

**FINAL FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT  
FOR DESIGNATION OF  
ROSIE THE RIVETER MEMORIAL AS  
A NATIONAL PARK SYSTEM AREA**

**Prepared by: Planning and Partnership Team  
Pacific Great Basin Support Office  
Pacific West Region  
National Park Service**

**June, 2000**



Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front Feasibility Study



October 17, 1943—Launching day of the U.S.S. "Pocatello," Richmond.  
(Richmond Museum of History)

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(Photograph not included in this pdf version)

The 5000<sup>th</sup> B-17 Bomber built at Boeing in Seattle in 1944. (Alfred Eisenstaedt-Pix)

(Photograph not included in this pdf version)

Shift change at the Richmond Shipyards, ca. 1942–1944, showing the incredible diversity of age, race, and gender among local defense workers. 1992. (Oakland Museum of California — Dorothea Lange Collection)

**FEASIBILITY STUDY REPORT  
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**HIGHLIGHTS**

**STUDY AUTHORIZATION:** P.L.105-355 Sec. 505. Rosie the Riveter National Park Service Affiliated Site, sponsored by Representative George Miller, directed the National Park Service to complete a feasibility study within six months to determine whether:

- (A) Rosie the Riveter Park located in Richmond, California, is suitable for designation as an NPS affiliated site.
- (B) the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Committee established by the City of Richmond, California, is eligible for NPS technical assistance for interpretive functions related to the park, including the preservation of oral histories from former workers at the Richmond Kaiser Shipyards.

**FINDINGS:** The National Park Service Study Team found that the collection of historic structures and sites in Richmond is nationally significant; ideally this finding would be confirmed through the National Historic Landmark process. While no individual structures have been determined as yet to meet national significance standards through the national historic landmark process, the study team found that taken together, the collection of sites and structures are an outstanding collection of this resource type. The study team further found that the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park is most appropriate for inclusion and interpretation as a part of the larger historic district. It cannot stand alone as an affiliated area.

Richmond, California played a highly significant role during the Home Front years from 1940–1946 and still has many original structures in place. Richmond had the nation’s largest shipbuilding operation, 55 other war industries, one of the largest public housing programs. Many related innovative industrial processes and employee services were initiated during the war years in partnerships between the Federal Government, City, industrialist Henry J. Kaiser, industries and businesses, labor unions.

The World War II Home Front was a significant chapter in America’s history that engaged Americans in winning World War II in a manner that has been unequalled since. The changes to society and industry had sweeping and lasting impacts on the nation. The changes wrought by the Home Front in rapid industrialization and migration and resettlement were most significant for the Pacific Coast states, especially in California.

The World War II Home Front is not yet adequately represented and interpreted in the National Park System. Richmond offers the best opportunity for a civilian

**(vs. military) Home Front site in the Pacific Coast states and may be the most logical site nationally. Its Home Front experience is nationally recognized and well-documented. It has a critical mass of intact historic structures. These structures are mostly in public ownership and accessible. The City of Richmond is very supportive of the potential designation of a National Park Service unit and is willing to commit to a partnership with the National Park Service.**

**Designation of a National Park Service unit in Richmond offers the opportunity to link together other representative Home Front sites across the United States to more completely interpret the breadth of the World War II Home Front experience and provide quality educational opportunities.**

**National designation would be a significant catalyst to make the World War II Home Front and Rosie the Riveter a unifying theme for the waterfront and City, attract national and international visitors, and serve as a national education center on these important themes.**

**The opportunity to pursue this more complete recognition of the significance of the World War II Home Front in America's history merits a sense of urgency for two reasons. First, the survivors who worked on the Home Front are in their seventies, eighties, and nineties. Their contribution and sacrifice should be recognized in their lifetime. Second, the strong economy is accelerating pressures to redevelop real estate and surviving structures and artifacts are at risk.**

**Five nationally-noted World War II Home Front historians and academicians have gone on record through their letters in support for establishing a World War II Home Front National Historical Park in Richmond, CA. See Attachment E.**

**This study found that it is suitable and feasible to designate the collection of theme-related sites in Richmond as a National Historical Park to commemorate the broader World War II Home Front theme as well as Rosie the Riveter and the role that everyone played in the Home Front workforce.**

**RECOMMENDATION: The National Park Service recommends Alternative III, to authorize the establishment of Rosie the Riveter / World War II Home Front National Historical Park, and a study of the feasibility and methodology of how additional sites could be included in or linked to the National Historical Park to adequately interpret the breadth and complexity of America's World War II Home Front experience.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### STUDY AUTHORIZATION

Public Law 105-355 Section 505 directed the National Park Service to complete a Special Resource Study to determine whether:

- (A) Rosie the Riveter Park located in Richmond, California is suitable for designation as a National Park Service Affiliated site.
- (B) The Rosie the Riveter Memorial Committee established by the City of Richmond, California, is eligible for National Park Service technical assistance for interpretive functions related to the park, including preservation of oral histories from former workers at the Richmond Kaiser Shipyards.

