

## ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR STATION 1940 - 1944



History of NAS Alameda, the Piers, and Building 77

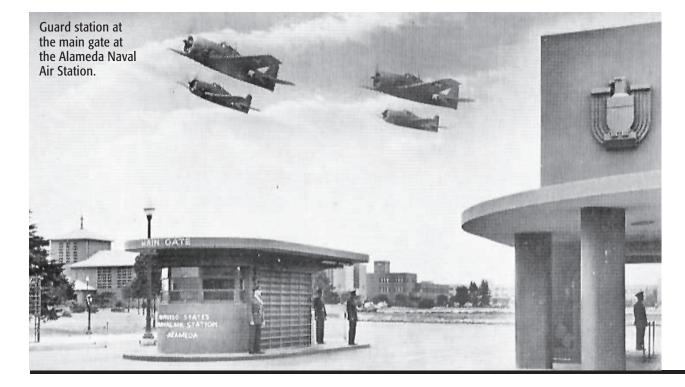
## HISTORY ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR STATION

In the 1930s Alameda Airport and Benton Field were established and in 1934, at the western tip of Alameda, Pan American Airways built a terminal, the first base of their China Clipper operation, which started flights to Manila, Philippine Islands in 1935. In 1939 Pan American moved to a new base at Treasure Island where it remained until 1944.

During WW-2, 1942 – 1945, the China Clippers were incorporated into Navy personnel and cargo handling service.

On June 1, 1936, Alameda deeded the entire property to the US government for the nominal fee of \$1. In 1938, Congress appropriated \$10 million to develop a Naval Air Station at the site. Construction at Alameda began, wet low land was raised and the station was commissioned on November 1, 1940, with a minimum of facilities.

Initial construction provided for two carrier air groups, five seaplane squadrons, two utility squadrons, and an Assembly and Repair



Department. In July 1940, additional funds were appropriated to enlarge the station with two seaplane hangars and a carrier berthing pier, as well as other facilities. With the start of World War 2, patrol and scouting squadrons began operations commanded by Fleet Air Wing 8. Carrier squadrons also were formed and commenced combat training.

During WW-2, this was one of the Navy's busiest air stations with air units, carrier groups, supplies, numerous naval personnel and VIP's passing through on their way to the Pacific or to points east. Actually, construction never stopped during the war and by 1945 it was a huge facility with 3,600 officers and 29,000 enlisted personnel. Patrol squadrons of PBY, PBM, PB2Y and Martin Mars seaplanes and PV, and PB4Y land planes served through Alameda during the war. By the end of the war in August 1945, almost 2,000 aircraft were present, about half in the overhaul facilities. After WW-2 Alameda also became the home base for the only two produced Lockheed R6V Constitutions, a very large, long range, 4-engined land-based cargo and passenger plane, to supplement the capabilities of the other transport aircraft.

Following the end of WW-2, the Alameda Naval Air Station returned to its original primary mission of providing facilities and support for fleet aviation activities. In 1957 runway realignment and extension began and in 1967 the airport was named Nimitz Field and land just west of the seaplane lagoon was extended to accommodate further lengthening of one runway and it grew into the jet age. The Alameda Naval Air Station was closed in 1997.

## HISTORY OF THE PIERS

Pier 1 was built in 1939, to be used by smaller boats that serviced larger vessels, as part of the original Air Station construction. From the west end of the pier a breakwater was extended on west to contain the seaplane lagoon. The pier was upgraded numerous times on out to 1988.

Pier 2, designed from the start to handle aircraft carriers, was built in 1941. In April 1942 the *USS* 

Hornet, CV-8, berthed at Pier 2 to take aboard 16 Army B-25 bombers and crews who successfully bombed Japan in the famed Doolittle Raid. Thus began ANAS's extensive role in WW-2. In 1973 this pier was lengthened to handle larger ships and extensively modernized. Shore power to the pier was improved in 1977.

Pier 3 built in 1945, expanded and improved in the 1970s. Shore power was improved in 1977. In 1981 and 1983 Pier 3 electrical systems were again upgraded enabling Alameda to become one of the two naval air stations on the West Coast capable of supporting all phases of carrier operations including service to *Enterprise* and *Nimitz* class nuclear-powered carriers, CVNs. In December 1995 Pier 3 became home to the *USS Hornet*, *CV-12*, Museum.

Wharf structures and fishing piers along the east edge of the lagoon area were built and improved in the 1939 to 1990 era.

The Maritime Administration now uses Piers 1, 2 and 3 to dock Ready Reserve Ships.

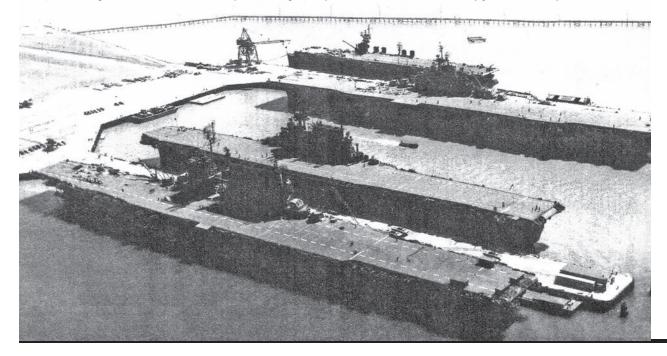
## ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR MUSEUM, BUILDING 77

The present museum, Building 77, was built in 1942 as a Radio and Radar Building, with facilities for overhaul of radio and radar equipment and included a vault for housing security items. Soon it also housed the operations department for seaplane squadrons and included a machine shop, metal shop, paint shop and cable shop as well as the radio and radar shops.

Extensive modifications in 1958 to 1960 included third story added using plywood to construct rounded structures. The third floor accommodated showers, lockers and sleeping quarters for flight crews during brief stopovers.

In 1960 the facility opened as an air terminal. The first floor housed the Air Terminal Officer's office, a ticket counter, a passenger lounge, and baggage facilities. A new cafeteria operated by the Navy

Alameda Naval Air Station, November, 1945. Pier 2: Saratoga, CV-3; Enterprise, CV-6; Hornet, CV-12. Pier 3: San Jacinto, CV-30. (Saratoga, CV-3, Illustrated History of the Legendary Aircraft Carrier 1927-1946, pg. 154. John Fry, 1996.)



Exchange opened on the second floor which also housed the staff of the Naval Overseas Air Cargo Terminal. The Terminal provided services to the Fleet, flights scheduled by area commanders and passenger and cargo services to flights of transient aircraft. In 1967 more than 7,000 passengers, 89,000 pounds of baggage, 6,700,000 pounds of cargo and 94,000 pounds of mail were handled in during the 24-hour seven-days-a-week operation.

In the 1960s the Aviation Safety Office was located in Building 77 with responsibilities for the aviation safety programs and had 20 aircraft, including transports, jets and helicopters in their service.

In the 1970s many renovations and improvements were carried out and the cafeteria on the second floor became the Crow's Nest restaurant. By the early 1980s the Air Terminal was the largest Naval Air Terminal on the west coast; the eastern terminus for the majority of Navy Trans-Pacific flights

Building 77 became home to the Alameda Naval Air Station Museum upon Station closure in 1997.

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Much of this Information is from
COMBINED SPECIFICATION BUILDING SURVEY &
EVALUATION REPORT, 2010. Marilyn York and
Bronson "Chief" Parry were interviewed in
connection with that report.



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