



Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation Archives
Guide to the Shipworker collection
1941-1966
MC/63

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Descriptive Summary

Title: Shipworker collection

Creator: New York Naval Shipyard

Date(s): 1941-11-21 – 1966-06-24

Quantity: 993 issues, 6320 files, 86.1 GB

Language of Materials: English

Call Number: MC/63

Administrative/Biographical History

The Brooklyn Navy Yard, previously known as the New York Navy Yard and later the New York Naval Shipyard, has its origins in the federal government's purchase of the land adjacent to Wallabout Bay for \$40,000 in 1801. Over the course of its history, more than 230 naval warships and auxiliary vessels were built at the Yard. Additionally, during World War II alone, more than 5,000 ships were repaired, overhauled, or converted. The first ship built was the USS Ohio, launched in 1817, while the last Navy ship launched was the USS Duluth (LPD-6) in 1965. Other historic vessels constructed at the Yard include USS Brooklyn, the USS Arizona, and the USS Missouri, the latter two of which bookended World War II.

In 1824, the Navy purchased an additional 25 acres near the Yard, on which it established the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. The main hospital building was completed in 1838. By 1850, the hospital annex was a walled-in, self-contained parcel of land with a gatehouse, a laboratory, and a cemetery. In 1864, a surgeon's residence was built. When the shipyard expanded during World War II, it took over the land of the former

Wallabout Market, located between the Yard and the annex, and the physical separation between the Yard and the Hospital was eliminated.

During the Civil War, the Yard employed about 6,000 people, and by 1938 it provided jobs for over 10,000. At the height of World War II, nearly 70,000 people were employed at the Yard, and it had grown to encompass 291 acres with 270 major buildings, 24 miles of railroad tracks, 23,278 linear feet of crane tracks, 18 miles of paved roads, 16,495 feet of berthing space, 9 piers, 6 dry docks, and 22 shops housing 98 different trades.

In 1966, the Navy decommissioned the Yard, and a year later most of the property was sold to the City of New York. While the Yard lost its naval shipbuilding presence, it retained residual administrative support functions as part of Naval Station New York, which occupied the former hospital annex and some adjacent buildings until it too was closed in 1989. The City eventually acquired the former naval station annex and the row of admiral's quarters at the south western tip of the site, taking full control over the 300-acre property by 2012.

The City delegated the Yard for private commercial use. It was first administered by the Commerce Labor and Industry Corporation of Kings (CLICK), then by the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC), a private, non-profit development corporation that manages and develops the Yard on behalf of the City with the aim of growing and maintaining an industrial manufacturing base in Brooklyn.

From 1969 to 1979, Seatrain Shipbuilding was the main tenant under CLICK. During its operation, the company produced four Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs), eight barges, one icebreaker barge, and two roll-on/roll-off ferries. Another important early tenant was Coastal Dry Dock & Repair Corporation, which leased space in the Yard between 1971 and 1987.

In the 1980s, BNYDC began a long-term effort to diversify the tenant base at the Yard, and by 2001 nearly 275 companies employing over 6,000 people were in residence. BNYDC undertook sustainability initiatives to support a rapidly growing cluster of green manufacturers, and large spaces were updated to accommodate small industrial enterprises that reflected the diversity, energy, and creativity of the community. BNYDC's Employment Center expanded, a Summer Youth Program was established, and a shuttle service to the subway is launched to provide better access and encourage the use of mass transit. The City took note of BNYDC's success and funded major upgrades to the Yard's basic infrastructure, some of which dated to the Civil War era. The Yard's largest expansion since WWII was underway.

The Yard is now home to over 400 businesses employing more than 7,000 people and generating over \$2 billion per year in economic impact for the City. With the openings of Building 77 and Dock 72, redevelopment of Admirals Row, expansion of Steiner Studios, and other projects, employment at the Yard will more than double in the next few years, jumping from 7,000 to 17,000+ by 2020. Building on the Yard's history as the economic heart of Brooklyn, the 300-acre waterfront asset offers a critical pathway to the middle class for many New Yorkers.

Scope and Content

This collection contains the full run of the *Shipworker*, from its first issue in November 1941 to its last issue in June 1966.

The *Shipworker* was the official periodical of the New York Naval Shipyard, and ran from November 1941 through June 1966. The publication details the functions, activities, and events that occurred at the Navy Yard from its period of greatest expansion through to its decommissioning. It was printed commercially via the Department of the Navy and distributed freely to employees on a bi-weekly, and sometimes weekly, basis.

At the time of its inaugural issue, the Yard was one of the largest single industrial establishments in the US, undergoing the changes associated with the loom of war. The decision behind creating the *Shipworker* was to "give each worker a bigger and better feeling of really belonging to the Navy Yard 'family'" (*Shipworker*, Vol. 1, Issue I, 1941-11-21).

The *Shipworker* covered such topics as shop activities and the accomplishments of its labor force; profiles of administrative staff and the departments that made up the Bureau of Yards and Docks; suggestions from employees; transit issues, including robust coverage of the Yard's internal railroad system; concerts; sports. It was a bulletin for Yard gates, the telephone and loudspeaker system, and wages.

Several issues featured a message from the Commandant, the highest ranking official and overseer of the Yard. The *Shipworker* regularly featured the cartoon "Dopey Dan," which chronicled the workdays of Dan, his coworkers, and his girlfriend Ann (in a Brooklynese dialect) to encourage safety at the Yard via Dan's many comic blunders. In its early days, the *Shipworker* actively promoted the purchase of war bonds, and covered the Navy's takeover of Wallabout Market, which was repurposed for offices and production utility buildings. Stories depict a site that was expanding, and a place of accomplishment, innovation, and resilience.

The *Shipworker* was a newspaper/newsletter hybrid, it exclusively covered the activities of the Yard and its many departments operating under the Bureau of Yards and Docks (the construction agency of the US Navy), it was also a periodical publication containing information about a wide variety of subjects.

The *Shipworker* thus provides the reader a robust history of the quotidian function of the Yard and its work force.

Related Materials

Location of Copies: Every item in this collection is featured in [BNY Collections](#), the BNYDC Archives' digital library.

System of Arrangement

This collection is arranged chronologically by publication date.

Access Points

New York Naval Shipyard
Administrative
Digital Files
News
Newsletters
Shipbuilding—United States

Administrative Information

Accession Number(s): N/A

Acquisition Notes: N/A

Processing Notes: This collection was processed in July 2019 by Elizabeth Mc Gorty, Archivist & Records Manager. This collection does not have a collection documentation file.

Access and Use

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