### CRITERIA

To be eligible as an affiliated area, a resource must meet the same standards of national significance that apply to units of the National Park System. A resource is considered nationally significant if it: 1) is an outstanding example of a particular type of resource, 2) possesses exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the national or cultural themes of our Nation's heritage, 3) offers superlative opportunities for recreation, public use and enjoyment or for scientific study; and 4) retains a high degree of integrity as a true, accurate, and relatively unspoiled example of the resource. Two additional criteria are recognized in evaluating affiliated areas: suitability and feasibility. To be suitable and feasible as an affiliate the area must need some special recognition or technical assistance beyond what is available through existing National Park Service programs, document that a cooperative arrangement with the National Park Service and contributions from other sources will be adequate to assure long-term protection of the resource, and be able to establish and continue a standard of maintenance, operations, public service, and financial accountability consistent with requirements applicable to National Park System units.

To be eligible as a new unit of the National Park System, an area must be nationally significant, suitable and feasible for administration by the Park Service, and other alternatives for protection and public enjoyment must not be adequate. The criteria for national significance are the same as those described for affiliated areas, above. The criteria for suitability include that the area represents a natural or cultural theme or type of recreational resource that is not already adequately represented in the National Park System or is not comparably represented and protected for public enjoyment by another land-managing entity. The criteria for feasibility include that the natural systems and/or historic settings must be of sufficient size and appropriate configuration to ensure long-term protection of the resources and to accommodate public use. It must have potential for efficient administration at a reasonable cost. Important feasibility factors include landownership, acquisition costs, access, threats to the resource, and staff or development requirements.

## **STUDY CONCLUSIONS**

The National Park Service Study Team found that the collection of historic structures and sites in Richmond is nationally significant; ideally this finding would be confirmed through the National Historic Landmark process. While the National Historic Landmark process has not yet been undertaken, the study team found that taken together, the collection of sites and structures are an outstanding collection of this resource type. The study team further found that the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Park is most appropriate for inclusion and interpretation as a part of the larger historic district. It cannot stand alone as an affiliated area.

The National Park Service Study Team found that the collection of historic sites in Richmond can effectively support interpretation of the breadth and national significance of the story of Rosie the Riveter and the World War II Home Front: mobilization for war and its sweeping social and economic changes. The Study Team also concluded that the larger collection of historic sites meets National Park Service standards for suitability and feasibility for a National Historical Park, and therefore the Park Service recommends Alternative III, Rosie the Riveter National Historical Park.

## **NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STORY, AND THE SITES**

The World War II Home Front was a significant chapter in America's history that engaged Americans in winning World War II in a manner that has been unequalled since. The changes to society and industry had sweeping and lasting impacts on the entire nation. The issues of women going to work in skilled and high paying jobs within industrial plants; women going to work in great numbers; resettlement and immigration and the struggle to provide housing and basic services overnight; women carrying the family responsibilities; children going to day care; early health care for workers and families; integration of the work force and the intervention by government to support that integration; and, finally this new work force being abruptly returned to unemployment, or underemployment, and the impact of these families remaining in a community like Richmond, all combine to create a supremely significant story in American history. The associated story of the cooperation of government, private industry, and the unions to mobilize the work force, and the creation of innovative plants and production methods designed to rapidly supply the war effort, is also a significant story in the history of our country. Other important themes include life on the Home Front and the aftermath of the war.

