elliott, Foxhall A. Parker, John Rodgers, and Oscar C. Badger, as well as Nicholson, Bainbridge, and Hull. In modern times, CONSTITUTION, by then a national shrine and permanently berthed at the Navy Yard, served as the commandant's flagship.

Of the earlier commandants, William Crane, Charles Morris, and John Nicolson, as well as Hull and Bainbridge, served on the Board of Naval Commissioners. Crane later became chief of the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography. After his tenure as commandant, Charles Morris held the positions of chief of the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography and chief of the Bureau of Construction, Equipment, and Repair.

Later nineteenth century commandants, in a more bureaucratic and diversified navy, regularly provided official expertise on a variety of examining boards, boards of inquiry, and courts martial. Commandant George Ransom, for example, reported to Pensacola, Florida, in 1880 as president of a board to "put the Navy yard at Pensacola in a state of efficiency." In 1885, Commandant Louis Kimberly reported to Newport, Rhode Island, as president of a board to examine a class in torpedo practice. In 1848, the secretary of the navy ordered Commandant Foxhall A. Parker to Europe to organize the
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German navy. His son, Foxhall A. Parker, Jr., wrote *Squadron Tactics Under Steam* in 1864 before his tenure as commandant. The book was a landmark work in the use of steam-powered ships. The younger Parker left the office of commandant in 1878 to command the U.S. Naval Academy. His predecessor, Edward T. Nichols, became chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks several years after he left the Charlestown Navy Yard position.

Twentieth century commandants distinguished themselves in a variety of ways during their naval service. Generally, they advanced professionally through a succession of line promotions which frequently included command of major vessels. Most developed a particular area of technical expertise. Many could count significant commendations among their service-record marks. Commandant William Rush received the Medal of Honor, the highest award conferred by the United States, for his heroic action at Veracruz in 1914. A destroyer named for him was commissioned at the Navy Yard in 1952. Rear Admiral Samuel Robison left the position of commandant in 1921 to become the military governor of Santo Domingo. Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves commanded the Atlantic Fleet Destroyer Force before World War I, readying the force for combat in anticipation of war. Immediately before his tenure as commandant, Gleaves commanded the Asiatic Station. Robert Theobald was in command of Destroyers, Pacific Fleet, for two years during World War II, before assuming the commandant's position in 1943. John McCrea was naval aide to
President Franklin Roosevelt during World War II. He escorted the president to Argentia Bay in 1941 and Teheran in 1943 and acted as liason between Roosevelt and Winston Churchill during lesser-known meetings of the two world leaders. Novelist Herman Wouk later chose McCrea as the model for his protagonist Victor "Pug" Henry in *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*. Rear Admiral Roy Benson, commandant during the late 1960s, served as Commander, Submarines, in the Pacific, and Assistant Vice Chief of Naval Operations before assuming the commandant position at the Charlestown Navy Yard.

The Commandant's Official Responsibilities

The commandant's responsibility to represent the navy to the civilian world matched his administrative responsibilities in the Navy Yard. If he utilized his skills as an officer in managing a military industrial complex, he utilized his gentlemanly attributes in moving through the world of politics and diplomacy. During the period before the Civil War, the commandant lived and worked almost exclusively in elitist circles. His activities included marching in parades for presidents visiting Boston; entertaining foreign princes; and escorting governors, cabinet members, and foreign ambassadors on tours of Boston Harbor. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, burgeoning population growth and increasing national political influence of the middle class stretched the commandant's role to include a wider variety of duties. He continued to attend governors' inaugural balls and to
entertain visiting foreign diplomats, but he also developed ties with numerous booster clubs, civic associations, and veterans' organizations. During the twentieth century, a continuous round of patriotic parades, board meetings, speaking engagements, and official receptions occupied much of the commandant's time. By the late 1960s, the public relations aspect of the commandant's role had become paramount.10

When President James Monroe visited Boston in 1817, Captain Isaac Hull was among the "select company" hosting the president at the official dinner at the Exchange Coffee House. Commodore William Bainbridge was a member of the official party receiving the Marquis de Lafayette in the State House senate chamber in 1824 during Lafayette's triumphant tour of the United States. Bainbridge later offered a toast to the much-loved Revolutionary War hero at the official banquet given by the governor in Lafayette's honor. In 1827, Commodore Charles Morris received President John Quincy Adams with honors at the Navy Yard and accompanied him on an inspection tour of the newly-commenced dry dock, and of the ships VIRGINIA and FALMOUTH then under construction. President Andrew Jackson missed the dedication of the dry dock in 1833 because of illness, but Commodore Elliott was present to greet Vice President Martin Van Buren who acted in his place. Elliott was also in the official party the day before at the "elegant and sumptuous collation" given for the president at the State House. In 1841, Commodore John Downes
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received the Prince de Joinville, son of the king of France, at the Navy Yard with twenty-one guns. In 1851, Downes, again in command of the Navy Yard, received President Millard Fillmore at the yard after an extended presidential harbor cruise. Rear Admiral John Rodgers and the officers of the station accompanied President Andrew Johnson on his 1867 tour of the harbor aboard the steam tug LEYDEN. In 1868, Rodgers received a Chinese embassy at the Navy Yard and escorted the ambassadors on an inspection of the yard shops.\textsuperscript{11}

Recurring civic and political activities oriented towards the new middle class formed a definite pattern by the end of the nineteenth century and became a fixed cycle of social obligations by the early twentieth century. In 1909, for example, Rear Admiral William Swift received invitations to the Grand Army of the Republic dinner; lectures of the Victoria League, an Anglophile organization; the annual dinner of the Hooker Association, a Civil War group; the inauguration of the president of Harvard College; and the inauguration of the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He attended meetings of the Luncheon Club, a businessmen's group; the National Lancer's Club; the Thursday Evening Club, which pursued scientific inquiry; and the Technology Club at M.I.T. The same year, Swift also attended the annual dinner of the Massachusetts Society of Cincinnati, the Elks Flag Day exercises at Faneuil Hall, and the United Spanish War Veterans' exercises at Faneuil Hall. The year 1909 also witnessed Swift's appearance at a dinner given by the
governor, a breakfast by the mayor of Boston, and a banquet by the mayor of Salem.

In 1910, the Appalachian Mountain Club asked Commandant John Fremont to serve on an honorary committee to welcome the arctic explorer Robert E. Peary at his first public appearance upon his return from the North Pole. This invitation is a good example of the commandant's stature in the civilian community. The club explained that the commandant had only to meet Peary at the reception, but if the commandant could not attend, the club still wished to use Fremont's name as a member of the committee of fifty influential persons, including the governor, the mayor, and the archbishop.

In the 1910s, '20s, and '30s, commandants continued their rounds of activities. Grouped together, the activities provide a picture not only of the commandant's involvement in the Boston community, but also of the character of growth and change in that community. The commandant sat on the boards of the National Sailor's Home and the Y.M.C.A. He attended ceremonies laying the cornerstone of the Boston City Club House (1913), dedicating the Widener Library at Harvard (1915), and opening Logan Airport (1923). He participated in the Pan American Scientific Congress and the mayor's official receptions to honor Admiral Richard E. Byrd and Amelia Earhart. He called on President Calvin Coolidge when the presidential yacht MAYFLOWER arrived at the Navy Yard. He attended the governor's luncheon for President Herbert Hoover (1930). He went to banquets and dinners at exclusive Boston
clubs such as the Beacon Society, the Somerset Club, and the Algonquin Club, but he also attended meetings and functions of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Red Cross, the Knights of Columbus, and the American Legion. As had his predecessors, the commandant received and escorted European, South American, and Asia diplomats and naval officers.

The period after World War II saw commandants functioning in much the same way with the emphasis on various activities changing as the political scene shifted once again. One indicator of change was the shift away from Beacon Hill society. Another was liberal politicians' avoidance of public association with the military during the Vietnam years. Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie joked about working "the cold fried chicken and mashed potato circuit" referring to his activities with the Chamber of Commerce, Elks, and similar groups, but his job as naval representative in the late 1960s was a sensitive one in troubled times. Commandants during the 1950s and '60s spent many hours entertaining official political and military guests at ship commissionings and transfer ceremonies. They maintained official associations with such people as Leverett Saltonstall, John McCormack, John F. Kennedy, John Volpe, Margaret Chase Smith, and Richard Cardinal Cushing.12

One incident illustrates the particular kind of influence wielded by a modern commandant within the civilian community. In the early 1970s, a serious labor dispute developed between Teamsters and Longshoremen regarding who would have the right
AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

to unload container cargo from ships. At a luncheon at the Commandant's House given to seven Boston labor leaders, Admiral Wylie mediated the conflict between the two unions. He described what happened:

[The unions] were at odds. There was a strike pending--both of them were going to go out on strike. It was an inter-union argument, and after lunch, for reasons I've forgotten now, I got a couple of bottles of Madeira and the glasses and put them on the table. We stayed at that table until 4 o'clock. The upshot of it was that they settled their argument. [The Commandant's House] was neutral ground, you see.13

The Commandant's Privileges

"Rank has its privileges" is a common expression in the navy which highlights the more pleasant aspects of life at the top. The commandant, by virtue of his rank and position, enjoyed amenities not commonly available to others. The Beacon Society, the Boston City Club, the Union Club, and the Thursday Evening Club all automatically extended membership privileges to commandants before World War II. When the Sword Club of Boston was formed (a fencing club), the board sought Captain William Rush's membership. The Boston Yacht Club made its facilities available to commandants. The Harvard Club was open to and utilized by commandants from the 1910s through the 1960s. Before World War II, commandants received complimentary tickets to the opera and season passes to Fenway Park and Boston Pops concerts. The Museum of Fine Arts allowed commandants to select and display works of art not on exhibit at the museum in the Commandant's House. Commandants
used the launch that accompanied the job (the commandant's barge) for leisurely pleasure cruises on the Charles River and in Boston Harbor. The navy band, assigned specifically to the commandant in the early twentieth century, was still available to him in the 1960s for official functions.

The patina of Boston elitism and privilege that began to wane in the years after World War II did not fade altogether. That the Harvard Club was available to and utilized by modern commandants illustrates this. Commandants appreciated this privilege. Others did not necessarily understand the status it represented. Rear Admiral John McCrea once entertained Secretary of the Navy Robert B. Anderson and his civilian aide at the Harvard Club. McCrea assigned his own aide, Lieutenant John Crehan, to pay special attention to the secretary's aide, and later asked Crehan how he had fared. McCrea reported Crehan's reply:

"We got up there at lunch and we sat down and this fellow said to me, he said 'Now let's see, just where are we?' And Crehan said, 'I told him we were at the Harvard Club.' And he said, 'The Harbard [sic] Club? For God's sake! If we had this thing back down in Texas, we'd tear it down and build them a real club!"

Unofficial Activities

Commandants did not spend all of their waking hours attending to official business, although like many professionals, they often formed personal friendships and associations with people they met during the course of business. Commandants often entertained these friends.
informally at home.

In the 1860s, Rear Admiral John Rodgers hosted Admiral David Farragut at dinner in his home the evening before Farragut sailed from the Navy Yard on his newly-outfitted flagship, FRANKLIN. Farragut amused Rodgers and his wife, Ann, with stories of his own midshipmen days under command of Rodgers' father, Commodore John Rodgers. Captain William Rush hosted a young French officer, one Captain Dyevre, overnight, only days after the armistice was signed ending World War I. Rear Admiral Louis de Steiguer, attending the Weymouth Tercentenary, used the First Naval District tug MOHAVE to transport Governor Cox, Chief Justice and former President William Howard Taft, and their party from the Navy Yard to Weymouth. He unofficially entertained Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur overnight at the Commandant's House. The following evening, de Steiguer, Wilbur, and their ladies attended a Halloween dance at the armory in Building 39. Rear Admiral Philip Andrews maintained an active interest in scientific innovations, belonging to such groups as the Boston Aero Club and the Thursday Evening Club. He once hosted a luncheon in his home to honor Prince Wilhelm of Sweden. The party, which included the governor, the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and the Swedish consul, retired after luncheon to Symphony Hall where the prince lectured on his recent scientific and hunting trip to Africa. In 1928, Charles Lindbergh stayed at the Commandant's House as Admiral Andrews' guest during his visit to Boston. They
attended a round of activities including luncheon at the Copley Plaza, a dinner to honor Lindbergh by the governor, and ceremonies at Mechanics Hall.15

* * *

The commandant filled several roles of administrator, manager, civic leader, and genial host. His knowledge of human nature and the exigencies of politics was frequently as important as a scholarly background in engineering or law. He functioned within the shore community as a recognized social leader and was thus able to garner support for the navy. He and his family also stood at the center of a small domestic environment within the Navy Yard itself. The officers of the station, their wives, and their children, followed the lead of the commandant and his wife in the daily round of activities that made up their life in the Navy Yard.
CHAPTER 5
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

The Commandant's House, standing on a hill and set off from other buildings in the Navy Yard, was nevertheless only one of the yard's residences for officers. Buildings, grounds, and tennis courts formed a "neighborhood" in the area of the Commandant's House at the upper end of the yard, and other homes were clustered in a similar manner at the lower end of the yard. The commandant and his family held the topmost position in this community of officers, wives, and children who carried on their daily lives amidst the hustle and bustle of an active military industrial facility.

