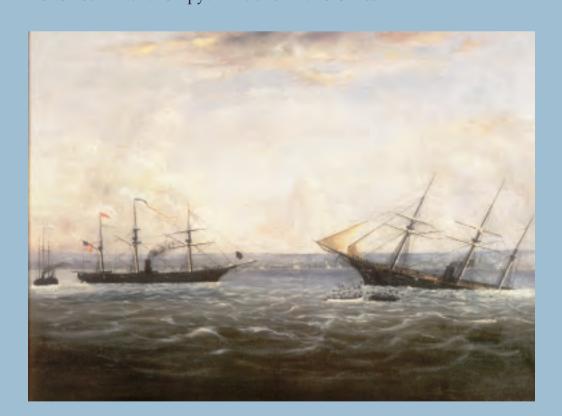# PORTSMOUTH NAVY YARD

THE PORTSMOUTH NAVY YARD WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1800 when the federal government perceived a need to expand the Navy in order to counter French privateer attacks against merchant shipping. It has served varied functions over the years, first constructing wooden warships, then ironclads and, finally, submarines. Threatened with closure many times, beginning in the 1870s and as recently as 2005, the Navy Yard remains a vital component of the local economy.

NAVY YARD PRISON

The castle-like prison at the Navy Yard, with its distinctive crenellations, was constructed between 1903 and 1908 with later additions in 1912 and 1943. Its inmate population reached a peak in World War II, when over 3,000 sailors and marines were imprisoned there. It has been closed since 1974, deemed wholly inadequate by modern standards of incarceration.

Photograph, *Aerial of Prison*. Courtesy of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Public Affairs Office.

LAUNCHING of the L-8

The L-8, shown at its launching in 1917, was the first submarine built at the Portsmouth Navy Yard. The shipyard went on to construct 79 submarines in World War II, with a record four being launched in a single day in 1944. Its first nuclear submarine was launched in 1957 and its last in 1969. The shipyard is now dedicated to the maintenance of nuclear attack submarines.

Postcard, *Launch out of dry dock*. Courtesy of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Public Affairs Office.

RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

In 1905, Theodore Roosevelt proposed to warring Japan and Russia that the Navy Yard serve as the site of a peace conference. The talks were held in Building 86, which is now the Yard's administrative headquarters. The Peace Treaty ended hostilities and gained Roosevelt the Nobel Peace Prize.

Photograph, *Japanese and Russian Delegates at Conference Table*. Courtesy of Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Public Affairs Office.
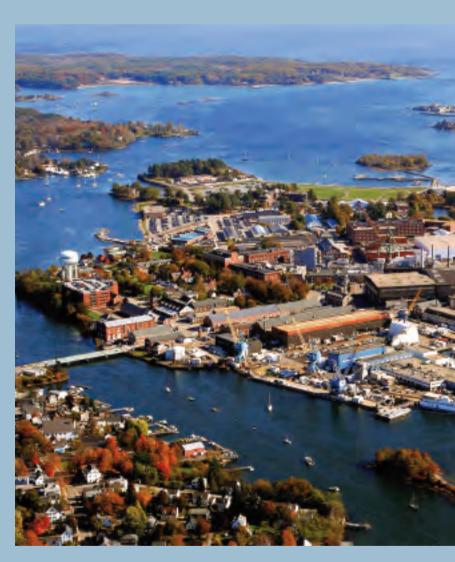
U.S.S. KEARSARGE

The three-masted steam sloop *U.S.S. Kearsarge* is, without question, the most famous of all Portsmouth-built warships. On June 19, 1864 she engaged the Confederate raider *CSS Alabama*, which in the previous twenty-two months had captured and burned at least fifty-five Union merchant ships. In an epic one-hour and twenty-minute sea battle just three miles off the coast of Cherbourg, France, *Kearsarge* sank the *Alabama*, sustaining no loss of life and minimal damage to the ship. This image, by Portsmouth painter Thomas P. Moses, is a typical re-creation of the event.

Thomas P. Moses, *Painting of Kearsarge & Alabama Sea Battle*. Courtesy of Richard Candee.

A CLUSTER of ISLANDS

Over the years fill was added to connect the original cluster of islands in Portsmouth Harbor into the single 278-acre land mass on which the Navy Yard now stands. The original islands are shaded in the drawing above.

Aerial Photograph, *Portsmouth Naval Shipyard*, 2007. Courtesy of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard Public Affairs Office.

Drawing of islands making up shipyard by Susan Kress Hamilton, Phineas (based on 1978 drawing by Sue Turner in the *Cradle of American Shipbuilding*, a publication of the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.)
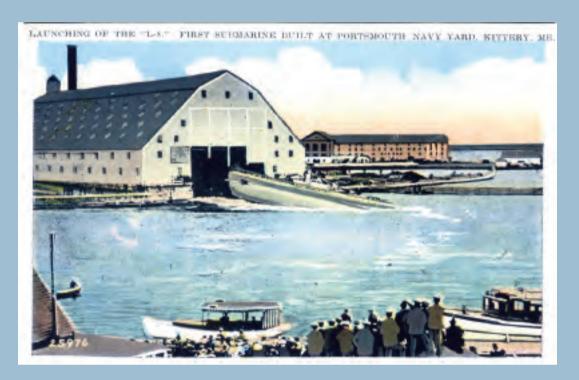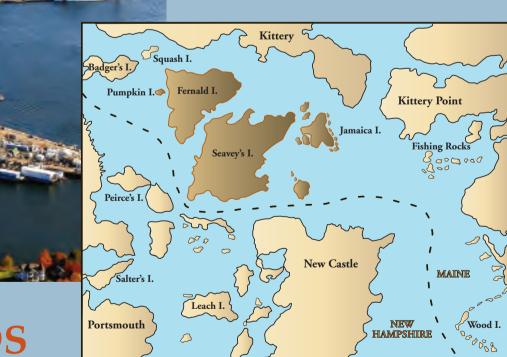
THE COMMANDANT'S HOUSE

This house has been the home of Navy Yard commanders since its major renovation in 1815. Its first resident was Isaac Hull, captain of the *U.S.S. Constitution* ("Old Ironsides"). During an epic 1812 battle his ship defeated *H.M.S. Guerriere*. Admiral David Farragut, naval hero of the Civil War, passed his last days here, dying in the home in 1870.

Photograph. Courtesy of the Public Affairs Office, Portsmouth Naval Shipyard.