The historic sites in Richmond are an outstanding collection of related sites that were built for the war effort that remain intact. The Richmond site today includes the following: the Atchison Village worker housing; the Maritime Child Development Center and the Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center, day care centers for the workers' children; and the Kaiser Permanente Hospital built for the workers; the site for early managed health care for workers and their families. Further, the Richmond Fire Station No. 67A, built to serve the Richmond Kaiser Shipyards, still exists. Structures built for

World War II war production that support interpretation include, in Richmond Shipyard #3, the Machine Shop, General Warehouse, Sheet Metal Shop, First-Aid Station, and Cafeteria, and five graving/dry docks. The Ford Assembly Building was converted to war production and remains. The Oil House next to the Ford Assembly Building adds to the historic scene. An additional significant historical resource are the Whirley or “Whirling” cranes that moved back and forth on rails 32 feet apart, and lifted and moved large prefabricated ship sections and gear into place, and sometimes worked in unison to support even greater prefabrication systems. The massive Pre Assembly Building also remains in Shipyard # 2. This collection of structures possesses exceptional value in illustrating and providing the support for interpretation of a transcendent story of our country’s heritage. The collection of structures and sites in Richmond has integrity to support this story. These findings will be further documented by proceeding with designation for National Historic Landmark status. Additional structures will be identified in a survey of historic buildings underway by the City of Richmond.

Five World War II Home Front historians and academicians have gone on record through their letters in support of establishing a National Historical Park in Richmond to tell the stories of the World War II Home Front.

#### **SUITABILITY FOR A NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**

The World War II Home Front stories are suitable for a National Historical Park because this is an overarching story of American history that is not the primary focus of existing National Park System units. Aspects of the World War II stories are a part of several existing System units including the Charlestown Navy Yard, where the World War II years were a small part of the sites of the yard’s 174-year history. A new World War II memorial has been dedicated by the President in Washington DC which will commemorate the war effort, but not have the historic resources to interpret the story. Springfield Armory and Lowell National Historical Park refer to the World War II mobilization effort, but it is not a significant focus of either site. State and private sites will be studied in the Theme Study.

#### **FEASIBILITY FOR A NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**

Important feasibility considerations for this study include size, configuration, costs, ownership and accessibility.

The Richmond site has the collection of historic structures to support a National Historical Park, but only if the significant historical structures can be protected, managed to the standards of the Department of the Interior, and made accessible to the public for interpretation. It will also be important to preserve the overall sense and scene of the area during World War II, including preserving /interpreting the building footprints for structures that have been removed. The study found that it is feasible for certain sites and structures to be included within the boundary of a new NPS unit only if the role for NPS is carefully defined to include interpretation at the historic sites, the memorials, and along the Bay Trail; and technical assistance regarding preservation of

the historic sites. The potential costs for restoring and adaptively reusing large industrial facilities, especially in light of the liability for hazardous wastes, are important constraints against ownership and management for the Park Service.

Management of the area is key to supporting a National Historical Park. Development threatens the area, and also provides opportunities for reuse of the interiors of the structures, while supporting the considerable expense of restoring and maintaining the exterior facades of the industrial buildings. However, it is not feasible for the National Park Service to acquire, manage, and/or retain the massive structures nor the open spaces, parks, trails, and memorials. These costs are not feasible because of competing needs for funding from already existing units of the Park System. A partnership between the Park Service and the City of Richmond and private developers can preserve the area to support this designation as a National Historical Park.

The Richmond site is feasible because it is accessible. Some sites might limit or prohibit public access because they are ongoing Defense Department installations requiring security. Some sites have continued on their corporate path of operation and may not be accessible because of corporate security, safety, or liability concerns. Richmond sites still exist, but are now or will be in other uses that permit public access. Proposed development for new uses such as residences and retail can, when carefully planned and designed, retain the historic exteriors and make the area more accessible to visitors.

Richmond has retained exemplary resources in part because Shipyard # 3 was built to be a permanent facility, while most structures were intended to be temporary to last only through the war years.

Richmond also stands out as a site that has actively worked to clean up the pollutants left by manufacturing. Brownfield conversion enabled the Marina Bay residential development on the former site of Shipyard #2. Participation by the National Park Service is feasible only if the National Park Service is not responsible for cleanup efforts, or the liability attached to waste sites.

Alternative transportation systems make the site available to residents throughout the Bay Area, and as well the many visitors to the Bay Area coming either on vacation or for work. The Bay Trail runs alongside the waterfront historic sites, and when completed, will make those sites accessible by walking and bicycling from San Francisco and communities all around the Bay. These sites are close to the Bay Area Rapid Transit System and bus line connections. In addition, ferry service has recently been initiated between the Richmond waterfront, close to the Ford Assembly Building, and downtown San Francisco.

## MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

**Alternative I: No Action.** Continue the status quo. Richmond would complete and dedicate the Rosie the Riveter Memorial: Honoring American Women's Labor During World War II. The City may provide some interpretation at the Ford Assembly Building.