For a naval family, the small size and character of this community was out of the ordinary. However accustomed a family might be to living within a military enclave, the usual assignment included both a large number of families of officers and enlisted men and an almost exclusively "navy" environment. At the Boston Navy Yard, hundreds, and later, thousands of workers left when the whistle blew. They were civilians. The navy—officers, wives, and children—stayed behind and called the place home.
Location of Quarters

Officers of the station and their families lived in one of three locations. Quarters L, M, N, and O, located in the lower yard, were built in 1826. Quarters P, near these houses but not connected as part of the row, was built in 1913. Quarters B, C, D, E, and F, in the upper yard, just southwest of the Commandant's House, were built in 1833. The Marine Barracks, directly east of the Commandant's House and begun in 1810, included quarters for the officers of the marine detachment at the yard. For most of the twentieth century and until the Navy Yard closed in 1974, bachelor officers lived in a fourth location, in Building 5.1

The Officers of the Station

In the early years, the Navy Yard housed almost all of the navy personnel concerned with managing and operating the yard. As the number of officers increased, the lower-ranking officers found housing outside the yard. In 1834, Quarters B through F, built for warrant officers, housed the boatswain, the gunner, the carpenter, the sailmaker, and the sailing master. That same year, the master commandant, the lieutenant of the yard, the surgeon, and another sailmaker lived in officers' quarters L, M, N, and O. By the beginning of the twentieth century, commissioned officers occupied all of the available Navy Yard quarters. Their number had increased with the growing sophistication of Navy Yard operations and
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

included inspection, construction, and public works officers, the commandant's aide, the captain of the yard, the medical inspector, and others. The modern Navy Yard included officers in charge of production, planning, electronics, ordnance, industrial engineering, industrial relations, medicine, and dentistry, among others.2

Officers' Activities

The officers of the station led lives of both responsibility and privilege. Along with their technical and managerial responsibilities for Navy Yard operations, they, like the commandant, had official social responsibilities to visiting dignitaries and officers of foreign ships in port. The commandant did not entertain important visitors in a vacuum. He expected, and received, support for official entertainment from subordinates. And the responsibilities in this area seldom stopped with the officers themselves but included, as well, their wives and even their children at times. Graciousness and the ability to entertain virtual strangers in a gentlemanly fashion were not exclusive attributes of the commandant.

The line between official ceremonial responsibility and official social responsibility was frequently blurred. From the early days of the Navy Yard, commandants required officers to appear at the Commandant's House, or later, at the commandant's office, to formally receive a visiting secretary of the navy. Such receptions frequently preceded official
luncheons at the Commandant's House. The arrival of a foreign ship in Boston usually touched off a round of activities including exchange of official calls and ceremonial gun salutes, and reciprocal entertainment aboard the foreign ship and on shore. Such exchange of amenities was a common part of an officer's life during all of the active years of the Navy Yard and continues today in naval facilities and stations all over the world.³

Official social and ceremonial occasions sometimes marked particular historical events. In 1889 Commandant William P. McCann ordered the officers of the station to appear in "special full dress uniform" for the reception of President Benjamin Harrison at the Hotel Vendome. In 1925, Donald B. MacMillan departed for his arctic expedition from the Navy Yard aboard the S.S. PEARY amid much ceremony and fanfare. Officers greeted the assistant secretary of the navy and escorted the governor, mayor, and Senators Butler and Gillette to the platform aboard CONSTITUTION, where the ceremonies took place.

Officers regularly attended change-of-command ceremonies when a new commandant assumed his duties. In 1873, the ceremony took place at the Commandant's House when Commodore Edward Nichols relieved Enoch Parrott. "The usual reception of and farewell to the officers" occurred at the house, and a salute was fired from the battery. By the 1880s and well into the twentieth century, changes of command took place at the commandant's office. After World War II, they typically
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

occurred on First Avenue near the flag pole. 4

The custom of paying formal calls was a long-held tradition in the navy which fell into disuse only after World War II. The commandant expected subordinate officers to call on him shortly after reporting to duty at the Navy Yard. An officer might pay an initial call at the commandant's office, but he quickly followed this with a formal call at the Commandant's House. The officer in uniform, accompanied by his suitably gloved and hatted wife, visited the commandant and his wife, who entertained such callers on the same afternoon or evening each week. The commandant informed his subordinates when he and his wife would receive visitors by announcing "at homes."

Approximately two weeks after calling on the commandant, an officer could expect the commandant and his wife to return the call. This was an opportunity for the junior couple to extend their hospitality to the senior couple. It was also something of a test for the junior couple which they faced with some trepidation.

After their initial visit, officers and their wives paid regular calls at the Commandant's House, never staying longer than the proper twenty minutes unless specifically urged to do so. Upon departure, an officer left three calling cards behind on a silver tray displayed for that purpose, two cards for himself to both his host and hostess, and one for his wife to the commandant's wife only. This last amenity was to avoid the implication of a lady calling on a gentleman.

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The custom of giving and receiving individual calls was a nineteenth-century refinement of the pre-telephone era. Although still practiced in the navy after World War II, the custom began to change. One common approach to discharging social obligations was what Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie called a "navy return device" during which he annually hosted all the Navy Yard officers at once and everyone traded calling cards during this one "call."⁵

Officers of the yard, particularly before the 1940s, enjoyed many social activities that reflected the way of life of the educated and refined class to which they belonged. The officers, during their leisure time, attended "navy nights" at various clubs, concerts at the Sailors Haven, "musicales" at the armory in Building 39, and dances given by the army officers at Forts Strong and Warren. They took their wives or sweethearts roller skating in the sail loft on Friday afternoons where they skated to the music of the navy band, or they ice-skated in winter on the tennis courts flooded for that purpose. They saw the Red Sox play at Fenway Park, attended army-navy football games at Harvard Stadium, competed in golf tournaments, and bowled at the enlisted men's club (the Ingram) on nights the lanes were reserved for them. They played a variety of field sports on the athletic field in the yard, which they shared with civilian employee teams and enlisted men. They also played tennis on the yard courts reserved exclusively for officers, their families, and their guests.⁶ One announcement for an "inter-collegiate smoker" to
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

which yard officers were invited promised competition with alumni from many colleges in "boxing, singing, and college cheers." Officers also pursued more serious interests, attending lectures on opera appreciation, illustrated talks on new aspects of submarine warfare, and meetings of the Naval Lyceum.

Certain clubs extended membership privilege to yard officers. They included the Sword Club, the Boston City Club, and the Commonwealth Country Club. Within the Navy Yard itself, officers had other privileges. Unlike civilian employees or enlisted men, officers, their families, and guests moved without restriction in and out of the yard and were not subject to search by the marine guards. Piers were designated for specific uses. In the 1920s, Pier 1 was designated for the exclusive use of the commandant, Pier 2 for officers and their guests, and Pier 4A for all other landings.7

Navy Yard Dances

Dances played an important part in the life of the Navy Yard. They provided entertainment for an officer, his family, and guests and enabled an officer to discharge his social obligations. They occurred regularly, as often as two times a week, from the 1860s to the 1940s. The tea dances of the early twentieth century did not last, but large formal dances like the Constitution Ball were continued until the navy left the yard in the mid-1970s.
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

Ann Rodgers, wife of Rear Admiral John Rodgers, held "hops" on Wednesday evenings in the 1860s at the Commandant's House from eight to eleven. A five-instrument portion of the Navy Yard band played for these occasions, and Mrs. Rodgers served ice cream and sangree for refreshment. Her husband reported that the dances were very popular and that his wife was "winning silver opinions, golden ones we cannot hope to win under the present pay and high prices of things."

Young officers and their ladies attended afternoon tea dances at the armory in the late nineteenth century. The Navy Yard band provided music, and the dance committee served sandwiches, hors d'oeuvres, ice cream, cake, and coffee for refreshment. Flags from many foreign countries added color and festivity to the setting. The weekly tea dances attracted fifty or sixty participants, while the formal evening dances, held four or five times a year, drew three hundred or more people. All dances were by invitation only. For the formal occasions, the dance committee issued engraved invitations to a select group outside the Navy Yard community, including local political and civic leaders, army officers of the forts in the area, and officers of visiting ships.

Dancing was clearly more than a way to have a good time. Commandants regularly reminded their officers of the purpose of dances, strongly encouraging those who failed to attend formal dances to change their habits. In the words of Rear Admiral Louis de Steiguer, dances were "part of an officer's opportunity to assist in bringing the Navy into closer contact

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LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

with their friends and other friends of the Navy, [and] an opportunity to return social obligations incurred." He emphasized that officers do "their part in entertaining their guests, both to make the dances a success and . . . to reflect credit upon the Naval Service."

A measure of importance of an officer's impeccable conduct at these dances is seen in the disciplining of an officer who failed to act the gentleman. For personal reasons, an officer asked a guest to leave a dance and assaulted him in the presence of a lady. Secretary of the Navy G. V. Meyer, who meted out the punishment himself, called the conduct "unbecoming an officer of the Navy" and further stated "your trial by general court martial would be seriously considered were the Department not of the opinion that the notoriety of such a trial would be . . . unfortunate for the good name of the Navy."

The navy upheld its good name in a special way by holding successful dances for charity. Such events were exclusive formal occasions that provided an outlet for the kind of service to society traditionally performed by well-bred ladies of the upper class. In 1914, for example, the Massachusetts Auxiliary of the Navy Relief Society held a fancy dress ball. Jane Rush, Commandant William Rush's wife and president of the chapter, saw to the appropriate decoration of the armory for the ball, even to utilizing rugs and tables from her own home. In modern times, the navy sponsored the annual Constitution Ball every spring at a Boston hotel. The ball, held from 1965
to 1983, raised funds for charity, and each year honored a notable person. The commandant and his wife entertained the guest of honor and about thirty other invited guests each year at a dinner at the Commandant's House immediately before the ball. Henry Cabot Lodge, Arthur Fiedler, Leverett Saltonstall, and Samuel Eliot Morison served as guests of honor during the years the commandants hosted these balls.  

Navy Wives

Successful wives of naval officers, who had their own "naval careers," possessed both resilience and resourcefulness. The married officer brought his family to each new assignment, or left them behind during duty at sea. With each move, the officer's wife had her own assignment to make a home for her family regardless of where it might be. Housing, furnishings, schools, transfer of finances, and orientation to new localities all fell to the officer's wife. She made the adjustment to different housing, different climates, different schools for her children—and her attitude to the changes could set the tone for her family's morale. She made entertaining a part of her life, always prepared for the surprise visitor her husband might bring home with him. Although her husband's career did not depend on it, an officer's wife's ability to entertain graciously was considered a great asset.

Some wives and children, having lived on more beautiful bases, initially thought the industrialized Navy Yard a dismal
home. Although they appreciated their spacious quarters, they had to adjust to the noise and dirt of a shipyard where work went on just outside their doors. But a shore assignment meant a husband and father at home. Rear Admiral John Rodgers was happy to spend three years at the Navy Yard, getting to know his children better and spending time with his wife, Ann. He described the domestic scene, one of the few glimpses of nineteenth-century domestic life in the Commandant's House:

She sews and talks, and I listen; the children grow and I play with them. Willie is a bookworm—Freda loves dolls, and to be petted. Helen is a little dunce who cannot talk—at least not in English, but she uses some unknown tongue with great volubility.

The importance of a wife's role as official hostess increased as her husband advanced in his career. In the twentieth century, the commandant's wife presided at official luncheons, dinners, and receptions at the Commandant's House, working with the chief steward to plan menus and draw up correct seating plans for invited guests. Always a part of official receiving lines, she shook many hands in the name of the U.S. Navy. She played an integral part in the many ship ceremonies that occurred at the Navy Yard, welcoming guests, introducing strangers to each other, and assisting her husband in showing people a good time.

