

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 25 1979

DATE ENTERED

Approved 9/26/79

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

C. A. Thayer (Schooner)

AND/OR COMMON

C. A. Thayer

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Foot of Hyde Street

Hyde Street Pier, San Francisco Maritime Park.

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fifth

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

San Francisco

CODE

075

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT

☐ BUILDING(S)

☒ STRUCTURE

☐ SITE

☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC

☐ PRIVATE

☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☐ OCCUPIED

☒ UNOCCUPIED

☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE

☐ COMMERCIAL

☐ EDUCATIONAL

☐ ENTERTAINMENT

☐ GOVERNMENT

☐ INDUSTRIAL

☐ MILITARY

☒ MUSEUM

☒ PARK

☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

☐ RELIGIOUS

☐ SCIENTIFIC

☐ TRANSPORTATION

☐ OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

National Park Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Avenue, Box 36063

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

STATE

California 94102

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

N/A

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings

DATE

1965

☒ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

National Park Service
Washington Office

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT

☒ GOOD

☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☐ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1895 of native Douglas Fir, the C. A. Thayer is a wooden-hulled, three masted sailing schooner. The Thayer is 156 feet long at the waterline and has a beam of 36 feet, 8 inches. With net tonnage at 391 tons, the Thayer draws a gross tonnage of 452 tons.

Constructed for use as a lumber schooner, the Thayer was built with one hold which ran the length of the ship and was comprised of the entire inner hull. In later years, when the ship was used in the codfishing trade, a foc'sle was built in the hold. It still remains and encompasses approximately one quarter of the hold.

The Thayer has been restored to her original 1895 appearance, with the exception of the foc'sle. She is presently on exhibit at the Hyde Street Pier in San Francisco.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Hans Ditley Bendixsen

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The C. A. Thayer is the last surviving example afloat of 122 sailing schooners especially designed for use in the 19th century Pacific Coast lumber trade. For many years the only practicable way to ship the lumber products of the northern California redwood forests was by sea, and most of the sawmills were built on or very near the coast. Fogs, strong winds, rocks, and powerful currents plagued the navigator, and most shipping points were mere "dog-holes", slight indentations in a rocky coast, where ships had to anchor close to shore and load by chutes, lighters, or cables. These conditions quickly gave rise to a fleet of small sailing schooners capable of maneuvering in difficult locations that did yoemen service in the redwood lumber trade until gradually replaced by the steam schooner.

Typical of these Pacific Coast sail lumber carriers is the C. A. Thayer. In recognition of the C. A. Thayer's national significance, the ship was made a National Historic Landmark on November 13, 1966, and was subsequently placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This form is submitted as a documentation of the C. A. Thayer's condition, historical background, and significance.

Historical Summary

The schooner C. A. Thayer was built by Hans Ditley Bendixsen at Fairhaven, on Humboldt Bay, in 1895. She was large for a three-masted schooner, measuring 452 tons, with a length of 156', beam of 36' and 11'8" depth of hold, and was designed to carry 575,000 board feet of lumber--about half of it on deck. Despite her size, a small crew could work the handy, bald-headed rig: altogether she represented the highest development of the new economical coastal lumber carrier.

The new schooner was named for Clarence A. Thayer, secretary of the E. K. Wood Lumber Company, of San Francisco. The E. K. Wood Company was managing owner of the vessel, though it owned but a 1/16 interest in her; as was common practice at the time, the builder, interested investors, and the master, owned shares.

C. W. Lileqvist was the first captain of the Thayer, and under his command she earned the reputation of being a "smart" sailing vessel, capable of making fast passages. About 1901, Ole Monsen became master of her when Captain Lileqvist "moved up" to E. K. Wood's new four-poster Fearless; "Gus" Peterson, then Fred Scott, subsequently commanded the Thayer during the next decade.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

San Francisco Maritime Museum: The Schooner C. A. Thayer (6 volumes), San Francisco S. F. Maritime Museum, 1960.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY N/A

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,0 5,5,0 9,6,0 4,1 8,4 6,6,0
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The area of the ship.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE James P. Delgado, Historian, Western Region

Gordon S. Chappell, Regional Historian, Western Region

ORGANIZATION

National Park Service, Western Region

DATE

June 30, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

450 Golden Gate Ave., Box 36063

TELEPHONE

415-556-4165

CITY OR TOWN

San Francisco

STATE

California 94102

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

MAY 9 1979

YES ☒

NO ☐

NONE ☐

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National ☒ National ☐ State ☐ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

F. R. Holland

TITLE

Asst. Director, Cultural Resources

DATE

7/18/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

William H. Blackburn

DATE

9-20-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

9-11-79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Designed primarily for coastwise work, the Thayer regularly sailed from the Hoquiam, Washington mill of E. K. Wood Company to their yard at San Francisco or to Southern California. But the E. K. Wood Company also supplied lumber to Guaymas, Honolulu, and Levuka (Fiji), and the Thayer made frequent offshore passages.