The impact of no action is that the larger story and fuller understanding and appreciation by the visitor might be lost. There are existing sites that could be linked on the internet, but there might be less incentive to link the story to actual sites across the country for visitors to go and see, and to attract to the site scholars and visitors to explore this story and its meaning to our society. There might be a lessened interest in taking on the preservation of either the massive industrial structures, or the smaller structures telling the story of the social changes.

**Alternative II: The Rosie the Riveter Memorial is designated as an Affiliated Area.** Affiliated sites must possess resources that have national significance and the resources must have historic integrity to support interpretation of the story. Affiliated sites must also have suitability, including national significance of a story that is not adequately preserved and interpreted elsewhere. Affiliated sites must also be feasible to manage to the Standards of the Secretary of the Interior. And, most affiliated sites are not managed by the National Park Service; they are managed by an organization with whom the National Park Service has a formal cooperative relationship. The National Park Service finds that the story of Rosie the Riveter is of national significance, and warrants being interpreted to the public. The memorial to Rosie, the proposed affiliated site, will commemorate the story, but is not historic. If the designation is limited to an affiliated site for the Rosie the Riveter Memorial, it would be appropriate for another organization to manage the site.

The expected impacts of designating the Rosie Memorial as an affiliated site might include loss of the historic structures available in Richmond to show and tell this enormous story that engulfed the population left at home during World War II. If the supporting historic structures are not protected to tell this story, they may be lost to intensifying development activity in Richmond. Structures may either be demolished, or greatly altered for their reuse so that they can no longer support the interpretation of this story.

**Alternative III: Rosie the Riveter / World War II Home Front National Historical Park.** The collection of sites in Richmond would be preserved, managed, and interpreted in partnership. The National Park Service would provide interpretive exhibits outlining the larger story and its context, and also interpretation at related sites, which could include wayside exhibits, guided tours, and tours of the sites and building interiors, as appropriate and feasible. The Park Service could develop and coordinate an education center to further tell this story and link up other Home Front sites around the country.

The Rosie the Riveter Trust could manage oral histories of the workers still living, including the interviews and the maintenance of the collection, and cooperate with

interpretation. Additional cooperative efforts would be identified in the General Management Plan.

The City of Richmond, working with public and private partners, would need to preserve and manage the large industrial sites, including the facades of the historic structures they own in Shipyard #3: Cafeteria, First Aid Station, General Warehouse, Sheet Metal Shop, and Machine Shop. The City of Richmond also owns the Ford Assembly Building, and the Oil House next to it. The City owns Fire Station 67A. The City of Richmond has developed preservation zoning, and could preserve the historic structures through this zoning, while the City owns the structures. If the structures are sold, preservation easements or preservation covenants in the deeds, or some other mechanism, could protect the facades of the industrial buildings to the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Preservation. Additional historic structures may be identified in the study now being undertaken by the City of Richmond.

Other historic structures important to interpreting the story include Atchison Housing, the two child development centers, and the Kaiser Permanente Field Hospital. Contra Costa County owns the two child development centers. The Park Service could provide technical assistance with preservation, and interpretation.

The S. S. Red Oak Victory ship is being restored by the Richmond Museum of History Association and will add to the interpretation of the story. It will not be feasible for the Park Service to assist in its restoration, maintenance, or management, or operations, but the Service could assist with interpretation and technical assistance.

The Park Service could provide interpretation at associated sites including the Shimada Friendship Park, the Liberty Ship Monument at Barbara and Jay Vincent Park, the Rosie the Riveter Memorial, Lucretia W. Edwards Park, and along the Bay Trail promenade, but the city would maintain these sites and memorials.

**REPORT FINDING: This study found that it is suitable and feasible to designate the collection of theme-related sites in Richmond as a National Historical Park to commemorate the broader World War II Home Front theme as well as Rosie the Riveter and the role that everyone played in the Home Front workforce.**

**REPORT RECOMMENDATION: The National Park Service recommends Alternative III, to authorize the establishment of Rosie the Riveter / World War II Home Front National Historical Park, and a study of the feasibility and methodology of how additional sites could be included in or linked to the National Historical Park to adequately interpret the breadth and complexity of America's World War II Home Front experience.**

(Photograph not included in this pdf version)

Richmond Shipyard welding crew : A multi-ethnic workforce was recruited from across the country. (Private Collection)

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**LOCATION**

The Rosie The Riveter Memorial cited in the legislation below will be constructed in Marina Park in the City of Richmond, California in the north San Francisco Bay Area approximately 20 miles by car from San Francisco. The Memorial will be constructed on the former site of Richmond Kaiser Shipyard #2, which was built to produce Liberty and Victory ships needed for World War II. See Map 1.