Many officers' wives spent whatever time they could spare from domestic duties working for charity. The navy's long-honored tradition of helping the less fortunate was institutionalized by the early twentieth century in the Navy Relief Society, the navy's own organization to provide
financial help and other assistance to the needy families of enlisted men. Wives of the officers organized events to raise money, such as the afternoon tea and auction bridge party given by Mrs. Jane Rush and her club members in 1915. In the 1960s and '70s, the wives organized monthly luncheons, fashion shows, and Christmas bazaars selling handmade goods. They also worked many hours with or for persons in need. Some women staffed a Navy Relief office where they interviewed enlisted men's wives applying for loans, or offered advice about stretching an allotment to the end of the month. Others gathered in small groups in quarters and spent a morning knitting layettes for the new babies born to enlisted families.

The commandant's wife, the designated advisor for the naval wives club in the 1960s and '70s, hosted an annual spring luncheon at the Commandant's House to honor the ladies who worked for Navy Relief. Winifred Wylie entertained forty or fifty guests at these luncheons where Admiral Wylie awarded the pins and charms denoting 100, 500, and 1000 hours contributed for Navy Relief. The wives were justifiably proud of their symbols of merit. Athena Padis, wife of the Navy Yard's engineering officer, explained that it could take up to fifteen years to accumulate 1000 hours of volunteer work.

Officers' wives worked at other volunteer projects in addition to Navy Relief. Athena Padis worked in Red Cross blood banks during the Korean War. Evelyn Williams' mother, whose husband was aide to Commandants Nulton and Hough, was a
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Red Cross grey lady during the Depression. Jane Rush also supported the Red Cross in the 1910s, but Navy Relief, the Special Aid Society for American Preparedness, and the Navy League absorbed most of her time.

Other officers' wives worked for the Navy League. Some commandants' wives hosted meetings of the league in the Commandant's House. The league, a civilian organization established in 1902 to support the navy, allowed wives to help their husbands by actively promoting the navy. Because membership in the league was not open to active military personnel, a wife's membership might be especially important in this particular organization which garnered support for navy projects and navy appropriations in Congress.

Personal interests and activities varied among wives of Navy Yard officers. Jane Rush occasionally entertained the yard's young women employees, who were awed by the grand house and the chance to have tea with the commandant's wife. Mrs. Hough, a Beacon Hill socialite and wife of Commandant Henry Hough, spent much time pursuing bridge and mah-jong in the company of other officers' wives. Mrs. Joseph Wellings gave small luncheons for the other officers' wives in an effort to get to know them all personally. Mrs. Richard Rumble entertained her daughter's fifth grade class for tea at the Commandant's House after they visited CONSTITUTION. Vida Benson put the Commandant's House on display as part of the League of Women Voters House Tour. Winifred Wylie regularly conducted tours of the house for interested groups, but
refused to take the groups—or herself—too seriously. Mischievousness took over in one instance when the leader of a group of doctors' wives wrote requesting a house tour and "ordered" coffee and cookies for refreshment. Mrs. Wylie instead served a well-disguised, standard rum punch, which the ladies innocently and quickly downed. As they happily departed, several ladies requested the punch recipe, which Mrs. Wylie hastily explained was a "well-kept secret," this "Commandant's Punch" recipe having been handed down from the first commandant, Samuel Nicholson.

Raising children, supporting a husband's career, moving household goods, working for charity, representing the navy in community activities—all were important aspects of life for an officer's wife. Perhaps second only to the family unit itself, the navy afforded a source of personal identification and social cohesiveness. It provided a way of life for officers' wives as much as it provided a career for their husbands.\(^9\)

**Navy Juniors**

Officers' children, called navy juniors, grew up with the navy in their blood. Like their parents, they adapted to new and sometimes exotic environments. They left friends behind with each move, but made new friends at each new duty station. Some attended many schools during their growing-up years; others, especially before the 1960s, attended boarding school. Those that found themselves among predominantly civilian
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

children in a school classroom could seem precocious to their teachers and peers for all their travels and apparent worldly wisdom. But juniors remained children first and foremost. They could be found in the Navy Yard making horsechestnut snowballs or taking a dare "to climb all the way up" to the cab of the crane when parents were elsewhere and children were left to their own devices.

Unlike other officers, commandants and their wives generally did not have young children living with them during their tours of duty in the Navy Yard. By the late 1800s, most commandants came to the job as a final assignment before retirement. Their children were grown or off at college and so did not share in the life of the yard. The few exceptions included Commandant Richard Rumble's children who lived in the yard in the early 1970s. The Rumbles were one of fifteen families living in the Navy Yard at that time, and many of the families had children. They made up a small but active enclave of navy juniors.

Officers' children attending public schools went to their classes in Brookline. The navy had the option of choosing and subsidizing any school system in the local area and chose Brookline schools for their top-quality rating. From the 1920s to the closing of the yard, children living in the yard boarded a navy bus provided for the school children and traveled crosstown to school in the morning. On the trip home in the afternoon, the children sometimes persuaded the bus driver to make a detour to Bailey's for ice cream.
The navy provided juniors with facilities and organized some recreational activities for them. Before World War II, children roller skated in the sail loft and, in winter, skated on the flooded and frozen tennis courts. In the 1930s, they played softball in an organized league. Both before and after World War II, they bowled at the enlisted men's club and attended movies shown on board visiting ships or at the theater in the yard.

Navy juniors also generated their own fun, often capitalizing on the particular environment in which they lived. Evelyn Williams entered the soapbox derby in the 1930s. "The parts came from the Carpenter's Shop, all the paint came from the Paint Shop, all the rope came from the Ropewalk, and an awful lot [of scrap iron] came from the junk yard." She and other children of the yard cavorted on board Admiral Richard Byrd's ship with the penguins and dogs which were part of the cargo. Williams was occasionally allowed to "drive the train" pulling scrap iron into the yard. As a regular hobby she collected scrap wood from CONSTITUTION which her father had reduced to chips and gave out as souvenirs for people who wrote and requested them.

The Yates children in the 1960s raided the civilian cafeteria to concoct sundaes, and cheerfully showed up at the Marine Barracks for free black cherry soda and steak whenever the marines put on a cookout. The children also skied on the grounds of the naval hospital across the river in Chelsea, and practiced street hockey and basketball on the tennis courts.
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

The Yateses played ping-pong (and an occasional "hockey" game) with the Rumble children in the basement of the Commandant's House.11

Navy juniors carried out their own social responsibilities to the navy within the larger context of their parents' entertainment. Evelyn Williams served hors d'oeuvres to her parents' dinner guests, attended cotillions, and learned ballroom dancing. As a young teenager, she danced with young midshipmen—some of whom were barely teenagers themselves—when yard officers gave formal dances to honor officers of foreign visiting ships. In the 1960s, the tradition continued; navy juniors entertained visiting midshipmen from the Naval Academy at the annual Christmas dances held at the officer's club. By that time, girls attending the dances were required to be at least eighteen. In the 1970s, the Yates children helped their parents, no longer provided with stewards, with the whole process of entertaining, including cleaning house, preparing food, and serving cocktails and food to guests.

Evelyn Williams offered a child's view of her parents' formal dinner parties. She and her brother, Harry, peeked through the window from the back stairwell into the dining room of their quarters to watch their parents dining with guests. Utilizing a myriad of utensils, the guests worked through successive courses of a meal. Some were stumped as to the proper use of the finger bowl, and this was a source of high amusement to the young onlookers:
LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

A constant joke . . . was "don't put sugar in it [the fingerbowl] and drink it" - you were supposed to take it off the plate, pick up the doily with it, set it down to your left. When the maid came and served desert, she served it on the plate usually that the finger bowl had come on. A few times we just giggled our heads off, because those that weren't trained this way . . . would occasionally leave the doily on the plate. When they did and the cream puff was served on the plate, which contained either custard or ice cream and then the chocolate sauce served and then the whipped cream served, when they tried to cut through the cream puff, they often had a doily to fight! It was a very amusing experience, and Mother would see us in the window and of course motion us upstairs, upstairs, out of the way!12

*   *   *

Domestic life in the Navy Yard differed from that found in most neighborhoods. A small number of families lived on an "island" surrounded by industrial activity which set the scene for their daily lives, but otherwise had little direct effect. That the residents were naval officers, navy wives, and navy juniors had a far greater effect on the social circles they moved in, the kinds of entertainment they enjoyed, and the education they received. However small the residential enclave in the Navy Yard, it was navy through and through.
PART 3

OFFICIAL ENTERTAINMENT
CHAPTER 6
THE BUSINESS OF ENTERTAINMENT

Commandants hosted many parties, receptions, luncheons, and dinners in their spacious quarters in honor of distinguished guests. A public figure and naval representative to the civilian community, the commandant entertained local civic, political, and business leaders. As a high-ranking naval officer, he had the additional responsibilities for the reciprocal entertainment of visiting foreign officers and for the reception of important U.S. Navy officials visiting the Navy Yard.

Official entertainment offered at the Commandant's House remained constant over the years. An 1817 reception and breakfast given to President James Monroe did not differ significantly from the dinner in 1972 to honor Samuel Eliot Morison. In both cases, the commandant and his wife welcomed their guests to the house with food and drink, and entertained them in the spacious rooms on the first floor. Historical changes, however, effected a change in the nature of entertainment. Over the course of more than 150 years, the navy increased in size and complexity; Boston fluctuated in importance as a port, a political center, and a naval center; and the commandant's relative importance within the navy.
The changes manifested themselves in two general trends: official entertainment at the Commandant's House became more frequent as time progressed, and distinguished guests of the commandants became more representative of the population as a whole, more diverse, and more numerous.¹

The Nineteenth Century: Distinguished Guests

In June 1817, President James Monroe—the Commandant's House's first distinguished visitor—arrived in Boston as part of his grand tour of the eastern states north of Baltimore.² This tour gained for Monroe such popularity it ushered in the so-called Era of Good Feelings, a phrase coined by the Boston newspaper Columbia Centinel. Good feelings toward the new president ran high in Boston, and his stay was marked by several official receptions, including a dinner at the Exchange Coffee House and a breakfast hosted by Commodore Isaac Hull at the Commandant's House. The Centinel described the guests and setting in detail:

The President partook of a sumptuous and elegant déjeune with Mrs. Hull the lady of the Commissioner. Of the guests were nearly 200 personages, embracing His Excellency the Governor, His Honor the Lieutenant Governor, Counsellors, Senators, and Representatives of the State, Members of Congress, Judges, Magistrates, Commodore Bainbridge and numerous naval officers; General Miller and numerous officers of the army; and many strangers of eminence. The breakfast table was ornamented with superb vases and services of Plate presented to the Commodore by the citizens of Philadelphia and Charleston. The President was on the right, and Governor Brooks on the left of Mrs. Hull; and the splendor of the martial insignia, united with the lustre of beauty and accomplishments, heightened the ensemble of a banquet which displayed the taste of
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the fair hostess, and the magnificence of the gallant Commodore.²

Secretary of State John Quincy Adams arrived in Boston in mid-August 1817 after an eight-year absence in Europe. On August 28, Captain and Mrs. Hull entertained Adams and twenty other guests at dinner at the Commandant's House. The guests included Mrs. Hull's sisters, Mrs. Garvis and Miss Hart ("a celebrated beauty"); and Timothy Bigelow, speaker of the House of Representatives of Massachusetts.³

When the Marquis de Lafayette returned to America in 1824, the people of Boston received him ceremonially. Lafayette, who embodied the popular ideals of patriotism and democracy, spent almost a week in Boston in a round of activities. A reception at the State House, an official banquet hosted by Boston's leading citizens (including Commandant William Bainbridge), and a review of seven thousand troops on Boston Common highlighted the general's visit. Obeying a presidential directive, Bainbridge received Lafayette at the Navy Yard with highest military honors. The marine guard greeted the general upon his arrival. A fifteen-gun salute was fired. Lafayette, in company with the governor, lieutenant governor, governor's council, and mayor visited the COLUMBUS and was saluted again with fifteen guns. The party proceeded to the Commandant's House where Captain and Mrs. Bainbridge hosted "a sumptuous collation" and introduced Lafayette to the officers of the station and their wives. Lafayette left the Navy Yard at 3 p.m. to the sounds of yet another gun salute.⁴
Kurt Bernhard, duke of Saxe-Weimar, voyaged to America in 1825 on the Dutch sloop-of-war PALLAS. He arrived in Boston late in July, and visited the Navy Yard and many other facilities in the vicinity. In the Navy Yard, Bernhard inspected the marine barracks, the ships in ordinary, and those under construction in the shiphouses. Although Commandant William Crane was away on business, Bernhard made a courtesy call on Mrs. Crane. Apparently impressed by the Commandant's House, particularly its bowed facade, Bernhard recounted an apocryphal story about the house:

