

City of Detroit

CITY COUNCIL HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD

204 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center, Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone: (313) 224-3487 Fax: (313) 224-4336

e-mail: cc-historic@ci.detroit.mi.us

Proposed R. Thornton Brodhead Armory Historic District

Final Report

By a resolution dated May 4, 2000, the Detroit City Council charged the Historic Designation Advisory Board, a study committee, with the official study of the proposed R. Thornton Brodhead Armory Historic District in accordance with Chapter 25 of the 1984 Detroit City Code and the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act.

The proposed R. Thornton Brodhead Armory Historic District consists of the single building at 7600 East Jefferson Avenue and the strip of land it is situated on that extends from East Jefferson Avenue to the Detroit River. The Brodhead Armory, built for use as a military facility, is located east of the Belle Isle Bridge and Gabriel Richard Park on the Detroit riverfront approximately three miles from downtown Detroit. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994 as the Detroit Naval Armory .

BOUNDARIES: The boundaries of the proposed historic district are as shown on the attached map, and are as follows:

- On the northeast, the east line of Private Claim 16;
- On the northwest, the centerline of East Jefferson Avenue;
- On the southwest, a line 250 feet west of and parallel to the east line of Private Claim 16; and
- On the southeast, the Detroit Harbor line.

HISTORY:

(from Hacala, Mark T., *A History of the R. Thornton Brodhead Armory, Detroit's Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center*, 1993.)

The R. Thornton Brodhead Armory stands as a reminder of Detroit's sea service heritage since 1930. Located on East Jefferson Avenue on the city's riverfront just east of the Belle Isle Bridge, Brodhead Armory has served the Navy, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, and their reserve and militia components. The building is historically significant for its associations with influential members of Detroit's Naval Militia community, who supported its creation, and is architecturally significant as an art deco structure designed by one of Detroit's leading architects of that era, William Buck Stratton. In addition, Brodhead Armory houses the largest collection

of federally-funded Depression-era artwork of any building in the state of Michigan.

In 1891, Congress passed a bill allowing the creation and maintenance of state naval militias. Gilbert Wiles, a retired naval officer, and other well known Detroiters, including Cyrus Lothrop, Strathern Hendrie, and Truman Newberry, lobbied the Michigan state legislature, convincing it of the need for such a unit, since Michigan had the longest coastline of any state in the union. Michigan Act 184 of 1893 provided for the Naval Militia, the forerunner of the U.S. Naval and Marine Corps Reserves.

The Michigan Naval Militia was organized as a brigade of locally-manned divisions that met in state armories in several cities. The militias were part of the state's military forces, reporting to the governor as commander-in-chief. Officers and men who had served in the Navy formed its nucleus, and the Navy provided guidance, training and limited funding and equipment.

Members had to pay initiation and annual fees to join the naval militia until World War One, when legislation was enacted to pay the reservists per training period. Detroit's early naval reservists were generally well-off, having been comprised of the sons of Detroit's most prominent families. Known jokingly as the *champagne preserves* and the *millionaire navy*, among the crew were Truman Newberry, who later became Secretary of the Navy and then a United States Senator; Gunner's Mate third class Edwin Denby, who would also become Secretary of the Navy and later one of the original officers of the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve; Ordinary Seaman J. Walter Drake, who became Assistant Secretary of Commerce under Presidents Harding and Coolidge, and ran Detroit's Hupp Motor Car Company during its short life; Henry B. Joy, a chief boatswain's mate in the militia, who owned the Packard Motor Car Company and helped establish Detroit as the automobile capital of the world; William B. Stratton, who became a noted Detroit architect; and a third class petty officer, Coxswain Richard Thornton Brodhead, who would become the most prominent figure in the development of the Michigan Naval Militia.

The USS *Yantic*, a three-masted bark built in 1863, became the first sailing vessel solely for use by the Michigan Naval Militia. She had an impressive Civil War record and served on numerous stations around the globe afterwards. She was brought to her new home at the foot of Chene Street in Detroit in 1897. The Michigan brigade went into federal service aboard the USS *Yantic* at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, and the militiamen were assigned to the USS *Yosemite* by Theodore Roosevelt. They did duty in Virginia with the Atlantic Fleet and then in the Caribbean Theater in Cuba and Puerto Rico.

