



Other Resources

Accessing the History of the Brooklyn Navy Yard

There are several other cultural heritage institutions that steward material relevant to the history of the New York Naval Shipyard (now the Brooklyn Navy Yard).

The United States Navy's Third Naval District, covering New York, purchased property in Brooklyn for the manufacturing of ships. The property was thus owned and operated by the United States Department of the Navy from its establishment in 1801 until its decommissioning in 1966. In 1967, the 300-acre property was purchased by the City of New York, and a not-for-profit corporation, now the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC) manages this property. The Corporation was established to refuel economic vitality to Brooklyn by transforming the property from a Shipyard to an industrial park. As our slogan once read: "we used to launch ships, now we launch businesses."

When the Navy decommissioned and left the premises, they took much of their records with them – personnel records, operational materials, shipbuilding plans. What they left behind were thousands of architectural drawings and maps of the property itself: the dry docks, the piers, and the buildings. This material is the BNYDC Archives' flagship collection: BNY Design Records. Thus, the bulk of the Archives' collections comprise architectural design records.

While we do have a modest collection of personal effects from former Shipyard workers, there are other institutions that hold records relating the BNY. Some of these are listed on our website. This guide builds on that list and is intended to provide users with resources they can consult that are outside the purview of the BNYDC Archives.



What are special collections?

Special collections are repositories that collect archives, rare books, and manuscripts. These unique materials have been selected for their enduring historical and cultural value.

What are archives?

Archives are materials created or collected by people and organizations as they lived and worked. They may contain drafts of literary manuscripts, correspondence, meeting minutes, sound and moving image recordings, photographs, reports, and artifacts. Archival collections range from a few letters to hundreds of boxes of organizational records.

New York Naval Shipyard Photographs

Nearly all photographs taken at the Yard were by the Navy. Some of these are construction photos, some are publicity photos. As such, you'll notice duplicates across several institutions. This is the nature of the historic record. Images were widely distributed over time and can be found in various repositories. Those repositories are detailed in the following pages.

Architectural Plans of Naval Vessels

Architectural plans designed by the Navy are transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration. As a rule, ship plans are not transferred to their holdings until 25 years after the ship has been stricken from the Navy rolls. Not all commissioned ships have plans and often the plans are not complete. The following sources are useful to obtaining plans of former Navy vessels:

- **Special Media Archives Services Division, Cartographic and Architectural Branch, RDSC, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).** Their collection includes the general plans and drawing of most ships stricken from the *Naval Vessel Register*. Requests should be limited to no more than three ships at any one time.
- **Smithsonian Institution.** Their collection of watercraft plans, maintained by the History of Technology Division of the National Museum of American History, is a valuable resource. To make their collection more accessible to the public, black-line reproductions of many of the plans are offered for sale. The Smithsonian has produced three publications containing descriptions of these plans and instructions for ordering large-scale copies. These catalogs are described and ordering information is included on the [Smithsonian's website](#).
- **San Francisco Maritime National Park Association.** The Maritime Park Association has collocated various ship plans that have been digitized. *Note that these plans come from NARA's RG19 Bureau of Ships collection (see below).*
 - <https://maritime.org/doc/plans/>



National Archives and Records Administration

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the Archives for US government. Every federal institution is obligated to transfer their records to NARA for retention or permanent preservation. The main site for NARA is Washington DC – Archives I is the National Archives building in DC, Archives II is located in College Park, MD. In addition to the flagship campus, NARA has satellite agencies throughout the country.

Collections at NARA

- *RG 19 – Bureau of Ships*
- *RG 71 – Bureau of Yards and Docks*
- *RG 181 – Records of Naval Districts and Shore Establishments*

Accessing the Collections

Online

NARA has digitized some of their material. You may access their online catalog by visiting: <https://catalog.archives.gov/>. A basic search is inputting keywords into the search box on the catalog's splash webpage. You can further filter by collection, format, NARA agency, and date.

In Person

For the material NARA has not digitized, it is possible to make an appointment to visit their reading room in College Park, MD. You can find out more information by visiting: <https://www.archives.gov/college-park>.