The architect who planned it, worried the commissioner with continual questions relative to the form of the house, until finally he replied in great vexation, build it like my [arse]! The architect took him at his word, and built it with two round projections standing close together, which have a very curious appearance from the navy yard.5

President Andrew Johnson arrived at the Navy Yard on an official visit in June of 1867. Rear Admiral John Rodgers and the officers of the station, along with the marine guard, received the president at the Commandant's House with a salute of twenty-one guns and "the usual military honors." Commandant Rodgers introduced the officers of the yard to the president at the reception, after which they all departed the yard on the steam tug LEYDEN for a cruise of the harbor. President Johnson did not return to the Navy Yard, but rather disembarked at a Boston wharf when the excursion was over.6

On a tour of the United States in 1871, Grand Duke Alexis of Russia stopped at the Navy Yard to view its facilities. Rear Admiral Charles Steedman and the officers of the yard
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greeted him in full dress uniform with a salute of twenty-one guns. The duke's visit included a formal introduction to Mrs. Steedman and the other officers' wives at the Commandant's House, as well as an inspection of all of the yard's shops and a display of torpedoes exploded from the bow of WORCESTER. During the duke's visit, the imperial flag of Russia flew from the mainmast of the OHIO. After the exercises, Commandant Steedman hosted a large reception for the duke in his home attended by the station's officers and their wives and a large number of invited guests. 7

Secretaries of the Navy

Official receptions of distinguished visitors at the Commandant's House formed a pattern marked by salutes from the battery, officers in dress uniform, and military honors rendered by the marine guard. Such receptions might be followed by a luncheon or dinner, if the visitor's schedule permitted and if his visit conveniently fell within the appropriate time for either meal. As the nineteenth century progressed and travel time lessened, busy officials followed tighter and tighter schedules. Days-long visits to the Navy Yard became hours long. Nowhere is this better illustrated than in official inspections of the yard by secretaries of the navy. On September 8, 1824, Secretary of the Navy Samuel Southard arrived at the Commandant's House with two of the three naval commissioners for an inspection tour. Because of rain, they waited three days to begin their inspection and
took five days to complete it. In 1891 Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy arrived at noon at the Commandant's House for an afternoon inspection. Commandant Selfridge introduced the yard's officers to him at an informal luncheon before touring the yard. In the course of the twentieth century, official receptions of high-ranking navy visitors frequently occurred at the commandant's office, totally removed from the more personal environment of the house, yet still accompanied by correct military honors. This more routine and business-like tone was in keeping with modern trends. Yet exceptions did surface, most apparently when an official's stay in Boston was prolonged or where a personal friendship existed with the commandant.8

A 1909 visit to the Navy Yard by Secretary of the Navy George von L. Meyer illustrates the order of events for an official inspection and the ways commandant might extend the hospitality of his home as part of such a visit. Commandant William Swift sent a carriage for the secretary to downtown Boston at 12:30 p.m. on the day of his visit. Meyer arrived at the house and lunched with Swift at 1:00. Forty-five minutes later he appeared at the rear gate of the Commandant's House to be received by the yard's officers, commanding officers of the ships of the yard, and the commanding officer of marines. Before proceeding to his inspection tour of the yard, the secretary witnessed a parade of marines and the station's band. The traditional salute was fired from the battery.
Visits by Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur occurred frequently between 1924 and 1928. Wilbur enjoyed a personal friendship with Rear Admiral Phillip Andrews (commandant from 1925 to 1930) and he stayed more frequently at the Commandant's House than other secretaries of the navy. The refurbishment of USS CONSTITUTION, closely monitored by Andrews, began in the 1920s during Wilbur's administration and ended in 1931 shortly after Wilbur's tenure as secretary ended. Several of Wilbur's visits included inspections of work in progress on the frigate. In October of 1928, for example, Wilbur came to Boston for the annual Navy Day celebrations. Ceremonies included driving two bolts into the starboard side of CONSTITUTION's spar deck, symbolic of the restoration work in progress. Wilbur made an inspection tour of CONSTITUTION the day before Navy Day, and attended a luncheon in his honor at the Commandant's House. Guests included the governor, the president of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and numerous naval, army, and marine corps officers.

The Twentieth Century Before World War II

A meeting of the Old Ironsides Association in May 1917 illustrates new kinds of official activity—reflective of the growing power of the middle class—which occurred at the Commandant's House in the twentieth century. Commandant William Rush hosted the executive committee, offering them tea and cakes following their meeting. The association, formed to
save and restore CONSTITUTION, was particularly concerned at that time about the navy's proposal to rename the frigate OLD CONSTITUTION, and the executive committee protested the plan as inappropriate to the intentions behind saving the ship.

In July 1917 officers of the Chilean navy arrived in Boston to receive six submarines built for Chile in the United States. Commandant Rush received Rear Admiral Gomez and his staff with honors at his office. The six submarines were transferred and commissioned in a simple ceremony the next day, on July 4, including a presentation of arms, a salute of thirteen guns from CONSTITUTION, and hoisting of the Chilean flag on the submarines. Captain and Mrs. Rush entertained the Chilean officers and United States naval officers in Boston at an informal reception in their home immediately following the ceremony.

Commandants made every effort to make foreign officers feel welcome. Food figured importantly at receptions. In 1920, for example, Commandant Samuel Robison served lobster, ham, potato salad, olives, almonds, peaches, pears, oranges, grapes, ice cream, cakes, tea, coffee, punch, and other foods. 10

In the 1920s, functions--luncheons, dinners, and receptions--were held four or five times a year to honor foreign diplomats and officers from visiting foreign ships.

Foreign naval officers were by far the most frequent guests at the Commandant's House during this period. They usually took part in a round of reciprocal activities,
attending a reception or dinner at the house as part of the social events. Admiral Seymour, commander in chief, British naval forces in North American and West Indian waters, arrived in the Navy Yard in October 1923 for a visit of several days. Rear Admiral Louis de Steiguer received him with honors and later accompanied Seymour to a dinner held by the Chamber of Commerce at the Algonquin Club. The following evening, Admiral and Mrs. de Steiguer gave a dinner at the Commandant's House to honor Admiral and Lady Seymour. After dinner, the party attended a dance at the armory (Building 39) hosted by the commandant and officers of the First Naval District and the Navy Yard for Admiral Seymour and officers of HMS CAPETOWN. When the French sloop REGULUS was in Boston the following year, similar events took place, including a dinner at the Commandant's House to honor the sloop's commanding officer, Captain Chenet, and a dance at the armory.11

When a Japanese training squadron came to Boston in 1927, the Japanese officers attended many events given in their honor by Governor Fuller, the Military Order of the World War, the Chamber of Commerce, and others. Commandant Phillip Andrews attended all the functions and also hosted a dinner at his home. Acting Governor Frederick W. Cooke, Mayor Malcolm F. Nichols, and Japanese naval attache Captain Isoroku Yamamoto were among the guests present. (Yamamoto masterminded the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941.)12

Visiting officers of other foreign navies enjoyed similar events held in their honor, including luncheon or dinner at
the Commandant's House. British, French, Italian, Australian, and Swedish officers were among the groups entertained at the house during the 1920s and '30s. The British and French, particularly, visited several times.

Foreign diplomats often attended luncheons and dinners given to officers visiting from their native countries. In 1930, for example, Commandant Andrews' dinner to honor Captain R. Leatham of HMS DURBAN included the British consul general, Edward F. Gray, and the British naval attache, Captain J.S.M. Ritchie, as guests. On other occasions a diplomat might be the sole person dining with the commandant, such as when Italian naval attache Captain L. de Villarosa visited in 1931.

Occasionally, a commandant hosted a different kind of visitor as part of his official responsibilities. In 1927 Commandant Andrews held a luncheon in honor of the painter Gordon Grant at the Commandant's House. Grant had painted one of the more famous depictions of CONSTITUTION, a broadside view of the frigate under sail entitled "Old Ironsides." The painting, commissioned to raise money for CONSTITUTION's restoration, proved very effective in publicizing the project. It was exhibited around the country, and prints were made from it and sold widely. Andrews wanted to highlight Grant's contribution and so honored him in this way.13

The Last Years

The years after World War II saw a continuation of official entertainment at the Commandant's House, with the
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style of entertainment changing only slightly according to the particular interests of a given commandant and the kinds of events which occurred at the Navy Yard. Rear Admiral John McCrea utilized his monthly entertainment allotment on what he called stag luncheons--official monthly luncheons when McCrea hosted the governor, the mayor, or business leaders in the city. In the quiet and pleasant atmosphere of the formal main floor of the Commandant's House, McCrea discharged his responsibilities to maintain good relations with Boston's civic leaders. Over a decade later, Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie gave similar luncheons several times a year--generally men-only gatherings when business would be discussed following the meal sometimes for hours amidst the blue haze of cigar smoke. Successful resolution of the early 1970s labor dispute between teamsters and longshoremen took place at one of these afternoon sessions.14

Visits to the Commandant's House by foreign naval officers and diplomats continued in the postwar period. Rear Admiral and Mrs. Roy Benson hosted a large number of such men from Portugal, Denmark, France, Italy, and Sweden who were aboard ships bound for Expo 67 in Montreal and who stopped in Boston en route. Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie gave a luncheon for thirty guests to honor the German ambassador and hosted visiting British and French naval officers.

Other one-of-a-kind receptions took place during the final years. Rear Admiral and Mrs. Richard Rumble gave a farewell reception for Navy Yard employees when the yard was
closing. Earlier they gave a large reception to honor prisoners of war returning from Vietnam.

Modern commandants found that their entertainment allotments were insufficient to cover expenses for the amount of entertaining they did. Rear Admiral Joseph Wellings estimated he entertained officially in some way—counting small luncheons to receptions for 250—two or three times a week, but the navy allotted him only $800 a year. Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie, commandant six years after Wellings, later remembered his yearly allotment to be about $500, and recalled that the amount did not begin to cover his expenses. He did note that the elegant setting of the Commandant's House eliminated the need for finding space elsewhere and this helped to keep costs down. At $4 a person per reception and $10 a person per dinner, including liquor, Wylie felt that he could entertain well economically. It was the number of people he entertained that drove costs up above the allotment.

Despite added personal expense, the modern commandants were happy to entertain in the Commandant's House. Several noted the ease of entertaining in the large and gracious setting. Rear Admiral Roy Benson called it "homey and very easy to entertain in." Admiral Wylie noted that the layout of the first floor allowed for good circulation of guests through a receiving line at the foot of the stairs enroute from the bar on the sun porch to the food served in the dining room.15
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Official entertainment at the Commandant's House took the form of luncheons, dinners, and receptions held several times a year. Commandants provided such entertainment to present the navy to the local, national, and international community of government officeholders, business leaders, and foreign officials. Commandants also honored high-ranking naval officers in the Navy Yard on business with appropriate luncheons and receptions. From the 1930s to the closing of the yard in 1974, entertainment related to numerous ship commissionings, transfers, and christenings at the Navy Yard also occurred at the Commandant's House, a subject discussed in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7
DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

Warships manifest a country's naval power. By their number and size and in their complex weapon systems, they plainly show the power and influence a country wields on the world's seas. Warship design, construction, and outfitting require sophisticated technology, tremendous financial resources, and massive industrial development. Warships inspire pride in country, and so when they are built, they go down to the sea with pomp and ceremony.

From the 1930s to 1974, a period of American naval preeminence, the United States built and outfitted, overhauled, or converted over five thousand ships at the Boston Naval Shipyard. In the ceremonies that accompanied the departure of many of these ships, the commandant played an important role, and he frequently entertained American naval and political leaders in his home as part of the related activities. The Commandant's House is therefore part of the ceremonial aspect of the Navy Yard story. This chapter describes three kinds of ship ceremonies and details the role that the Commandant's House played in each one.¹

Formal occasions in which warships figured individually
included christenings, commissionings, and ship transfer ceremonies. A christening marked a ship's launching and its first contact with the water. A commissioning placed a ship in active service and sent her out onto the seas. Transfer ceremonies conveyed American-built ships to friendly foreign nations. The ceremonies mirrored work at the yard: first, the all-out effort to defeat the Axis, and later, military support for our allies in a time of relative peace.