The militia grew after news of its short but distinguished performance spread. Training cruises increased and a flotilla of naval militia vessels from Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Minnesota (Great Lakes Fleet) continued from 1906 forward.

Detroit's drill site was on the second floor of a mercantile building in an old machine shop. Detroit reservists would continue to drill in inadequate spaces until 1930. The 1915 Naval

Reserve Act made the citizen-sailors members of both the Michigan Naval Militia and the United States Reserve, making it easier to assure uniform training among militias of various states and easier to mobilize in times of war. The Naval Reserve Force was created in 1918.

Michigan's Naval Militia was again activated for federal service during World War I. The men were sent to a number of ships and other assignments. After the war, the Naval Militia returned home and resumed training. Former *Yosemite* crewman Richard Thornton Brodhead was then a Lieutenant Commander assigned command of the Second Area, Ninth Naval District. His job was to reorganize the Naval Militia as a training organization, consolidate its Federal-State relationship, and plan for its weekly drills and training cruises. A full battalion now existed in Detroit, albeit without a ship. In the spring of 1920 the Navy again loaned the *Yantic* to the State of Michigan. The USS *Dubuque*, a patrol gunboat, was loaned in 1922. Also in that year, the Michigan force received its first official Marine Corps designation, the 306th Company, Fleet Marine Corps Reserve.

The *Yantic* was desperately in need of repairs, but was useful as a static training platform. Then, in the Fall of 1929, the *Yantic* sank in her slip. Having served for sixty-five years during three major wars, she was raised in the spring, and her equipment removed. Her oak frame was burned down to the waterline, and the slip filled in. The *Yantic's* anchor holds a prominent position in front of the armory today.

Detroit Naval Armory

Richard Thornton Brodhead (1879 - 1947) was instrumental in establishing a permanent home for the Detroit-based naval militia and marine corps divisions. His grandfather, Thornton F. Brodhead, was the second owner and publisher of the *Detroit Free Press*, served as postmaster General of the U.S. during the administration of his cousin, President Franklin Pierce, and commanded the First Michigan Cavalry Regiment, later to gain fame in General George Custer's brigade during the Civil War. Brodhead's father, John T. Brodhead, served as a career officer in the U.S. Marine Corps; after his retirement as a lieutenant colonel, the family returned to Detroit. Richard T. Brodhead attended the University of Detroit and Georgetown University. He joined the Michigan Naval Militia in 1897, but his love of the sea returned him to civilian life between 1906-1912, when he crossed the Pacific multiple times with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company. He returned to the Naval Militia in 1912, was promoted to lieutenant in 1914, and recalled to active duty in 1917 during World War I, as the second in command of the battleship USS *Iowa*. He was assigned as Commanding Officer, U.S. Naval Reserve Force, State of Michigan, in 1920.

The need for a new naval armory was evident throughout the 1920's. The Light Guard Armory at the corner of Brush and Larned Streets was used by the Detroit reservists unit 1925, after which a double-storefront building at 7456 East Jefferson in front of the *Dubuque-Yantic* slip and a run-down, corrugated metal boat shack was their base. By the end of the decade there were about 6000 officers and men drilling at the site on the northeast corner of Gabriel Richard Park on the city's riverfront. After much lobbying by Lieutenant Commander Brodhead as head of the

Michigan Naval Force, a plan for the construction of a new armory was developed between the City of Detroit and the State of Michigan.