Like most of her sisters, the Thayer was considered a "good berth" by seamen, for the coastwise ships were notable feeders, and wages were \$35.00 a month--a princely sum as compared to that which deepwater traders offered. Four able seamen, a carpenter or donkeyman, and the cook made up the normal crew; the afterguard consisted of two mates and the master--and frequently the master's wife.

Altogether, the C. A. Thayer was typical of the scores of sailing lumber carriers which linked the forests and mills of the northwest with the builders of San Francisco and Los Angeles. By 1910, with the rapid development of the wooden steam schooner, the Thayer was already becoming a marginal, "old-fashioned" carrier. In 1960, she was an almost unique antique.

The last voyage of the C. A. Thayer for the E. K. Wood Lumber Company began on January 5, 1912, when she sailed from Grays Harbor with a cargo of lumber for San Francisco. Captain Fred Scott, his wife, and seven men made up the ship's complement.

Two days later, the vessel began to "open up" from the strains of heavy weather. During the succeeding week, the leaks became more and more threatening: as the donkey boiler consumed the entire ship's fresh water supply, the steam pump was shut down and the crew turned to hand pumps. The hand pumps had broken down and the Thayer was in sinking condition when she was sighted by the coastwise steamer President some twenty miles off the Humboldt Bar on the evening of the 13th.

The master of the President reported the Thayer's distress by wireless, and continued his voyage, confident that a tug would soon appear from Eureka. But the tug was bar-bound by heavy seas, and the Thayer seemed in a fair way of coming to her end almost within sight of her birthplace.

When the steam schooner J. B. Stetson appeared in the morning of the 14th, the Thayer was floating on her deckload of lumber. The Stetson took the waterlogged schooner in tow and she arrived in the safe waters of San Francisco Bay on the 16th.

E. K. Wood seems to have had enough of the Thayer after this trip. She was laid up in Oakland with a \$9,000 claim against her by the owners of the Stetson when "Whitehead Pete" Nelson bought her to use as a transport for his Alaskan salmon saltery.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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Peter M. Nelson had started a small saltery on the Igushik River, which empties into Nushagak Bay in Western Alaska, in 1902, and by 1912, he was an important factor in this minor industry. In that year he was doing well enough to buy the C. A. Thayer and to build a second saltery on the Igushik; the next year he built a station at Squaw Creek, on the estuary of the Ivichak River, which proved most successful. The C. A. Thayer served these salteries from 1912 to 1924, carrying supplies north from San Francisco in the spring and returning the summer's pack to market in the fall.

Bristol Bay, which in Peter Nelson's time contained the world's most valuable fishery, is 3,500 miles from San Francisco. Men and all of the supplies for their maintenance and for the pursuit of the fishery had to be transported each spring to this distant and dreary shore from San Francisco or the ports of the Northwest, an operation which employed a large fleet of sailing ships well into the era in which sail had all but disappeared from the seas.

That a sailing vessel used a month in the passage between San Francisco and the anchorage in the Kvichak River was a matter of little moment in the days when a fisherman's time was worth little, for sailing time was consumed before the short fishing season opened, and after it had closed. Hence, vessels like the C. A. Thayer or the Balclutha, representing a small investment, yet large enough to carry a big cargo, provided ideal transport for the industry.

The C. A. Thayer sailed from San Francisco every April for thirteen seasons, lay all summer in the anchorage of Squaw Creek or the Igushik, and returned with the barrelled salmon during September. In the winter, she was laid up in Oakland Creek, and was repaired and refitted in preparation for the next voyage.

Only during the First World War, with the shortage of shipping and consequent high freight rates, did Peter Nelson seek off-season employment for his schooner. In the winter of 1915-1916, and in the three following winters, the Thayer went to Australia, twice with Northwest fir and twice with Mendocino redwood. Returning, she brought coal from Newcastle or copra and hardwood from Sydney. After the 1918-1919 voyage, there was no longer any use for the old schooner in the lumber trade.

The demand for salt salmon, rarely great, declined rapidly as the Emergency Relief period ended in postwar Europe. Poor business and advancing years would probably have led to Peter Nelson's retirement from the Bristol Bay fishery during the middle '20s in any event, but the desire of A. & P. Products Corporation to open a large cannery in Western Alaska was the immediate cause of the termination of his and the Thayer's Alaskan career. A. & P., desiring the Squaw Creek site, bought up the entire Nelson operation early in 1925: Squaw Creek and Igushik salteries, 16 gill-net boats, and the C. A. Thayer.