Christenings

A ship's christening is a momentous occasion signifying more than the mere pronouncement of title. Naming bestows an identity, an act of great importance to captain and crew. The sense that a ship is a living entity begins with the naming ceremony, and the choice of a name as well as the events surrounding a christening can bode well—or ill—for the future of a ship. However straightforward, modern ship christenings share a romantic tradition with ancient rites meant to supplicate the unknown forces of the sea.

The years between 1938 and 1945 were unprecedented for shipbuilding in the Navy Yard. In 1938 President Franklin D. Roosevelt initiated a billion-dollar expansion fund for naval defense, and from then until the end of World War II, yard workers built over one hundred and fifty ships, including many destroyers and destroyer escorts. These ships carried the names of navy, marine corps, and coast guard heroes, men whose heroic actions—often performed only a few months or years
before--inspired ships' crews.

The ships were christened at the yard once their hulls were completed but before they were fully outfitted and ready to sail. Before Pearl Harbor, christening ceremonies took place at the time a ship was launched. This was, and is today, the traditional procedure. After 1941, a more frenetic pace prevailed. Ships, built in dry dock, were floated out without ceremony and christened later when they were more nearly complete. Frequently, ships were christened and commissioned on the same day, thus hastening the vessels into their active fighting role.

During the war, only a small number of people from outside the Navy Yard attended christenings. In 1939, the navy closed the yard to general visitation for security reasons and christenings were restricted to the sponsor and her party (approximately ten people), officers of the station, officers' families, and shipyard employees.

The woman chosen as ship's sponsor usually had a particular association with a ship--as a relative or descendant of the naval hero whose name the ship carried. After 1941, sponsors were needed on a regular basis as the Navy Yard turned out one ship after another. The criteria for selection then broadened considerably. The sponsor might be the wife or daughter of a yard officer, or a woman employed in one of the Navy Yard shops that had exceeded a production quota, excelled in safety, or donated a record amount of blood.
The christening ceremony at the Navy Yard was brief during the 1930s and '40s. Whether it occurred at the shipway or on deck, it followed a pattern which varied only slightly from one christening to another. The commandant sent an official car to meet the sponsor at her hotel or home and to drive her to the commandant's office in Building 39. There the commandant presented the sponsor with two dozen American Beauty roses and escorted her to the christening site.

The ceremony, which lasted approximately fifteen minutes, began with an invocation followed by a brief address from the commandant. Next the sponsor stepped forward to break the bottle of champagne across the bow and pronounce the words "I christen thee ------." With these words, she added her own good wishes to the ship's officers and men as she smashed the bottle across the bow, starting the ship down the ways to meet the water. After the christening and launching of the vessel, the yard employees presented the sponsor with a gift.

Most christenings concluded with a small reception at the officers' mess in Building 5. During the early 1940s, Rear Admiral William Tarrant and his wife—departing from the usual practice—hosted a number of luncheons and receptions in their home for the sponsors and guests at ship christenings. In 1940, for example, the Tarrants hosted two christening-related events at the Commandant's House. The spring event was a luncheon for twelve given to Josephine O'Brien Campbell of Maine, sponsor of the USS O'BRIEN. The fall event was a mid-afternoon reception given to Mrs. Philip Van Horne.
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Lansdale, sponsor of the USS LANSDALE. Forty-five people attended that reception, including Admiral and Mrs. Chester Nimitz and Mr. and Mrs. Charles Francis Adams.

Another christening luncheon which the Tarrants hosted in 1940 illustrates the care they devoted to such events. Before the USS MEREDITH was launched in April, Admiral Tarrant wrote to Ethel Dixon Meredith, the ship’s sponsor, asking for the approximate ages of the female guests in her party. He wished to invite officers of the Navy Yard of appropriate age to the luncheon in order to have a balanced complement of guests.

In March 1941, Mrs. Tarrant sponsored the USS HUMBOLDT, and the Tarrants’ daughter Ruth served as maid of honor. After the ceremony, one hundred guests attended a large mid-afternoon reception at the Commandant’s House. The Tarrants served sandwiches, cake, and punch.

The Tarrants gave another large reception in 1941 for the double christening of the USS COWIE and the USS KNIGHT. Former Secretary of the Navy Charles Francis Adams and Governor Leverett Saltonstall attended the reception which also included more than a hundred guests.

Commissionings

The commissioning marks the navy’s acceptance of a ship for active service. It is the event that symbolically breathes life into a ship, marking the transition from a mere construct of steel to an entity with personality. The words spoken, the music played, the honors rendered are part of a
long naval tradition that reaches back well before the establishment of the United States Navy. Those who witness such a ceremony obtain a sense of the importance of the occasion—the climax of thousands of hours of coordinated work, when a ship leaves the hands of her builders and outfitters and becomes home to hundreds of men. The promise of successful cruises, the prospect of many crew members working together cooperatively, and the hope that the ship will serve her country well are all celebrated at commissionings.

More than two hundred ships were commissioned at the Navy Yard between 1938 and 1974. Before 1945, ships commissioned at the yard had also been built there. After 1945, commissionings were mostly of ships built at private yards, usually in Quincy, Massachusetts, or Bath, Maine. Recommissionings of newly converted, older ships also occurred at the Navy Yard. Similar to commissionings, recommissionings highlighted the Navy Yard's prominent role, after World War II, in modernizing older ships.

Like christenings, commissionings followed a standard procedure. Unlike christenings, they included regular receptions at the Commandant's House held before the commissioning ceremony and occasionally included a luncheon as well. Approximately forty-five minutes before the commissioning, the platform guests, dignitaries in attendance, and selected personal guests of the commandant met at the Commandant's House. Official cars left the house ten minutes
before the beginning of the ceremony, transporting the platform guests and dignitaries to Pier 1, the customary site for commissionings. Other guests for the ceremony, already seated, awaited arrival of the principals. Uniform for the occasion was full dress blue or white for participants, depending upon the season, and service dress blue or white for guests.

As the commandant got out of his car at pierside, the navy band and marine color guard rendered honors to him. His presence, and the presence of the platform guests, was the signal to begin.

The ceremony, lasting approximately thirty minutes, took place on the main deck of the ship. It began with an invocation and proceeded with the introduction of platform guests, brief remarks by the commandant, an address by the principal speaker, and the reading of commissioning orders. When the new commanding officer accepted responsibility for his ship, he immediately set the watch as his first official act. The crew snapped into action, racing to their stations against a backdrop of noise and color—cannons firing, whistles blowing, radars turning. Navy ships nearby flew signal flags and fireboats spewed great plumes of white water. The active life of a ship thus began with celebration.

The ship's new commanding officer hosted a reception for several hundred invited guests after the ceremony. The commandant and his wife stood in the receiving line and welcomed the guests. Such receptions, usually held in the
officers' mess, offered cocktails and light luncheon food to those attending.

**Pre-Commissioning Events at the Commandant's House**

Pre-commissioning gatherings at the Commandant's House were occasions for the platform guests and principal speaker to meet. They also ensured that platform guests would arrive punctually at the commissioning site. In addition, commandants utilized these receptions to foster good community relations, and so they invited politically and socially prominent individuals.

The receptions, less than an hour long, offered simple refreshments and coffee. The number of guests attending these "coffees" varied from 50 to 150 depending upon the importance of the commissioning itself. Particularly significant commissionings frequently included a luncheon. In 1953, Rear Admiral Charles Momsen hosted a luncheon in his home to honor Admiral Robert Carney, chief of naval operations and the principal speaker for the commissioning of USS McCAIN. The guests included Senators Leverett Saltonstall and John F. Kennedy, Representatives John W. McCormack and Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., Governor Christian A. Herter, and Mayor John B. Hynes.

In 1962 Rear Admiral and Mrs. Joseph Wellings hosted a pre-commissioning luncheon to honor Rear Admiral K. S. Masterson, deputy chief of the Bureau of Naval Weapons. Masterson was principal speaker at the commissioning of the
USS HOEL. Rear Admiral and Mrs. Means Johnston gave a luncheon in 1967 to Admiral Thomas Moorer, then commander in chief of the U.S. Atlantic Fleet and later chief of naval operations. Like the formal coffees, these luncheons were official social events of the navy. Those attending were naval and army officers, political office-holders, high-ranking navy officials, and locally prominent business leaders.

Transfers

After World War II, the United States supplied military equipment to friendly nations as part of its worldwide peacekeeping policy. Between 1938 and 1974, the United States transferred more than seventy-five ships to foreign countries at the Navy Yard. The Navy Yard was the official receiving station for these ships from the private shipyards where they were built. After inspecting and approving a ship, the U.S. Navy formally turned it over to the receiving nation during a brief ceremony. Countries involved participated in one or another of the Mutual Assistance Pact agreements the United States initiated after World War II. Australia, Brazil, The Netherlands, Greece, Turkey, Pakistan, Korea, the Republic of China, Great Britain, Spain, Iran, and Thailand all received ships at the Boston Naval Shipyard.

Transfer ceremonies were more businesslike and less celebrative than commissionings for the Americans involved. The country receiving a ship determined how large attendance
would be, a factor influenced by the rank and number of its dignitaries participating in the ceremony, and by the number of interested persons readily available to witness the ceremony. It was common, for example, to invite Chinese students attending Harvard or members of the Greek Orthodox diocese to such ceremonies when the Republic of China or Greece received ships. Frequently, a nation's ranking diplomat formally received a ship for his country.

Transfer ceremonies resembled, but were not as long as, commissioning ceremonies. Common to both ceremonies were the navy band, a platform erected on the main deck of the ship for participants, and spectators seated on the pier adjacent to the ship. Naval participants wore service dress blue or white uniforms, depending upon the season. The country receiving a ship hosted a reception in the officers' mess following the ceremony.

The commandant usually transferred a ship to a foreign country and attended the reception following, but he rarely entertained in his home for these events. At the commandant's choice, he might arrange to meet with the receiving country's representative before the ceremony began. For example, in 1951 Rear Admiral Hewlett Thebaud briefly received Dr. J. G. de Beus, Netherlands minister to the United States, at his home before transfer of two American ships to that country. The same year Admiral Thebaud, in a departure from usual practise, hosted a large reception for Prince George of Greece when the prince accepted two ships. Greek Ambassador Athanase
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Politis, Assistant Secretary of State George McGhee, Bishop Ezekiel Tsoukalas, and many other dignitaries attended the reception at the Commandant's House.

* * *

Official ceremonies at the Navy Yard, including official receptions and luncheons at the Commandant's House, complemented shipbuilding and overhauling activities in significant ways. Such events celebrated the products of an industrial workforce and the military might of a great naval power.
The Commandant's House is the oldest structure in the Charlestown Navy Yard. Situated on the highest point of land in one of the country's oldest navy yards, today the house evokes the memory of the navy's nearly two centuries. Unlike the yard's early dry dock or its granite industrial buildings, the Commandant's House tells a political and domestic story. It tells a story of naval officers who managed a military/industrial complex and acted as liason between the navy and the outside world. It tells a story of diplomacy and influence carried out during affairs of ceremony and celebration. It provides a picture of how the commandants and their families lived, and of the part they played in the social life of the Navy Yard and the city of Boston.

Commandants held elegant dinners and receptions to honor presidents, princes, and military heroes. They received secretaries of the navy for inspections of the yard. They entertained their own club members at the house, and their wives welcomed friends who came to enjoy an afternoon of bridge and tea. They scheduled "at homes" for young subordinates and their wives to pay their respects. They dealt with the recurring needs for upkeep and repair of a large official residence.
CONCLUSION

Many different people lived in the Commandant's House during the Boston Navy Yard's active service. For 170 years, families moved furniture in and out, set up and dismantled household, hired and discharged servants, and played notable roles in the social life of the Navy Yard and the city of Boston. Each occupant who lived in this spacious house overlooking Boston Harbor added something to its long history.
CHAPTER I - A HOME FOR THE COMMANDANT


2 The six original frigates, rated for 44 guns and 36 guns, were UNITED STATES, CONSTITUTION, CONSTELLATION, PRESIDENT, CONGRESS, and CHESAPEAKE. In 1795 work was halted on the last three CONSTITUTION, the second of the ships to be completed, was launched in the fall of 1797. See Bearss, I, pp. 2-3.