Several sites were considered, including the foot of West Grand Boulevard. However, the land on the riverfront between Townsend and Baldwin Avenues in Gabriel Richard Park seemed better suited. The city was constructing the new Belle Isle Bridge, so it had already demolished the old amusement park known as Electric Park and cleared the land it had purchased for that purpose in 1928 at considerable expense. Space was available adjacent to the *Dubuque-Yantic* boat slip and the training center. The City of Detroit deeded the land at 7600 East Jefferson Avenue to the State of Michigan on June 12, 1929. The state appropriated \$250,000 for construction, which was seen as only enough to build a garage-type armory. Lieutenant Commander Brodhead sought to receive more funding from the City of Detroit, which ultimately granted an additional \$125,000, after having been reminded of the significant contributions of Detroit naval militiamen to the community.

The building was designed in the modernistic style by the prestigious Detroit architectural firm of Stratton & Hyde, of whom William B. Stratton was a former naval militiaman and member of the *Yosemite* crew. For the decorative faience, Stratton relied on the famous Pewabic Pottery to produce the ceramic art tiles for the building's facade, just eastward from the armory on East Jefferson Avenue. Four of these tiles depicted naval insignia and one detailed the seal of the state of Michigan. Pewabic tiles were well known and widely incorporated into architectural installations for their unique iridescent glazes, the result of a new firing techniques in a revolutionary oil-burning kiln. Stratton was well-acquainted with the pottery, as he had designed its building shortly before marrying its founder, Mary Chase Perry.

The armory was built of Indiana limestone with masonry load-bearing walls. Designed in two sections, the drill deck area was in the north end and the three story office section was near the river end. In all, the building consisted of almost 97,000 square feet of space set on 3.81 acres of land. The land would remain city property and the building would belong to the state. The state contracted the Walbridge Aldinger Company to erect the building, and construction began on September 1, 1929. It was completed on August 1, 1930 and dedicated on October 6th of that year.

The Naval Armory's dedication was a gala event in Detroit; wives of the former *Yosemite* crew members, many of whom were among the city's social elite, organized the event, with Helen Joy chairing. The U.S. Navy Band from the nation's capitol provided the music, celebrated Detroit soprano Elektra Rosanska sang patriotic songs, Michigan Governor Frank Green and Detroit Mayor Frank Murphy gave speeches, and Jean Harlow, the glamorous actress, was in attendance.

Training of the Naval and Marine Corps Reservists continued throughout the 1930's, with the various divisions and companies meeting two nights a week and performing their summer training aboard the *Dubuque* or, for the Marines, at the Marine Corps base at Quantico, Virginia. Few dollars were available for maintenance and upkeep of the facility due to the Depression.

Creative means of raising funds to pay for upkeep were sought; the drill deck was particularly well-suited to rental for large public gatherings, as Detroit's large indoor auditoriums had not yet been built, so the armory served the community as its premier events center of the day.

Dance marathons, social mixers, automobile and flower shows, labor meetings, and political rallies took place in the armory. A special ramp was built to accommodate the wheelchair of Franklin D. Roosevelt when he campaigned in the armory during his first run for the White House. Sporting events were commonplace, and the University of Detroit's basketball team used the armory drill deck as its home court. The armory was a frequent home to boxing matches; legendary figure Joe Louis fought the first fight of his career there in 1932 against former U.S. Olympic team member Johnny Miler, and lost.

Lt. Cmdr. Brodhead, who was promoted to full Commander in 1935 and Captain in 1937, found another way to maintain and improve the armory. With the advent of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) programs of the New Deal, state facilities could tap into federally-funded projects designed to keep people employed during the Depression. Initially Brodhead was able to receive janitorial and handymen help through a WPA agency, the Civil Works Administration (CWA).

On a grander scale, WPA funds were used for an extensive remodeling and expansion project, including a basement motorpool and a gymnasium. The third floor was enlarged, adding an officers' wardroom, enlisted mess hall, and kitchen. A fourth floor penthouse wing of eight rooms was built to quarter visiting officers. The project began in May of 1936 and was completed in late 1939 at a cost of \$106,237.

In 1930 the Marine Corps Reserve unit had been redesignated as a company of 1st Battalion, 24th Reserve Marines. In 1935 its name changed again to a company of the 9th Battalion, Fleet Marine Corps Reserve. In the late 1930's, the Detroit unit grew to battalion status, becoming the 17th Battalion, Fleet Marine Corps Reserve.