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The C. A. Thayer was not idled by Peter Nelson's retirement, for before the start of the next fishing season she was purchased by J. E. Shields, part-owner, manager, and salesman for the Pacific Coast Codfish Company of Poulsbo, Washington. He loaded her with salt, a familiar cargo, and she sailed from San Francisco on March 3, 1925, racing to take on her crew and equipment at Seattle in time for an April sailing to the Bering Sea.

The Bering Sea codfishery bore considerable resemblance to the Portuguese Grand Banks fishery of recent years: the distance to the grounds required the use of large vessels, capable of staying a long time on the banks and carrying a large cargo. Speed counted for nothing (unlike the competitive Gloucester fishery), for these vessels were not market boats, but tenders and transports for a six months' cruise. For this reason, old lumber schooners - particularly the three-masters - served as cheap and adequate equipment, and many of the Thayer's sisters survived through the '20s and '30s, sailing out of San Francisco and Puget Sound in search of the North Pacific cod.

The Thayer's first codfishing skipper was the famous Puget Sound old-timer, John Grotle. Under his command, she made seven consecutive voyages, on the last of which, in 1931, she returned with 302,000 fish - the largest catch that an American schooner had brought back from the Bering Sea up to that time.

With the conclusion of the 1931 season, declining prices for salt cod led to laying up the Thayer in Lake Union for the rest of the decade. The big four-master Sophie Christenson carried most of the burden of the Shields' operation during the '30s, and it appeared likely that the Thayer would just rot away betwixt Lake Union's fresh water and the constant Seattle rains.

The U. S. Army bought the decaying Thayer in 1942 for use as a barge in British Columbian and southeastern Alaskan waters. They cut her masts out, pumped money into her rotten stern, removed most of her deckhouse, enlarged her hatches, and in 1945, sold her back to Captain Shields for a pittance. Shields had operated the old Charles R. Wilson during most of the war years and he bought the Sophie Christenson as well as the Thayer back from the army.

He found that he owned (thanks to army work) a fairly sound hull in the Thayer, a generally poor vessel in the Wilson and a reasonably good rig, but poor hull, in the Sophie. With characteristic ingenuity he took out three of the Sophie's sound masts and her bowsprit, and fitted them into the Thayer. Thus, in 1946, the Thayer was ready for another five voyages to the Bering Sea.

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With her three masts out of a topmast schooner (without the topmasts), with iron "extender" bars making up the shortness of the shrouds, with her gaff foresail and main complemented by a leg-of-mutton mizzen, the Thayer was one of the most unattractive three-masted schooners ever to sail from a Pacific port. But the codfish didn't care, and the Thayer sailed to the Bering Sea each season through 1950.

By this time the Thayer was the last operating commercial schooner on the Pacific Coast - a genuine anachronism of the days when sail dominated the seas, when men worked half a year for a few hundred dollars, and when Americans ate salted cod.

In 1943, Karl Kortum, one of several young west coast sailing ship enthusiasts who had voyaged around Cape Horn and the Cape of Good Hope to Australia in the last American square-rigger, formulated the concept of a monument in San Francisco devoted to the preservation of the maritime heritage of the Pacific Slope. This idea included saving a three-masted lumber schooner, a steam schooner, a scow schooner, a riverboat, and a "Cape Horner", together with the preparation of a museum devoted to California's maritime history.

By 1951, San Francisco had its first permanent maritime museum, and four years later, the Balclutha - a full-rigged ship built for the California grain trade - lay in a berth at Fisherman's Wharf. But the fulfillment of the plan called for greater resources than those available to a private historical society or to the City of San Francisco.

At the urging of the Maritime Museum, the California State Legislature, in 1955, appropriated \$200,000 for the purchase and repair of a sailing schooner and a steam schooner. The need to move quickly was becoming apparent, for of the once-numerous fleet of coastwise lumber carriers, unique products of west coast shipbuilders, only two three-masted schooners and one steam schooner survived in repairable condition. And of the two sailing schooners, only the C. A. Thayer could be purchased for a reasonable price.

By the end of 1956, the California State Division of Beaches and Parks had reached agreement with Charles McNeal on a purchase price for the schooner. As had been known, and as a final detailed survey showed, the Thayer was in no condition to be towed to San Francisco "as is", and to the end of preparing the ship for the voyage, the State employed Harold Huycke, a young seaman and maritime historian of notable energy and accomplishments, to act as its representative and to supervise the repair of the vessel. A well-known Seattle marine surveyor, Captain A. F. Raynaud, was retained to assist Mr. Huycke on the technical problems of the refit.