Other NARA Agencies

NARA NYC

Portions of the NARA collections stated above – in particular, select series that contain records about the BNY – were transferred to NARA NYC. For example, there is a collection of photographs of the BNY from RG 181 that were transferred to NARA NYC. Both the BNYDC Archives and NARA NYC digitized these photographs. You may find some on the BNYDC Archives' digital library. You may find others on NARA's catalog. [Click this link to browse the photos in NARA's catalog.](#) *Note: there may be duplicate photographs on both BNY Collections and NARA's catalog.*

Personnel Records Center

All personnel records relating to both civilian work and military service are maintained by NPRC. You can make a request for records and find out more information by visiting: <https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/federal-records>.

Naval History and Heritage Command

Naval History and Heritage Command (NHHC) is the archives for the US Navy. It is the central resource for today's operational Navy and acts as the service's institutional memory and is located in the Washington Navy Yard in Washington DC. NHHC maintains records related to military service, photos, deck logs, ship histories, and more. A number of museums are also under their purview, such as the United States Navy Seabee Museum, National Museum of the American Sailor, and the Naval Historical Foundation.

Collections at NHHC

- *Photo Archive*



- *Artifacts*
- *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships (DANFS)*
 - <https://www.history.navy.mil/content/history/nhnc/research/histories/ship-histories/danfs.html>

Accessing the Collections

Online

NHNC has digitized some of their material. Items may be browsed in two ways: by collection, under the three umbrella categories Art, Artifacts, and Photography, OR, by topic. Most material relating to the BNY at this time are photographs. You may begin your search by visiting: <https://www.history.navy.mil/>.

In Person

NHNC offer limited reference assistance [by phone or E-mail](#). The archives is open for research Monday-Friday, 9am to 4pm (except for Wednesdays and federal holidays), by appointment only.

New-York Historical Society

Collections at N-YHS

- *World War II Photograph Collection*
 - *In series 3 of this collection, you will find photographs of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. Unlike the photographs at NARA, these photographs were maintained by the Navy Public Relations Department, and contain dynamic photographs of people and ships. The finding aid may accessed by visiting this link:* <http://dlib.nyu.edu/findingaids/html/nyhs/worldwarii/dscref31.html>.

Accessing the Collections

In Person

The Department of Prints, Photographs and Architecture is open for research by appointment only. To make an appointment, E-mail printroom@nyhistory.org. By using the finding aid above, you can select boxes of material to be made ready for you upon your visit. You must create an account with their reference system to do so.

The United States Navy Band

In 2004, the Navy Band amassed a team of musicians to collect and preserve documents, photos and artifacts. The head archivist is Chief Musician Mike Bayes.

Collections at USNB

- *Jose Contreras collection*
 - *Photographs of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Band.*
- *Commander Stauffer collection*
 - *Photographs of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Band.*



Accessing the Collections

In Person

While the Archives is not open to the public for research, you may contact the head archivist to assist in your search for material or answer questions relating to the history of the organization at 202-433-3366.

United States Marine Corps Archives

The Archives Branch of the Marine Corps History Division acquires, preserves, and provide access to primary source materials pertinent to the history of the Marine Corps. The Archives collects materials in four primary areas: **Personal Papers; Command Chronologies; Marine Corps University Materials;** and **Select Official and Unofficial Marine Corps Unit Materials.** More information may be found in [this library guide](#).

Brooklyn Historical Society

The Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history.

Collections at BHS

Brooklyn Historical Society's holdings include official publications and records, oral history interviews with former Navy Yard employees, collections of papers and items which belonged to former employees, photographic prints and negatives, Civil War era material, books, and maps. A list of collections can be found in [this library guide](#).

Accessing the Collections

Online

BHS has an online catalog for searching books, periodicals, and maps. They also have their finding aids published online. To access those catalogs, visit <http://brooklynhistory.org/library/search.html>.

In Person

The Archives are temporarily closed, but information for visiting may be found here: <http://brooklynhistory.org/library/visit.html>.

Library of Congress

Prints and Photographs Division

Their collections number more than 15 million images. These include photographs, historical prints, posters, cartoons, documentary drawings, fine prints, and architectural and engineering designs. While international in scope, the collections are particularly strong in materials documenting the history of the United States and the lives, interests, and achievements of the American people.

Accessing the Collections

Online

LOC has digitized nearly all their holdings. [This guide contains lists of images on popular topics](#). Or, you may begin your search by visiting the P&P catalog at <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/>.

In Person

The P&P reading room is open Monday-Friday, 8:30am to 5pm, and is located in the Library of Congress Madison Building, Room 337. [Researchers are strongly encouraged to read this information prior to visiting](#).