Federal Arts Projects, 1936 - 1941

The Federal Art Project (FAP) was an agency within the WPA designed to keep artists working during the Depression by applying their skills to decorate government buildings. Brodhead originally wanted some form of art to "liven up the wardroom," and after investigating the eligibility requirements for the program, he applied for funding. The project grew through time to include a number of works of different media throughout the building. Several artists and their assistants worked on projects at the armory between 1936 and 1941.

Captain Brodhead personally chose the artists and kept the themes of the art naval and nautical. The painters he chose were respected locally and would go on to earn continued notoriety in their careers.

David Fredenthal was in his early twenties when commissioned for artwork at the armory. He

had been a scholarship student at Cranbrook Academy of Art and studied in Italy and France on a Museum of Modern Art scholarship. Having won numerous prizes for his work at local and national exhibits, at age 23 he was hailed as a 'youthful genius' at a one-man show in New York. He was the youngest artist to win a Guggenheim fellowship in 1937. His other FAP works included murals in post offices in Caro and Manistique, Michigan. Fredenthal later sketched events for Life Magazine, including combat drawings in the Pacific Theater of World War II and illustrations from the Nuremberg Trials.

The wardroom, the officers dining room, provided a perfect setting for Fredenthal's largest mural painting. Brodhead and architect William Stratton, who visited the armory often during the project, approved Fredenthal's plan for remaking an entire wall, including the installation of a fireplace and bookshelves. Fredenthal's al fresco technique included putting up three layers of plaster, the last of which was put on in small areas so that the artist could work on that for a day. Assistants enlarged the sketches and drew up each section to be painted. They would then grind the pigments and, when the plaster had reached a certain state of consistency, Fredenthal would have to paint regardless of the time involved. His style was expressionistic, emphasizing line rather than form, and achieving definition of shape with color.

What resulted was a sixty-foot mural of five panels portraying the range of experiences of shipboard life. Sailors in weather gear strain against the wind and rain on the deck of a rolling ship in the first panel, an exhausted gob sleeps in the second, a lone sailor looks into the vastness of the sea in the central panel above the fireplace. Two men exert themselves hauling away on a line in the fourth panel, and four men relax and dance to a squeeze box and harmonica in the fifth mural.

Fredenthal was responsible for another smaller mural in the bar area adjacent to the wardroom, where the sailors are portrayed relaxing and enjoying themselves, and smiling seagulls join in their merriment.

The mess hall, adjacent to the wardroom, was painted with a mural by Edgar Yaeger that portrayed the ships that served the naval militias of Michigan and the other Great Lakes States that joined together in their summer cruises. Fredenthal refused the mess hall project as beneath his talents. Edgar Yaeger, an accomplished painter at this time, was chosen to do the mural on its four walls. Yaeger studied art in Europe on a Detroit News Scholarship, and won a number of prizes for his paintings throughout his long career. His other WPA projects would include Grosse Pointe (South) High School, Ford Grammar School in Highland Park, the Detroit Public Lighting Commission Building in Detroit, and a men's dormitory at the University of Michigan.

Yaeger approached the difficult task of taking a rectangular room, six feet high by 180 feet around, and giving the ships and their setting a sense of depth and dimension. In each corner of the room, the foreground of the mural presented deck fittings, ship superstructures, masts, and lines to give the viewer the perspective that he or she was aboard a ship, looking out to port or starboard. The other ships were then arranged at different angles around the viewer's vessel, as if

they were all cruising in one great fleet. At the time of its completion, a Detroit Free Press art critic described the mural as the “work of sensitive artist and a master craftsman.” Yaeger worked on the project twenty hours a week at an hourly rate of \$1.00.

One of Yaeger’s assistants, John Tabaczuk, carved about twenty insets to the wooden doors in the building, depicting Navy and Marine Corps insignia, ships such as the *Yantic* and the *Yosemite*, and themes appropriate to the rooms’ uses. The cloakroom door outside the wardroom depicts a hat-check girl receiving an officer’s belongings, while the door frame over the bar entrance depicts the figure of Bacchus, god of alcohol, as its central theme.