**STUDY AUTHORIZATION**

P.L. 105-355 of November 6, 1998. Sec. 505. Rosie The Riveter National Park Service Affiliated Site, sponsored by Representative George Miller, (Attachment F) directed the National Park Service to complete a feasibility study within six months to determine whether:

- (A) Rosie the Riveter Park located in Richmond, California, is suitable for designation as an NPS affiliated site.
- (B) the Rosie the Riveter Memorial Committee established by the City of Richmond, California, is eligible for NPS technical assistance for interpretive functions related to the park, including the preservation of oral histories from former workers at the Richmond Kaiser Shipyards.

**BACKGROUND — THE ROSIE THE RIVETER / WORLD WAR II HOME FRONT EXPERIENCE**

Coming out of the Great Depression, America held back from entering World War II until the attack on Pearl Harbor. The next day, December 8, 1941, America declared war on Japan, Germany, and Italy and joined the global conflict. Once engaged, the commitment to win the war fully involved the American people. Now-retired Lt. Gen. Stanley R. Larson observed, "The one thing about World War II is, nobody ever had to be told why we were fighting. We *had* to win; we *had* to stop those guys." Studs Terkel referred to it as "the Good War," a phrase frequently used by the generation who fought in World War II because there was little ambivalence about the necessity for America's involvement to insure victory and restore world peace.

The Home Front industrial buildup in Richmond, California and across America to strengthen U.S. military capability and eventually to win World War II started in early 1941 with the Lend Lease Program to re-supply Britain, which was already at war and losing ships and planes. In the first year of America's entry to World War II, the U.S.



(SPOT Image Corporation, UTM, NAD27, 1:100,000m)

**Map 1 — Location of the Rosie the Riveter Memorial and Potential Rosie the Riveter / World War II Home Front National Historical Park in the San Francisco Bay Area.**

\* White box show s location of the various sites to be considered.

Navy was losing ships faster than they could be built. In the 1930s America had launched only 23 ships. In 1940, it took 14 months to build a typical cargo ship. By 1945, it was being done in eight weeks.

Four shipyards were built in rapid succession in Richmond beginning in early 1941 and completed by 1942. Employment at the Richmond Shipyards peaked at 90,000 and, along with the rest of the defense industry buildup, forced a national recruitment and migration of workers and integration of the work force that was unprecedented in its magnitude and impact.

As America went to war, its people fought overseas on the battle fronts and pitched in on the home front. Ten million people departed the civilian workplace for active military service. Industry, challenged to undertake a massive overnight buildup, aggressively began recruiting and training an effective workforce from the population left behind.

“Rosie the Riveter” was a propaganda phrase coined to help recruit female civilian workers and came to symbolize a workforce that was mobilized to fill the gap. “Wendy the Welder” was another less glamorized icon, who in real life was Janet Doyle, a welder in the Richmond Shipyards. After some initial resistance from employers, women replaced men in many traditionally male stateside jobs to support World War II Home Front production efforts as men enlisted in active military service. People of color encountered more lengthy resistance, but ultimately were brought into the Home Front workforce. Rosie the Riveter has survived as the most remembered icon of the civilian work force that helped win World War II and has a powerful resonance in the women’s movement.

The four Richmond Shipyards, built by industrialist Henry J. Kaiser’s Firm, comprised one of many industrial complexes built to support America’s role in World War II. These four shipyards employed 90,000, including tens of thousands of women of all ages and backgrounds. In Richmond, these women helped build 747 ships in record time for use by the United States Navy and Merchant Marine. Their labor marked an unprecedented entry into jobs never before performed by women and played a critical role in increasing American productivity to meet the demand for ships to overturn the German and Japanese strategy to defeat the U.S. Navy.

Nationwide six million women entered the World War II Home Front workforce. The employment opportunities for black women and other women of color were unprecedented. African Americans, Asians, Hispanics and Native Americans were eventually employed for the first time to work side by side with whites in specialized, high-paying jobs previously unavailable to them. Women and people of color earned more money than they ever had and mastered job skills that had been solely performed by white men up to that point.

Many of the Home Front industries were set up at the nexus of railroad lines and harbors where materials could be assembled and shipped overseas. Richmond was



The government and industry launched a full-fledged public awareness campaign to attract workers for Home Front jobs to win the war.