4 Smith to Brown, March 28, 1804, quoted in Bearss, I, p. 55.

5 Smith to Brown, June 4, 1804, quoted in Bearss, I, p. 56.

6 Smith to Brown, July 13, 1804, quoted in Bearss, I, p. 56.


8 Ibid., I, pp. 58, 89, 341.


10 Bearss, I, pp. 491-92.

11 Elliott to Rodgers, January 18 and August 16, 1834, quoted in Bearss, II, p. 716; Bearss, II, p. 949; Preble, pp. 397, 402.

12 Commandant's Correspondence, 1918, Record Group 181, National Archives — Boston Branch, Waltham, Massachusetts. Hereafter cited as RGL 181, NABB.

13 Boston Globe, 28 July 1929.

14 Ibid.; "Commandant's House," Vertical File, Boston National Historical
Park Archives, Boston. Hereafter Boston National Historical Park will be cited as Boston NHP.

15Preble, p. 371.

16Public Works—Quarters, 1915, RG181, NABB.

17Public Works—Quarters, 1922, RG181, NABB. In 1937, plans were drawn up for a new greenhouse 35'6"x18' with an attached brick service building 16'x19'. The bureau evidently did not approve the project. Records from 1951 call for repairs to the much smaller lean-to greenhouse attached to Building 21. See Navy Yard plans and photograph file, Maintenance Division, Boston NHP.

18Evelyn Williams interview, 1980; P.W. Hamlin, "History of the Boston Naval Shipyard, 1800-1937," reproduced at Boston Naval Shipyard, 1948 (Boston NHP Archives); Vice Admiral John McCrea interview, 1980; Rear Admiral and Mrs. Joseph Wellings interview, 1981. All interviews cited are in the Oral History Collection, Boston NHP.

19Bearss, I, p. 341.

20Ibid., I, pp. 450-55, 471; Bainbridge to Crane, May 21, 1825, quoted in Bearss, I, p. 472; Bearss, I, pp. 472-73.

21David R. Pelletier, "Historical Survey of Building 21," Professional Services Branch, Boston NHP, June 1982; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Denver Service Center, Boundary Enlargement Report, Charlestown Navy Yard (Denver: National Park Service, 1982), Appendix F, "Revised National Register Forms," 1978. In the National Register documentation, Edwin Bearss states that Building 21 was converted to garage use by the late nineteenth century; however, annual site plans for the Navy Yard at that time identify it as a watch house. Building 20, just south of Building 21, is identified as a barn in the late nineteenth century and as a garage in the twentieth century. Bearss also states that the stable was used as a greenhouse, but it was a separate structure to which the greenhouse was attached. See Navy Yard Site Plans, Record Group 1, Series 65, Boston NHP Archives. Also see McCrea interview, 1980, and photograph collection, Boston NHP Archives.

22Bearss, I, p. 59.

23Ibid., I, p. 101.


26Ibid., I, p. 478.

27Miscellaneous Letters Received, 1823-26, RG181, NABB.

28Bearss, I, p. 480; Bearss, II, p. 945; Preble, p. 169.
NOTES TO PAGES 18 TO 30

29Public Works—Quarters, 1922, RG181, NABB.

30Sources consulted yielded no information on the exact date of the
change. A 1930 photograph of the house in the Boston NHP Archives clearly
shows an unpainted facade.

31David Wright, "Boston Naval Shipyard Architectural and Environmental
Inventory," Boston NHP, May 17, 1974, pp. 33-34; Miscellaneous Letters
Received, 1823-26, RG181, NABB.

32Wright, p. 34.

33Bearss, I, pp. 480-81; Preble, p. 172.

34Preble, p. 176; Bearss, II, pp. 945-46.

35Bearss, II, pp. 783, 948. See Eugene S. Ferguson, "An Historical
Early America (Radnor, Pa.: Chilton Book Co., 1976), for more about early
central heating.

36Wright, p. 33; Bainbridge to Crane, April 22, 1825, quoted in Bearss,
p. 467; Quarters G Plan, 1872, Maintenance Division, Boston NHP. In 1882,
for example, only 2 percent of New York City homes had indoor plumbing. See
Otto L. Bettmann, The Good Old Days—They Were Terrible! (New York: Random
House, 1974). In Boston, late nineteenth-century expansion into the suburbs
saw the systematic laying of water, sewer, and trolley lines along with new
housing construction, but adding such lines to the city was an expensive,
difficult task that proceeded fitfully. See Sam B. Warner, Jr., Streetcar

37Civil Engineer to Commandant, August 7, 1891, RG181, NABB; Annual
Reports and Estimates for Fiscal Years 1892, 1893, 1895, Record Group 71,
National Archives, Washington, D.C.

38Annual Reports and Estimates for Fiscal Years 1896 and 1897, Record
Group 71, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; Wright, p. 33.

39Annual Report of Expenditures and Operations for Fiscal Year 1899, RG
181, NABB. Calcimine is a mixture of zinc oxide, water, glass, and coloring
used on walls and ceilings.

40Wright, p. 33.

41Public Works—Quarters, 1914, RG181, NABB.

42Wright, p. 33.

43Quarters G Plans, Maintenance Division, Boston NHP; Lalande L.
Keeshan, "Physical Study, Navy Yard Granite Wall" (draft), Professional
Services Branch, Boston NHP, 1981; Wright, p. 33; Wellings interview, 1981;
McCrea interview, 1980.

44Quarters G Plans, Maintenance Division, Boston NHP; Annual Report of
Expenditures and Operations, 1899, RG181, NABB; Furniture Inventory, Quarters G, 1907 (filed under 1909), RG181, NABB.

45Williams interview, 1980; Rear Admiral and Mrs. Joseph Wylie interview, 1977.


CHAPTER 2 - SERVANTS, STEWARDS, AND RETAINERS


2McCrea interview, 1980; Wellings interview, 1981.
Today's budgetary austerities have meant the elimination of most domestic help provided by the navy. The navy provides a flag rank officer (rear admiral, vice admiral, or admiral) with a single steward. Others must do the best they can. Officers' wives must sometimes carry a tremendous burden of keeping a large old-fashioned house and entertaining guests without assistance. See Yates interview, 1983; and Mrs. Yurso (wife of commandant, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard) audio tape, May 25, 1983, Boston NHP Archives.


5Sutherland, pp. 30-32.

6Ibid., pp. 33-34.

7Bearss, I, p. 481; Quarters G Plans, Maintenance Division, Boston NHP.

8Preble, p. 108; Bearss, I, p. 343; Bearss, II, p. 702.

9Personnel—Officers, Coffman, 1913, RG181, NABB.

10Personnel—Officers, Rush, 1919, RG181, NABB.

11McCrea interview, 1980; William Hughes telephone conversation, Boston, May 1985, notes on file, Boston NHP Archives; Rear Admiral Richard Rumble interview, 1980; Wellings interview, 1981; Public Works—Quarters, 1918, RG181, NABB.

12Personnel—Officer, Rush, 1917, RG181, NABB.

13Ibid.

14Ibid.; Hughes conversation, 1985; Public Works—Quarters, 1914, RG181, NABB.

15The practice may have started long before. Available records provide no direct information on the subject before the 1890s.

16It is unclear whether both carriage and automobile were maintained at government expense.

17Public Works—Quarters, 1914, RG181, NABB.


19With only three exceptions, all of the twentieth century commandants (39 in number) achieved flag rank before or during their tenure as commandant.


21Commandant to Chief, Bureau of Yards and Docks, April 24, 1891, Letters Sent to Bureau of Yards and Docks, 1883-92, RG181, NABB; Public
CHAPTER 3 - CATS, DOGS, AND REFRIGERATORS

1Charlestown became part of Boston in 1874.

2Bearss, I, p. 19; Navy Yard Site Plan, 1901, Record Group 1, Boston NHP Archives.

3Public Works--Quarters, 1913, 1915, 1920, RG181, NABB.

4Public Works--Quarters, 1915, 1918, 1920, RG181, NABB.

5Williams interview, 1980. Evelyn Williams lived in Quarters C or D. Her father was aide to Commandants Nulton and Hough.


7This section is not intended to provide a detailed record of Commandant's House furniture. See the following for furniture regulations in officers' quarters and specific furniture inventories in the Commandant's House: Furniture and Equipment, 1909, 1911, RG181, NABB; Public Works--Quarters, 1913, RG181, NABB; Bearss, II, pp. 943-948. See also archival records of Boston NHP for inventories from the nineteenth century, the late 1960s, and the early 1970s.

8Such regulations may have existed earlier. Sources consulted indicate a late-nineteenth century date. In 1881, for example, the chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks sought Commandant George Ransom's opinion on the type and amount of furniture suitable for officers' quarters and on the length of service one could expect from various articles of furniture. See Ransom to Nichols, 19 August 1881, Letters Sent to Bureau of Yards and Docks, 1875-83, RG181, NABB.

9Public Works--Quarters, 1922, RG181, NABB, Boston NHP Archives.


11Furniture and Equipment, 1910, RG181, NABB; Public Works--Quarters,
NOTES TO PAGES 62 TO 72

1915, RG181, NABB.

12Wylie interview, 1977; Inventories, Quarters G, Boston NHP Archives.

13Social Affairs—Fremont, 1910, RG181, NABB; Public Works—Quarters, 1914, 1915, 1922, RG181, NABB; "Furniture in Officers' Quarters," Public Works—Quarters, 1913, RG181, NABB; "Inventory and Receipt for Furniture," Public Works—Quarters, 1918, RG181, NABB; Wylie interview, 1977. The Wylies' china in the late 1960s was probably white with a thick brown band on the outer edge and a thinner green band inside but otherwise unadorned. At least two other styles—one ringed in blue, and the other in blue and gold—and both bearing flag officer's emblems, preceded the modern style. For more information on Commandant's House china, consult accession files, collection of Boston NHP.

In commenting on the challenge of maintaining furnishings in a large official residence, Eleanor Roosevelt had this to say about the White House:

The replenishing of curtains and rugs and the re-covering of walls and furniture in the formal rooms have to be seen to carefully and constantly, because a house that is always on exhibition should look its best at all times. Mrs. Hoover told me that some visitors wrote her that one of the curtains over the large staircase window had a darn in it, not realizing that the height and size of windows made new curtains a great expense. (The Autobiography of Eleanor Roosevelt [Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1984])


15"Reminiscences" in Hamlin.

16Williams interview, 1980.

CHAPTER 4 — AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN


2John Quincy Adams Diary, 19 August 1817, The Adams Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

3The term "commandant" had different meanings during the historical period of the Navy Yard (1800-1974). Before 1903, it simply denoted the
administrative manager of the Charlestown (Boston) Navy Yard. In 1903, with the creation of the First Naval District, the term came to be used for both the commandant of the First Naval District and the commandant of the Navy Yard. Captain William Rush filled both positions from 1915 to 1918. From 1921 to 1945, Rear Admiral Albert Gleaves and his successors down to Rear Admiral Felix Gygax also filled both positions. In 1945, the Boston Navy Yard became the Boston Naval Shipyard, a major reorganization which separated the previously combined positions, calling one "commandant" (First Naval District) and the other "shipyard commander" (Boston Naval Shipyard). Thereafter two different men held the two positions at any given time, and the term "commandant" applied to the First Naval District commandant only.

Before 1945, the Navy Yard commandant occupied the Commandant's House. After 1945, the First Naval District commandant lived there.


5Frederick R. Black, "Boston Navy Yard, 1890-1973" (draft Historic Resource Study, Boston NHP, 1985), pp. 143ff. As a measure of comparison, the following statistics on U.S. naval officers in the twentieth century are illustrative: In January 1920, of the 7961 naval officers, 83 (1 percent) were flag officers; in June 1960, of the 69,559 naval officers, 292 (0.4 percent) were flag officers. See Navy Register, 1 January 1920; U.S. Navy Department, Annual Reports of the Navy Department for the Fiscal Year 1920 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1921); and U.S. Navy Department, Annual Report, Navy and Marine Corps Military Personnel Statistics (Washington: Bureau of Naval Personnel, 30 June 1962).

6Extensive biographies of the commandants are beyond the scope of this study. Incidental biographical information included here is intended to be illustrative only and is therefore highly selective.

7"USS CONSTITUTION," Ships' Histories Files, Record Group 1, Series 13, Boston NHP Archives.

8Callahan, passim.; Preble, pp. 299, 329; Ransom to Thompson, 25 October 1880, Letters, Endorsements, Telegrams Sent to Secretary of the Navy, 1874-80, RGL181, NABB; Kimberly to Whitney, 21 August 1885, Letters Sent to Secretary of the Navy, 1875-79, RGL181, NABB.