Captain Brodhead seemed to have a lot of fun decorating the building he commanded. He and Lt. Commander Hoard went to Philadelphia and tagged the portholes from a mothballed ship in the destroyer yard with USS *Dubuque* property labels, and ultimately had them sent to Detroit for installation in a steel bulkhead which sectioned off the base of the stairwell leading to the ward room, and Tabaczuk decorated a thick door to the stairs. Another idea that came to the captain was to include a decorated bannister leading from the new door and portholes up six flights of steps to the penthouse area; Tabaczuk represented aquatic life, including mermaids and sea serpents, in his carvings of the bannister. This work continued into 1941, long after the other work was finished.

Gustav Hildebrand, one of the other assistants, wanted to try carving into plaster, so a Belgian immigrant who had aided the muralists laid the plaster for Hildebrand. Assisted by James Johnson, who later did FAP artwork at the University of Michigan, Hildebrand carved into the four walls by the main east entrance on the first floor as if he were doing a line drawing. In these walls he depicted everyday activities of sailors, and “personalized the drawings by depicting the armory’s cat, Tom, who frequently joined Hildebrand for lunch.” According to one expert of Depression-era art, Brodhead Naval Armory contains “the riches WPA art collection of any building in Michigan, with the greatest variety of different media in one collection.”

WWII - Present

World War II brought the armory out of its decorating mode and into mobilization. Immediately after the United States declaration of war, Detroit’s reservists were called to active duty and went wherever the Navy needed them. Two Navy schools were established at the armory - the Electric School, which trained electrician’s mates, and the Diesel School. Both schools trained navy and Coast Guard personnel, and the Diesel School included sailors from Britain’s Royal Navy in its classes.

This new role resulted in changes in appearance at the armory. A chain-link fence surrounded most of Gabriel Richard park and the building and a guard shack was built at the main entrance off of East Jefferson Avenue. A recreation building was built behind the armory to seat 350 men and be used by them during their off-duty hours. The drill deck was converted to a berthing area of bunk beds and wall lockers - a bedroom for 1,600-2,400 sailors at a time, and the motorpool was converted into a mess hall. When the war came to a close in late 1945, the armory was used

as a demobilization center for the Coast Guard, until it reverted to its original status as a reserve training facility in July of 1946, with eight times as many drilling reservists (3,220 enlisted and 192 officers) as there were before the war.

More changes in the armory were planned to accommodate the larger contingent. Balconies were installed along the east and west walls of the drill deck in 1947, and offices were built above and below them to provide desks and filing space for the numerous divisions. New training ships were also assigned to the armory, and a submarine was assigned at that time. A dock was built behind the armory to provide a mooring place for these vessels; a 384 foot pier designed by the engineering firm of Giffels and Vallet was completed in December of 1949.

Captain Brodhead retired from the navy in 1943, but remained the head of the Armory Board of Control for the next four years, until his death from pneumonia in 1947. His successor was Captain Leon J. Jacobi, Commanding Officer of the Armory and Commander of the Michigan Naval Force. As a tribute to Captain Brodhead's contributions to the Michigan Naval Militia, the Navy, and the armory, the state legislature changed the legal name of the armory building to the R. Thornton Brodhead Armory in 1947.

With the outbreak of hostilities in Korea in 1950, virtually all of the Marine Corps Reserve were recalled to active duty, as well as approximately 50% of the sailors. After the conflict, the Naval and Marine Corps Reserves once again reconstituted as training organizations, with approximately 1600 officers and enlisted between them. No new personnel were accepted into the Michigan Naval Force in 1950 and after, so the numbers dwindled due to attrition. Brodhead Armory, though, continued to be one of the busiest reserve training centers in the country. Admiral Jacobi pressured the state to allocate increased funding for this upkeep, but his calls fell on deaf ears. The state devoted decreasing amounts of money until 1963, when the legislature canceled all appropriations for maintenance of the armory. The state remained owner of the building but it was then leased to the Department of the Navy, who was then responsible for its maintenance, for a token sum of \$1 per year. As the building aged and the repair costs mounted, the Navy searched for a new training site. Despite the changing state-federal relationship, 1200 reservists continued to train in the Detroit armory in the late 1950's, and the dock was still home to ships and a submarine.

