

HISTORY OF NAVAL AIR STATION, ALAMEDA

(The following is an excerpt from Welcome Aboard – NAS Alameda, published by the Armed Forces Directory Service in 1963.)

History of Naval Air Station, Alameda

In 23 short years of existence, the naval Air Station Alameda has come a long way from the small tidewater facility it once was. It has grown into a giant industrial complex representing a capital investment of over \$100,000,000 in buildings, grounds, and facilities. Replacement value would be in excess of a quarter of a billion dollars. Its total area covers 2,671 acres, including 1,108 under water. The Naval Air Station is a major economic force in the community and a vital lifeline in the defense of the United States.

Originally the site of an Indian burial ground, part of the land was later deeded to the government for a naval base and formed a portion of the Spanish Land Grant to Don Luis Peralta.

The year 1864 saw the construction of “San Francisco and Alameda Railroad,” which ran from High Street in Oakland, to the west end of Alameda. It terminated at a ferry landing at the present site of Pier Two. This became the western terminus of the Central Pacific transcontinental railroad. Old Alameda Point, within the confines of the present Air Station, was the scene of early industrial activity. An oil refinery, called the Pacific Coast Oil Co., was constructed in 1879 and later purchased by the Standard Oil Co., which operated the plant until 1903. The four-story building of the Pacific Coast Borax Works was located at the present site of the aircraft engine overhaul building.

As early as World War I, farsighted Alameda residents saw the possibilities for the location of a Naval Base on the West end of the Island, but it was not until June, 1936, that Congress authorized President Roosevelt to accept Old Alameda Point for a token payment of one dollar.

Construction began with the dredging operations in February 1938, and soon the first buildings began to take shape. On November 1, 1940, the Naval Air Station was commissioned with 200 military and civilian personnel aboard under the command of Capt. Frank McCrary.

In January 1941, the Station’s fledgling Overhaul and Repair Department received its first assignment – one SOC-1 for overhaul. That aircraft was completed in May 1941, but by December 7 of that year the Overhaul and repair Department employed 1,935 persons who repaired 14 aircraft a month.

During the war years the rest of the Station kept pace with the rapidly expanding Overhaul and Repair Department. The Supply Department, which opened its door for business in April 1940, with a compliment of nine civilians and two military personnel, had a personnel ceiling of more than 1,400 by 1945.

ALAMEDA NAVAL AIR MUSEUM

The Public Works Department operated at top speed to affect the rapid expansion of facilities and services. The original authorization to construct personnel facilities to support 1,000 men was subsequently increased to provide facilities for 18,000 men.

The years following World War II saw the conversion of assembly lines and training of personnel for the jet age. Where in 1946 only 12 jet engines were processed, in 1958, 1,305 jet engines, in addition to 881 reciprocating engines, were overhauled.

The Supply Department, which provides the life-blood of the great complex, is one of the largest and most modern in the world. The Department serves customers both on and off the Station. Its largest customer for volume of issue is the Overhaul and Repair Department. The largest customer, in size, from a Fleet unit, is the U.S.S. Ranger, one of the largest aircraft carriers in the world, which homeports at Alameda.

In addition to attached Fleet units, on-station activities, and assigned satellites, NAAS Fallon (Nevada), NAS Lemoore, and NAF Monterey, it provides complete aeronautical material support to NAS Moffett Field, BAR Palo Alto, and NAS Honolulu (Hawaii).

Naval Air Station Alameda is homeport for four large aircraft carriers and one seaplane tender. Other carriers, seaplane tenders, and MSTS ships are frequently berthed at NAS facilities.

The Station now has two modern 8,000-foot runways as well as three seaplane ramps and a lighted seadrome. For industrial and logistical support the Station offers 2,027,000 square feet of shop area and 2,858,000 square feet of covered storage. There are 300 buildings on the Station and 30 miles of roads.

Throughout its history, the Station has made all the preparations it could to be ready with expert service for the future needs of the Fleet. It stands in a tremendously strategic location, prepared to offer its best services both to the cause of Free World defense and the betterment of the surrounding Bay Area communities.

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