10For more information on the rise of power and influence of the middle class in the late nineteenth century, see Robert H. Wiebe, The Search for

11Boston Columbian Centinel, 2-5 July 1817 and 25-28 August 1824; Adams Diary, 15 September 1827; Boston Columbian Centinel, 26 June 1833; Preble, pp. 387, 393. Other notable nineteenth century persons visited the Navy Yard and were probably received and escorted by the commandant, but sources consulted do not provide conclusive evidence of the commandant's role in these visits. The visitors included President John Tyler, President James K. Polk, Jefferson Davis, former President Franklin Pierce, Prince Jerome Napoleon, Major General George B. McClellan, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, Grand Duke Constantine of Russia, Lieutenant General Ulysses S. Grant, Secretary of War William Stanton, and General William T. Sherman. See Preble, pp. 355-381.

12Social Affairs, 1909, 1910, RG181, NABB; Personnel—Officers, 1913-1924, RG181, NABB; Personnel—Social Affairs, 1913-1924, RG181, NABB; Log, Commandant's Office, First Naval District, 1930-33, RG181, NABB; Personnel—Parades, 1916, RG181, NABB; Foreign Navy Vessels, 1914-1917, RG181, NABB; Wylie interview, 1977; Mansfield, p. 67; Ships' Histories Files, passim. As in the nineteenth century, various notables visited the Navy Yard during the twentieth century and were probably greeted by the commandant; however, direct evidence of the commandant's role is yet to be documented for the following visitors: President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Queen Wilhelmina of The Netherlands, the Grand Duchess of Luxembourg, and the Duke and Duchess of Windsor. See Mansfield, p. 67.


15Robert Erwin Johnson, Rear Admiral John Rodgers, 1812-1882 (Annapolis, Md.: U.S. Naval Institute, 1967), p. 299; Personnel—Officers, Rush, 1917, RG181, NABB; Log, Commandant's Office, First Naval District, 1923-25, 1925-28, RG181, NABB. The Thursday Evening Club is illustrative of the elite social circles in which commandants moved, especially before World War II. Founded in 1846, its objective was to bring together congenial gentlemen to informally discuss scientific and technological advances that could ameliorate social ills and advance the country. Polite society interested in aiding others via science was a particularly nineteenth century form of noblesse oblige. See Alexander W. Williams, The Greater Boston Clubs (N.p.: Barre Publishers, 1970), for information on this and other elitist clubs.

CHAPTER 5 - LIFE IN THE NAVY YARD

1Bearss, I, p. 83; Historical Base Map No. 4, ca. 1834, Bearss, II, plate IV.

2Social Affairs, 1909, RG181, NABB; Personnel—Social Affairs, 1915,
RG181, NABB; Foreign Navy Vessels, 1917, RG181, NABB; Public Works—Offices, 1924, RG181, NABB; Mansfield, p. 63.

3Orders Issued by Commandant, 8 April 1891, RG181, NABB; Log, Commandant's Office, First Naval District, 1923-1925, RG181, NABB. Commandant Thomas O. Selfridge held a luncheon for Secretary of the Navy Benjamin F. Tracy at the Commandant's House in 1891. Commandant Louis de Steiger hosted a similar luncheon to honor Secretary of the Navy Curtis D. Wilbur in 1924. That luncheon included officers' wives as well as officers.


6The Athletic Field, open to all navy and yard employees, was located in the 1920s and '30s in the area where Shipyard Park is today. In 1930, it included two concrete tennis courts. There were five courts in 1930 for officers' use. See Personnel—Officers and Personnel—Social Affairs, 1913-1924, RG181, NABB; and Navy Yard Site Plans.


Owing, probably, to the fact that one of my great-aunts married Commodore Horatio Bridge, USN, my grandparents always cultivated the successive commandants of the First Naval District. I well recall a visit with my grandmother to Admiral and Mrs. Sampson at the Charlestown Navy Yard, in the fall of 1899, because the Admiral sent me on board the old receiving ship U.S.S. Wabash, to be measured by the naval tailor for a sailor suit, complete with bell-bottomed trousers.

CHAPTER 6 - THE BUSINESS OF ENTERTAINMENT

1Oral tradition holds that James Madison, Theodore Roosevelt, and Franklin D. Roosevelt all visited the Commandant's House. This writer was unable to document such visits (although Franklin Roosevelt was in the Navy Yard in 1913 and in 1940). Documented visits to the Navy Yard by Henry Clay (1818), Ulysses S. Grant (1865), Calvin Coolidge (1924), Herbert Hoover (1932), and Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands (1942) may have included receptions at the Commandant's House; however, these leads have yet to be verified.

2Boston Columbian Centinel, 9 July 1817. The first recorded public event at the Commandant's House was the funeral of Captain Samuel Nicholson, the yard's first commandant and highest-ranking naval officer in the country at the time of his death. Nicholson's funeral, occurring on January 2, 1812, originated at the Commandant's House. Army and navy officers in Boston, Nicholson's fellow members of the Massachusetts Society of Cincinnati, members of King Solomon's Lodge, and officers and members of other Boston fraternal lodges attended the funeral. Nicholson was buried at Christ Church (Old North Church). See Preble, p. 62; Boston Columbian Centinel, 1 January 1812.

Another early event at the Commandant's House occurred in 1814 when Commodore William Bainbridge hosted the New England Guards. Bainbridge, worried that the British would burn the INDEPENDENCE (the country's first ship-of-the-line) before she could be launched, called in the guards. They marched to Charlestown and fortifying the bridge to Chelsea. For five days the guards engaged in drills and maneuvers returning to the Navy Yard on 18 June for the first (unsuccessful) attempt to launch the INDEPENDENCE. That day Bainbridge hosted the troops for refreshments in his home and later sent them over to CONSTITUTION where Captain Stewart also hosted them. The vulnerable INDEPENDENCE was finally launched on 21 June. The guards left the following day with the thanks of a relieved Captain Bainbridge. See Preble, p. 100; and Bearss, I, p. 149.

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4 Preble, p. 147; Boston Columbian Centinel, 25 and 28 August 1824. The year before Lafayette's visit, Governor William Eustis of Massachusetts inspected the Navy Yard. Commodore Bainbridge served refreshments to the governor and his party at the Commandant's House after the inspection tour. See Preble, p. 134.


6 Preble, p. 387.

7 Ibid., p. 406.

8 Ibid., p. 147; General Order, 8 April 1891, Orders Issued by the Commandant, 1872-1913, RG181, NABB.

9 Official Visits, 1909, RG191, NABB; Log, Commandant's Office, First Naval District, 1925-28, 1928-30, RG181, NABB. In 1923, Commandant Louis de Steiger's aide began a log of the commandant's official activities. This unique record, maintained through the administrations of four commandants, provides coherent documentation of social, political, and ceremonial activities of commandants daily, from 1923 to 1935.

10 Personnel—Officers, Rush, 1917, RG181, NABB; Foreign Navy Vessels, 1917, 1920; RG181, NABB. See Appendix 3 for a complete list of provisions supplied to Commandant Robison for two 1920 receptions.

11 Log, Commandant's Office, First Naval District, 1923-25, RG181, NABB.

12 Ibid., 1925-28.


14 McCrea interview, 1980; Wylie interview, 1977. See Chapter 4 for an account of the labor dispute settlement.


CHAPTER 7 - DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS

1 This chapter is based on a previous report. See Margaret A. Micholet, "Charlestown Navy Yard Ship Ceremonies, 1939-1973," (unpublished report, Boston NHP, December 1984), copy on file Boston NHP Archives. The author examined the over 800 files in the park's Ships' Histories Files, RG1, Series 13, as source material for the report. Information on specific ceremonies cited in this chapter can be located in the files by ship name.

2Mansfield, pp. 11, 97.

3Ibid., pp. 91–96, 102–107, 109–110; Commander, Boston Naval Shipyard, "Command Histories Reports," annual reports for years ending 31 December 1962 and 1966–73, RG1, Series 11, Boston NHP Archives.
Illustration No. 1

Illustration No. 2

Captain William Bainbridge, three times commandant of the Navy Yard and successor to Samuel Nicholson. Bainbridge instituted a construction program for the yard, started the first navy service school (precursor of the U.S. Naval Academy), and began the yard journal of daily activities.
Illustration No. 3

Captain Isaac Hull, third commandant, 1813-1822, and commanding officer of USS CONSTITUTION during her War of 1812 victory over HMS GUERRIERE.
Illustration No. 4

Captain William Crane, commandant 1825-1827. Crane initiated the first major alterations to the house.
Illustration No. 5

Captain William Rush, commandant 1914-1919, shown here with Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt during Roosevelt's visit to Boston, November 1917.
Illustration No. 6

Rear Admiral Phillip Andrews, commandant 1925-1930. Andrews maintained an active interest in scientific endeavors. He was commandant during the restoration of USS CONSTITUTION.
Illustration No. 7

Rear Admiral William T. Tarrant, commandant 1938-1942. Tarrant was commandant during the initial navy build-up for World War II.
Illustration No. 8

Illustration No. 9

Rear Admiral and Mrs. Joseph Wellings in the Commandant's House, Christmas 1963.
Illustration No. 10

Rear Admiral Joseph Wellings with domestic staff, Commandant's House, Christmas 1963. From left, Ursula, Equia, Sovehoz, Ding, Admiral Wellings, and Aguivo (cook).
Illustration No. 11

Rear Admiral Joseph Wylie with Henry Cabot Lodge at 1970 Constitution Ball.
Illustration No. 12

Commandant's House, south facade, etching after a circa-1825 painting. Isaac Hull's rows of poplars are shown. The twelve windows on the bowed facade were reduced to four during the 1825 changes to the house.
BUNKER HILL FROM THE NAVY YARD, BEFORE THE ERECTION OF THE MONUMENT, FROM A PAINTING
Illustration No. 13

Commandant's House, south facade, from Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion, 18 September 1852.
Illustration No. 14

Plans of Commandant's House, 1872. Note enclosed porch at southwest corner of house, main floor. Note, also, dumbwaiter in pantry, and water closets and bathrooms throughout the house. (Set of five drawings.)

A. Side (West) Elevation
Illustration No. 14

B. Plan of Basement Floor
Illustration No. 14

C. Plan of Parlor Floor
Illustration No. 14

D. Plan of Chamber Floor
Illustration No. 14

E. Plan of Attic Floor
Illustration No. 15

Commandant's House, south facade, 1874. Note profusion of trees and shrubs and unenclosed gallery at main floor level.
Illustration No. 16

Commandant's House, south facade, circa 1900.
Illustration No. 17

Commandant's House, north facade, June 17, 1914. Bunker Hill Day parade down Chelsea Street. Note figures sitting on fence in front of Commandant's House. Portable storm porch at northwest corner has been removed for the summer.
Illustration No. 18

Commandant's House, south facade, 1930s. Awning over gallery at main floor level was used in warm weather before sun porch was erected in 1936.
Illustration No. 19

Commandant's House, south facade, June 1936, showing sun porch construction in progress.
Illustration No. 20

Construction of kitchen wing on east side of house, October 1938. Note greenhouse attached to original stone stable (Building 21).
806-38 Boston Navy Yard, Oct 7 1938, Project 765-14-3-19, addition to "trs. 'C',
showing brickwork and concrete floor slab. Looking north.
Illustration No. 21

East side of Commandant's House, December 1938, showing construction of kitchen wing in progress.
Illustration No. 22

Plan of main floor, Commandant's House, 1938, showing addition of kitchen wing.
Illustration No. 23

West side of Commandant's House, circa 1941, showing portable storm porch in place and infilled granite wall in front of house.
Illustration No. 24

Commandant's House, south facade, along Second Avenue, circa 1952-54. Fallen trees are probably hurricane damage.
Illustration No. 25

Plan of main floor, Commandant's House, 1956, showing conversion of original pantry to study.
Illustration No. 26

Greenhouse attached to Building 21, 1963, prior to its demolition.
Illustration No. 27

Marine Commandant's House, Washington Navy Yard, circa 1862. George Hadfield, reputed architect of this house, may have been the architect of the Commandant's House at the Charlestown Navy Yard.
Illustration No. 28

East parlor, facing north, 1918. Note portieres at doorways. This was a fashionable furnishing of the period allowed only to commandants of major navy yards.
Illustration No. 29