In 1965, the U.S. Naval Sea Cadet Corps, a youth organization sponsored by the Navy League of the United States, formed a unit at Brodhead. It drilled under the name of the James M. Hannan Division. Membership in the reserve continued to decrease through the 1960's due to the existence of the draft, requiring active duty service of men that might otherwise join the reserve, and then decreased interest in general. The U.S. Coast Guard Reservists joined their navy and marine counterparts, using the armory as their drill site.

The last change in ships at Detroit would add the submarine USS *Piper* to the pier in July, 1967. No large scale mobilization of Brodhead's reservists took place during the Vietnam War, but active duty sailors and marines served tours of duty. As American involvement in the Vietnam

War slowed, military budgets were trimmed and training facilities consolidated. With the disappearance of the Naval Militia and subsequent lease arrangement between the state and the Navy, the armory became like any other command; the name of Brodhead Naval Armory became second to the generic title of Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Center. Its primary mission in the 1960's and 70's was to provide basic training to new recruits. The Navy assigned new commanding officers every three years or so, and for many it would be his final assignment before retirement.

Brodhead reservists participated in numerous community goodwill projects in addition to their training. They aided in sandbagging and storm proofing the Grosse Pointe War Memorial building during a fierce storm in 1973, and they painted Belle Isle's Remick Band Shell. Although the ships stationed at Brodhead were either gone or decommissioned, the pier remained a popular spot for local fisherman, until 1976, when it was finally demolished. The Navy considered other tenants upon its departure, since the building would revert to the City of Detroit if it was to leave. The fifty foot parking lot to the west of the building was constructed in the 1970's.

A new renovation project began in 1978, when Yaeger was invited back to restore his mural. 1980 marked the 50th anniversary of the building, and its history was celebrated that year. It was placed on the state's historic register, and tours and open houses took place.

Despite the Navy's intention to find a new training site, it remained in the building until March, 1989. The reservists of 1st Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, however, did not move. The Marine Corps, a component of the Department of the Navy, negotiated a ten-year lease with the State of Michigan, and began to improve the building.

In the 1990's, Detroit's reservists were mobilized in support of Operation Desert Storm and served with 3D Marine Division in the Far East for eight months. The Marines provided rescue and relief assistance in the Philippines during and after the eruption of the Mt. Pinatubo volcano, and were awarded the Joint Meritorious Unit Award for their outstanding service.

The winter of 1991-92 brought disaster to the armory's artwork. Although the roof was repaired in 1965, leaks continued to be a problem. Water seeped into the plaster which was the base for the David Fredenthal's frescoes, severely damaged the mural in the wardroom. Funding from the Marine Corps and Navy was used to modify the plumbing, electrical, roofing and other aspects of the building, but the artwork was not restored. The armory is still utilized for the benefit of the Detroit community; the Marine Corps Reserve's annual Toys for Tots program is completely run by active duty staff, and the armory has been home to P.A.L.'s Youth Basketball League, high school graduations and special community sports activities. The Brodhead Armory Preservation Society was founded in 1998 for the purpose of coordinating efforts to rehabilitate and maintain the armory as a historic structure.