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February 17, 1956, was the date set for removing the Thayer from her gravel coffin in McDaniels Cove. In the words of Harold Huycke:

The last night on Hood Canal was bone-chilling, with snow patches lying amongst the shadows of fallen logs on the nearby hillsides. The shifting crew had cleared up the ship during the day, ready for the arrival of the tug in the early morning hours of Sunday, but now it was too dark to accomplish anything more. Nothing more needed to be done. Stations had been selected, and all but the last two lines to shore had been let go. Fortunately, the weather was calm and clear - the kind that brings low temperatures and chattering teeth. The cove was plunged into darkness as the sun dropped behind the Olympics to the west, leaving a still calm to settle over the scene. No ships had ever remained as close to their origin as had these lumber schooners, shaped from logs and trees of the Pacific forests; loaded with the lumber products of which they were a part, and sailed on the coast, nearly always in sight of their nativity. Now it seemed as if the Thayer communed with her ancestors, on the eve of a new chapter which would return her to a world of activity and attention that claimed her in her declining years.

The commencement of repair work at Seattle on March 1 was the prelude to a much larger refitting program than it had been planned to undertake in the Northwest. As is usually the case in repairing old ships, it was found that long-term economy was best served by carrying work far beyond a superficial level. The installation of a new stern and a new rig vastly transcended the early proposals - and saved a great deal of money later.

The Thayer came out of the Puget Sound shipyards far short of a "restored" lumber schooner, but she came out a well-repaired vessel capable of a coastwise passage under her own sail.

The decision to replace the Thayer's rotten masts triggered the idea of sailing the schooner to San Francisco instead of quietly and ingloriously towing her down the coast. There would be no scarcity of volunteer sailors, the outfit for the voyage would cost no more than the tow, and the permanent publicity value of the trip would pay dividends for years.

The Thayer's old sails, dories, and other gear were purchased from J. E. Shields, and a team from the Maritime Museum went north to reeve off the running rigging. The inevitable delays in preparing for such an undertaking created more than a little anxiety, for summer was fast disappearing, and it was desired to sail before the onset of the autumn calms - and storms.

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The selection of a crew from amongst scores of hopeful adventurers was finally completed: Captain Raynaud, who had contributed so much to the restoration of the vessel would be skipper; Jack Dickerhoff, one of the most experienced sailing ship men on the coast - who had supervised outfitting the schooner for sea - would be mate; men who had given freely of their energies in the cause of west coast maritime history, and who had the requisite sea experience, would make up the crew.

The restoration effort at Puget Sound had been adequate to repair the Thayer to fairly seaworthy condition, but it stopped far short of "display ship" standards, and although the schooner was berthed at Jack London Square for over a year, she was in no condition to show off to the public. More alarming was the gradual deterioration from her condition on arrival at San Francisco. The energetic efforts of a small and comparatively inexperienced crew with little time for more than watchman and housekeeping duties were not enough to meet the most basic maintenance requirements.

More than anything else, lack of the full-time attention of a fully qualified marine supervisor prevented the development of an adequate maintenance program or, when additional funds became available, or a progressive restoration and repair program. In December of 1958, \$276,000 of the \$2,000,000 San Francisco Maritime State Historical Monument appropriation was released for the further restoration of the old vessels. The San Francisco Maritime Museum set up an initial restoration program, but it was not until May of 1959, when Harry Dring, Manager of the ship Balclutha, was hired as Supervisor of the project, that real work could start.

Within two months a busy ship repair facility developed at the Oakland Dock & Warehouse Company's Pier 1-E. The complexity of the old ship restoration, in which the extent of work undertaken could be only generally anticipated, and in which constant on-the-spot judgements had to be made as to "how far to go with this one", made it extremely difficult or uneconomical to contract much of the work. Hence, titles new to the Division of Beaches and Parks soon appeared on the payroll: shipwright-foreman, shipwright-joiner, machinery restoration and maintenance specialist, caulker, rigger.

A bewildering assortment of supplies strange to the State purchasing system, from ship spikes to marline and oakum, and including large quantities of scarce ship-quality lumber have been needed. Naturally, the peculiarity of the personnel and materials required created more than the usual problems associated with a new project, but any judgement of the last year's program must account it a complete success relative to its purpose - to get along with the restoration of old ships.

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Not all of the 1959-1960 effort was devoted to the C. A. Thayer by any means, although it was a goal of the project to substantially complete her restoration before July, 1960. Cleaning up the Thayer and Wapama and setting up the needed machinery and facilities took a great deal of time, and the major effort of the summer and fall of 1959 was directed to determining the nature and extent of repairs necessary to the Wapama and to restoring her leaky boat deck prior to the rainy season.

The Thayer restoration was completed in 1963, when the ship was moved to her present location at the Hyde Street Pier.

In 1976, the Maritime State Historic Park and its ships, including the C. A. Thayer, was transferred to the National Park Service.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

Nomination Update

**Acting under authority of Public Law 100-348-100th Congress,
San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park Act of 1988.**

**The National Historic Landmark LUMBER SCHOONER C.A. THAYER was
transferred from the Golden Gate National Recreation Area to the
newly formed San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park on
June 27, 1988.**

National Historic Landmark # 66000029