Dining room, facing south, pre-1940. Electrical cord between underside of table and carpet was probably a call bell.
Illustration No. 30

East parlor, facing south, circa 1950.
Illustration No. 31

West parlor, 1953.
Illustration No. 32

Commandant's barge, 1951. The 45-foot boat was on a trial run when this photograph was taken.
56-51. NY2. 4/27/61. Admirals Barge (6-35876) 5' Tickt Boat Hull. Trial Run (1000 rpm).
Commissioning of USS McCAIN, 1953. Admiral Robert Carney, chief of naval operations, was principal speaker at the ceremony. Commandant Charles Momsen gave a luncheon in his honor at the Commandant's House, attended by Senator John F. Kennedy.
Illustration No. 34

Commissioning of USS BIDDLE, 1967.
Illustration No. 35

Christening of USS HUMBOLDT by Mrs. William Tarrant, 1941.
469-41 Navy Yard Boston. 17 Mar. 1941 USS Humboldt.
Christening by Mrs. W.T. Tarrant.
Illustration No. 36

USS HUMBOLDT christening, 1941. The HUMBOLDT slides down the shipway into the harbor.
Illustration No. 37

USS HUMBOLDT slides into the water moments after christening, 1941.
Transfer ceremony of USS ELDRIDGE and USS GARFIELD THOMAS to Greece, 1951.
Illustration No. 39

Transfer ceremony of USS ELDRIDGE and USS GARFIELD THOMAS to Greece, 1951.
APPENDIX 1

LIST OF COMMANDANTS

**Shipyard Commanders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Samuel Nicholson</td>
<td>1800 - 1811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT William Bainbridge</td>
<td>1812 - 1813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Isaac Hull</td>
<td>1813 - 1822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT William Bainbridge</td>
<td>1822 - 1824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT William M. Crane</td>
<td>1825 - 1826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Charles Morris</td>
<td>1827 - 1832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT William Bainbridge</td>
<td>1832 - 1833</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Jesse D. Elliott</td>
<td>1833 - 1835</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT John Downes</td>
<td>1835 - 1842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Francis H. Gregory</td>
<td>May 1852 - Nov 1855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Silas H. Stringham</td>
<td>Nov 1855 - Apr 1859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT William L. Hudson</td>
<td>Apr 1849 - June 1862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE John B. Montgomery</td>
<td>June 1862 - Dec 1863</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Silas H. Stringham</td>
<td>Dec 1863 - Dec 1866</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE John Rogers</td>
<td>Dec 1866 - Dec 1869</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Charles Steedman</td>
<td>Dec 1869 - Sept 1872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE Enoch G. Parrott</td>
<td>Sept 1872 - Oct 1873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE Edward T. Nichols</td>
<td>Oct 1873 - Oct 1876</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Start Date - End Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE Foxhall A. Parker, Jr.</td>
<td>Oct 1876 - June 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE William F. Spicer</td>
<td>June 1878 - Nov 1878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE George M. Ransom</td>
<td>Feb 1879 - Feb 1882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE Oscar C. Badger</td>
<td>Feb 1882 - Apr 1885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Louis A. Kimberly</td>
<td>Apr 1885 - Mar 1887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE William P. McCann</td>
<td>June 1887 - May 1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Thomas O. Selfridge</td>
<td>May 1890 - July 1893</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Joseph Fyffe</td>
<td>July 1893 - July 1894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE Joseph N. Miller</td>
<td>Aug 1894 - May 1897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Henry L. Howison</td>
<td>May 1897 - Mar 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Henry F. Picking</td>
<td>Mar 1899 - Sept 1899</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM William T. Sampson</td>
<td>Oct 1899 - Aug 1901</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Mortimer L. Johnson</td>
<td>Oct 1901 - June 1904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM George F. F. Wilde</td>
<td>June 1904 - Feb 1905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Albert S. Snow</td>
<td>Feb 1905 - Nov 1907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM William Swift</td>
<td>Nov 1907 - Dec 1909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM John C. Fremont</td>
<td>Dec 1909 - Mar 1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT DeWitt Coffman</td>
<td>Mar 1911 - Nov 1914</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPT William R. Rush</td>
<td>Nov 1914 - July 1919</td>
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<tr>
<td>RADM Samuel S. Robison</td>
<td>July 1919 - May 1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Albert Gleaves</td>
<td>May 1921 - Dec 1921</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Henry A. Wiley</td>
<td>Dec 1921 - June 1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Louis R. de Steiguer</td>
<td>June 1923 - Oct 1925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Philip Andrews</td>
<td>Oct 1925 - June 1930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Louis M. Nulton</td>
<td>June 1930 - June 1933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Henry M. Hough</td>
<td>June 1933 - Jan 1935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Walter R. Gherardi</td>
<td>June 1935 - July 1938</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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-240-
# LIST OF COMMANDANTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Dates</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RADM William T. Tarrant</td>
<td>July 1938 - July 1942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Wilson Brown</td>
<td>July 1942 - Jan 1943</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Robert A. Theobald</td>
<td>Feb 1943 - Oct 1944</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Felix X. Gygax</td>
<td>Oct 1944 - Nov 1945</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMMODORE Adrian R. Marron</td>
<td>Nov 1945 - Nov 1946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM Wesley McL. Hague</td>
<td>Nov 1946 - June 1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RADM R. Morgan Watt, Jr.</td>
<td>June 1949 - Dec 1950</td>
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<tr>
<td>RADM Philip W. Snyder</td>
<td>Feb 1954 - June 1955</td>
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<tr>
<td>RADM William E. Howard, Jr.</td>
<td>June 1955 - June 1959</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Fred L. Ruhlman</td>
<td>June 1959 - Sept 1960</td>
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<tr>
<td>RADM William A. Brockett</td>
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<td>RADM Frank C. Jones</td>
<td>June 1962 - July 1966</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPT Stuart C. Jones</td>
<td>July 1966 - Aug 1968</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAPT Russel L. Arthur</td>
<td>Aug 1972 - July 1974</td>
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## Commandants of the First Naval District

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<td>RADM John J. Read</td>
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<td>RADM C. F. Goodrich</td>
<td>Sept 1903 - July 1904</td>
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<td>RADM William W. Mead</td>
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<td>RADM G. A. Bicknell</td>
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<td>RADM Edwin Moore</td>
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<td>CAPT Frank Wilner</td>
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<td>RADM Charles Rogers</td>
<td>Aug 1911 - May 1914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPT Thomas Snowden</td>
<td>Jan 1915 - Feb 1915</td>
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LIST OF COMMANDANTS

CAPT William R. Rush
RADM Spencer Wood
RADM Herbert Dunn
RADM Albert Gleaves
RADM Henry A. Wiley
RADM Louis R. de Steiguer
RADM Philip Andrews
RADM Louis M. Nulton
RADM Henry M. Hough
RADM Walter R. Gherardi
RADM William T. Tarrant
RADM Wilson Brown
RADM Robert A. Theobald
RADM Felix X. Gygax
RADM Morton L. Deyo
RADM Hewlett Thebaud
RADM John L. McCrea
RADM Charles B. Momsen
RADM Joseph Harold Wellings
RADM John A. Snackenberg
RADM Carl F. Espe
RADM Joseph Harold Wellings
RADM A. H. Taylor
RADM W. M. Beakey
CAPT Blish C. Hills
RADM W. B. Sieglaff
RADM Means Johnston, Jr.

Feb 1915 - Feb 1918
Feb 1918 - Apr 1919
Apr 1919 - May 1921
May 1921 - Dec 1921
Dec 1921 - June 1923
June 1923 - Oct 1925
Oct 1925 - June 1930
June 1930 - June 1933
June 1933 - Jan 1935
June 1935 - July 1938
July 1938 - July 1942
July 1942 - Jan 1943
Feb 1943 - Oct 1944
Oct 1944 - Apr 1946
Apr 1946 - July 1949
July 1949 - Feb 1952
Feb 1952 - June 1953
June 1953 - June 1954
June 1954 - Aug 1954
Aug 1954 - Apr 1958
May 1958 - Apr 1962
Apr 1962 - Apr 1963
Apr 1963 - Sept 1963
Sept 1963 - Dec 1963
Dec 1963 - Jan 1964
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<td>RADM R. R. Hedges</td>
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## APPENDIX 2

**URBAN UNSKILLED HOURLY WAGE IN AMERICA, 1816-1973**

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<td>1935</td>
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APPENDIX 3

REFRESHMENT LISTS, 1920

The invoices which follow contain lists of items purchased by the navy from Fabian Calderon for use at functions hosted by Commandant Samuel S. Robison at the Commandants House in July and September 1920 in honor of visiting foreign naval officers. They are reproduced from Personnel--Officers, Robison, 1920, in Record Group 181 at the National Archives--Boston Branch.
Charlestown, Mass.,
22 July 1920,

U.S. Navy Department, Sr.

To: Dahlan Califfen

2 cases grapefruit ........................................ $14.60
4 doz. oranges ............................................. 2.60
100 lbs. peaches .......................................... 1.96
100 lbs. pears ............................................. 2.89
100 lbs. apples ............................................ 2.90
100 lbs. pineapple ......................................... 1.70
3 cases grapes .............................................. 1.20
1 case strawberries ....................................... 16.20
1 doz. lettuce ............................................. 1.80
1 cantaloupe ............................................... 1.20
45 lbs. Almond ............................................ 9.75
6 qts. olives (quenas) .................................... 6.70
3 cases saltines crackers .................................. 2.70
4 leaf bread ................................................ 1.50
5 doz. hot, cold water .................................... 4.60
2 grapes ................................................... 9.20
3 cases, heavy cream ...................................... 8.25
200 lbs. rock salt ......................................... 2.00
1 case ...................................................... 14.70
2 doz. lemons ............................................... 3.99
2 eggs ....................................................... 1.29
2 qts. salad oil .......................................... 4.60
1 bbl. vinegar ............................................. 1.25
10 lbs. mustard ........................................... 1.15
1 bbl. tea .................................................. 1.90
25 lbs. sugar ............................................... 5.50
500 lbs. ice ............................................... 3.60
400 cigarettes ............................................... 2.50
4 cans pears ............................................... 1.12
8 peaches .................................................. 5.00
8 pkgs. matches ........................................... 4.90
200 napkins ................................................ 1.20
4 lbs. meat ............................................... 1.60
1 box glasses ............................................. 2.20

Flowers .................................................... 5.20

Material and services satisfactory.

CENTRAL FILES

S.S. Robinson,
Rear Admiral, U.S.N.
Commander.
For provisions furnished in connection with Commandant's luncheons given to Foreign Officers 1 September 20.

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<th>Item</th>
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<td>27</td>
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<td>&quot; celery</td>
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<td>Pts. potatoes</td>
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<td>Napkins</td>
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<td>.90</td>
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Total: $88.76

Certified correct and just - payment not received.

Yabian Calderon.

Material and services satisfactory.

S.S. Hobson,
Rear Admiral, U.S.N.,
Commandant.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. Unpublished Sources


Record Group 181, Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments, provided significant source material for this paper. Data related to the Charlestown Navy Yard and the First Naval District are housed in the Boston Branch of the National Archives in Waltham, Massachusetts. Records from 1925 onward are organized according to the system outlined in the Navy File Manual. Records prior to 1925 are organized in a variety of ways, both chronologically and thematically. Use of a finding aid is essential to access pertinent information from these earlier records. A working copy of the finding aid is now available at the Waltham center: Stanley P. Tozeski, "Descriptive Inventory for Record Group 181 (Boston Naval Shipyard and Headquarters First Naval District)," Waltham, Mass., 1985. Since this finding aid was not available when the research was done for this report, discrepancies may exist between the categories cited in footnotes and those listed in the finding aid. However, Mr. Tozeski has informed this writer that original categories were generally maintained when the finding aid was developed.


Doyle, Lucy. 27 April 1978.
Padis, Athena. 22 April 1980.
Rumble, Rear Admiral Richard. 15 April 1980.
Welling, Rear Admiral and Mrs. Joseph. 12 March 1981.

C. Other Unpublished Sources


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Preble, George H. "History of the Boston Navy Yard, 1797-1874." Boston, 1875.


II. Published Sources

A. Newspapers and Periodicals

Boston Columbian Centinel, 1 June 1812, 2-9 July 1817, 25-28 August 1824, 26 June 1833.


Boston Record American, 18 October 1968.

Gleason's Pictorial Drawing Room Companion, 18 September 1852.

Quincy Patriot Ledger, 18 October 1968.

B. Other Published Sources


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