(For bibliography, see Hacala, Mark T., *A History of the R. Thornton Brodhead Armory*,

Detroit's Naval & Marine Corps Reserve Center, 1993.)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

(From *National Register of Historic Places*, Detroit Naval (Brodhead) Armory nomination form)

The Detroit Naval (Brodhead) Armory is a Modernistic limestone structure at the northeast corner of Gabriel Richard Park on Detroit's riverfront near the Belle Isle Bridge. Its location is south of the intersection of East Jefferson and Baldwin Avenues. The building is comprised of four main sections: a vestibule, the main drill hall, an office and penthouse section, and a company drill hall. It contains a large array of Depression-era WPA art, including wood and plaster carvings and murals. Between the front of the building and East Jefferson Avenue is a semicircular driveway and lawn. Centered within the lawn is a flagpole erected in 1943 and a large, white Navy stock anchor, which tradition and photographic evidence support as having come from the USS *Yantic*, a Civil War gunboat whose hull is buried in a filled-in boat slip in Richard Park. The building's front facade faces East Jefferson Avenue. A fifty car parking lot runs adjacent to the west side of the drill hall portion of the armory. Another parking area extends from the rear (south) end of the building's fenced vehicle compound to the Detroit River.

The vestibule at the front or north side of the building is composed of a center section and two wings. The center is two story and square arched with the columns separating five double--doored entrances on the first floor and five windows on the second floor. The four free spaces between these windows contain Pewabic Pottery tiles portraying Naval and Marine Corps insignia. Two slender stairway windows flank the main vestibule sides. The wings are each one story with two windows on the facade.

The main drill hall section of the building is set back from the vestibule. It has a shallow gabled parapet, on the limestone facade of which is a circular Pewabic Pottery tile of the seal of the State of Michigan. The east and west sides of the drill hall each have five two-story mullioned-glass windows with vertical pivot hung insets. A bronze relief memorial to Edwin Denby is attached to the west wall at the south corner. This section of the building was designed with a steel frame and limestone-covered cinder block walls. The roof is supported by a subdivided Pratt truss support system. Beneath the south end of the drill hall is a pistol range which runs east to west.

Connected with the south end of the drill hall is the office wing of the armory. It is a four-story structure with a basement. Of similar construction to the drill hall, the walls of the office wing have steel frame supports and limestone-covered cinder block. Its floors and roof are concrete. It has steel pivoting sash windows on the east, west, and south sides of each floor and two double-doored stairway entrances on the east side. The south and west sides had only a partial third story originally. WPA funding allowed for additions to the third story and construction of the fourth between 1936 and 1937. The basement in this wing of the armory has a center passageway off of which are several large shop and storage spaces, the boiler room, and a vehicle garage.

The first floor of the office wing has a central main passageway, off of which are several large office spaces and a men's lavatory. The southern end of this floor houses several works of Depression-era art. Plaster carvings on the walls done in the form of line drawings depict various scenes of naval life. Eleven oak doors and one over door bear relief carvings depicting historic ships, heraldic crests, and significant persons in Detroit history. The south corner commanding officer's office also contains carved cabinet doors with depictions of the zodiac signs.

A main stairway leads from the first floor to the fourth, and is adorned with an oak bannister, one of the 1930's art projects, carved with representations of sea creatures, plants, and mermaids. The second floor has an identical layout to the first, with office spaces and a lavatory and shower coming off the central passageway.

The third floor contains the wardroom, lazarette, officers' cloak, locker, and shower rooms, office spaces, the mess hall, and the galley. The locker room, shower, lazarette, and wardroom entrances come off a landing from the south stairway. The wood carvings from the bannister are enhanced by more door and overdoor carvings, each identifying the purpose of its room. The southernmost room is the wardroom which, in ship's parlance, is the officers' dining room and lounge. Here is contained the five panels of David Fredenthal's fresco above bookcases and a protruding central fireplace. Moving to the northeast, the next room is the mess hall, an essentially rectangular room whose walls are adorned with Edgar Yaeger's ship murals. Running west and parallel to the mess hall is the lazarette, with a bar, booth seating, and several small tables. A third mural, by Fredenthal, occupies the wall opposite the bar, while doors and overdoors contain more wood carvings.

North of the mess hall is the galley, with its large stove and oven, an unused walk-in freezer and dumbwaiter. On the west side of the building are several offices which connect to the officers' locker room and back to the landing at the south stairwell.

The fourth floor is a partial story containing several small rooms originally intended to serve as visitors' quarters. A larger open room lies to the north of the visitors' rooms. Staircases access the fourth floor at the north and south ends.

A small company drill hall adjacent to the main drill hall and office wing was constructed in 1936-1937. It is made of cinder block stone faced curtain walls with a concrete frame and floor. Steel trusses support its arched gypsum roof.

Criteria: The proposed historic district meets the first and third criteria contained in section 25-2-2: (1) Sites, buildings, structures, or archeological sites where cultural, social, spiritual, economic, political or architectural history of the community, city, state or nation is particularly reflected or exemplified; (3) Buildings or structures which embody the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural specimen, inherently valuable as a representation of a period, style or method of construction.

The proposed district contains only one contributing resource, the armory itself. There are no non-contributing resources.

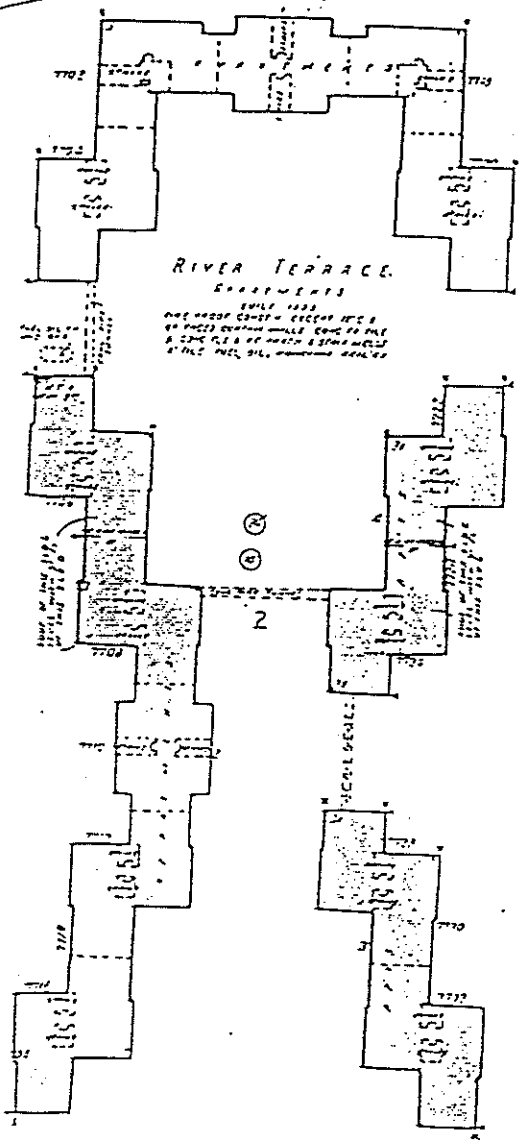
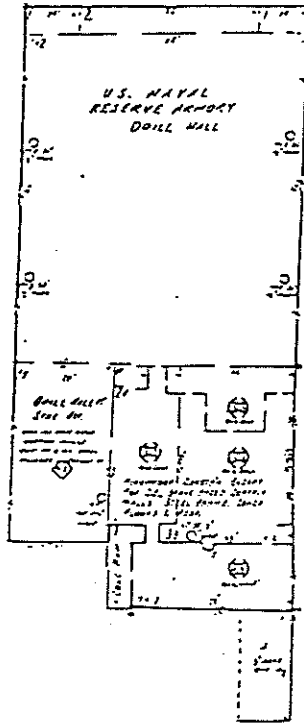
Recommendation: The Historic Designation Advisory Board recommends that City Council adopt an ordinance of designation for the proposed historic district with the design treatment level of "rehabilitation." A draft ordinance is attached for City Council's consideration.

JEFFERSON AV. E.

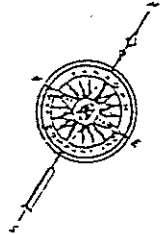
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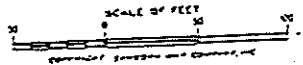
BRODHEAD NAVAL ARMORY



Gabriel Richard
Park



Proposed R. Thornton Brodhead Armory
Historic District
7600 East Jefferson Avenue
(boundaries shown in heavy black lines)



Detroit Ri