Philadelphia: Birthplace of the U.S. Navy (1794 - 1801)

Philadelphia is known throughout the world as the birthplace of American democracy. Visitors come by the millions each year to walk the streets and see the buildings where Franklin, Jefferson, and many others debated and delineated the founding principles of the United States. Both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States were signed in Philadelphia (in what is now known as Independence Hall), and the city served as the nation’s first capital from the Revolutionary War up through 1800.

Few of Philadelphia’s visitors are likely aware that the city is also the birthplace of the U.S. Navy. On March 27, 1794, President George Washington signed the Naval Act, which called for the purchase of six frigates to defend the country. Built in a shipyard below Carpenter Street in Philadelphia’s Southwark neighborhood, the first of the commissioned ships launched from a private shipyard on May 10, 1797. Shortly thereafter, the Navy purchased its first piece of real estate along the Delaware River, establishing the Southwark Yard between Federal and Reed Streets in 1801.

From Southwark to League Island (1801 - 1876)

The Southwark Yard remained active for much of the 19th century, serving the country well as a production center during the War of 1812 up through the Civil War. More than 50,000 Philadelphians watched the first warship launch from Southwark: the wooden-hulled Franklin. New technology allowing iron-clad ships changed the production process, necessitating changes at the Southwark Yard to keep it competitive with newer facilities in Massachusetts and Virginia. Investments in floating dry docks (the first in the world) extended its useful life, but eventually it became clear that Philadelphia would need an entirely new shipyard.

The City of Philadelphia eventually transferred 923-acre League Island to the U.S. Government in 1868 for $1. Funding came slowly in the wake of the Civil War, but the first buildings began to rise in the 1870s. After eight years of running two shipyards, Southwark closed in 1876.

120 Years on Broad Street (1876 - 1996)

The Philadelphia Naval Shipyard (PNSY) continued to operate as a naval base until 1996, employing more than 40,000 people during its peak production period in World War II. During that time, 53 warships were constructed, and an additional 1,218 were repaired. The year 1970 saw the completion of the Blue Ridge, the last new ship to be built at the Yard. Rumors of closure persisted in the decades following, becoming reality when the Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) made the decision to cease operations in 1991. A court challenge postponed the inevitable for several years, and in the interim the USS John F. Kennedy received a two year overhaul at the PNSY (this would become its final assignment). The Philadelphia Naval Shipyard closed on September 26, 1996.
The Navy Yard Today

The Navy Yard has undergone a remarkable transformation throughout the years. Looking around the Navy Yard today, it is hard to imagine that its role as a productive part of Philadelphia’s economy was ever uncertain. Nevertheless, this was the case when the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) announcements of 1991 and 1995 brought the closure of nearly all naval activities at the former Naval Shipyard. The only Navy facilities that remained after the 1995 BRAC were Naval Ship Systems Engineering Station (NAVSSES), the Propeller Shop and Foundry, and the Naval Inactive Ship Maintenance Facility, all which remain in operations to this day.

One hundred and twenty years after handing over League Island to the federal government, the City of Philadelphia once again became the landlord and owner of the Navy Yard. In March 2000, the Philadelphia Authority for Industrial Development (PAID) acquired 1,000 acres on behalf of the City of Philadelphia from the U.S. Navy. Equivalent in size to Center City Philadelphia, local officials saw the opportunity in this expansive area. A comprehensive master planning process in 2004 and updated in 2013 resulted in a new vision for the former industrial property, as a vibrant mixed-use hub that will be developed to accommodate thousands of new employees and eventually, residents, over the next 20 years. In its master developer role at the Navy Yard, PIDC, Philadelphia’s public-private economic development corporation, manages all aspects of the property’s management and development, including master planning, leasing, property management, infrastructure development, utility operation, civic and social engagement, and structuring development transactions on behalf of PAID and the City of Philadelphia.

Today, the Navy Yard is a historic, thriving waterfront neighborhood with more than 150 companies occupying over 7.5 million square feet of office, industrial/manufacturing, and research and development space. The 13,500+ employees working at the Navy Yard have reinvigorated the former shipyard and its historic buildings, and the word is spreading fast. The Navy Yard’s historic waterfront community and unique development opportunities make it a dynamic location for local companies seeking to create collaborative, progressive, and modern work environments. Commercial shipbuilders, Navy engineers, fashion designers, and energy efficiency researchers contribute to an increasingly diverse and energetic urban campus that is both charming and cutting edge. The Walking Tour & Visitor Guide will help you explore the Navy Yard at your own pace, experiencing the old and new up close and on foot.
TRANSPORTATION

Situated at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers at the southern end of Broad Street, the Navy Yard is one of the region’s most accessible destinations in Greater Philadelphia. Visitors can reach the Navy Yard by subway, bus, car, bike, or even on foot.

RIDE
The Navy Yard offers two free bus routes Monday through Friday. For schedules and maps, please visit www.navyyard.org/shuttle or download the free mobile app (for Apple and Android devices only).

- The Navy Yard Loop runs between NRG Station and points throughout the Navy Yard
- The Center City Express runs between Center City (stop is located on 10th Street, between Market and Filbert Streets and at 4th & Market Street and points throughout the Navy Yard.

SEPTA’s Broad Street Line (orange) terminates at NRG Station, just 0.6 miles from the Navy Yard’s Broad Street Gate. Subway trains run every 7-8 minutes throughout the day, and every 10-12 minutes after evening rush hour.

Riders can transfer to the Broad Street Subway from both the Market-Frankford (Blue) Line and the Subway Surface Trolley (Green) Lines at the City Hall/15th Street Station. Concourse connections are also available to the PATCO Line and SEPTA’s Regional Rail.

BIKE
Visitors can take advantage of the Indego Bike Share program at the Navy Yard and nearby neighborhoods. Please visit rideindego.com for more information on day & month passes. Indego Bike Share Stations are located at:

- Crescent Park (Rouse Boulevard & Crescent Drive)
- Central Green (12th Street & Normandy Place)
- 15th Street & Kitty Hawk Avenue
- NRG Station (Broad Street & Pattison Avenue)

DRIVE
From I-95 South: Take Exit 17 for PA-611/Broad Street. Turn left at the light onto S. Broad Street. The Navy Yard’s Broad Street entrance will be immediately in front of you.

From I-95 North: Take Exit 17 for PA-611/Broad Street. At the end of the ramp, at the light, turn left on to S. Broad Street. Head south for 0.8 miles to the Navy Yard’s Broad Street entrance.

From I-76 East: Take Exit 349 for PA-611/Broad Street. Turn right on S. Broad Street. Head south for 1 mile to to the Navy Yard’s Broad Street entrance.

WALK
From NRG Station, visitors can walk south on Broad Street 0.6 miles (approximately 10 minutes) to reach the Navy Yard’s Broad Street entrance. After exiting the station, cross to the west (southbound) side of Broad Street and turn left, keeping FDR Park on your right.

PARKING
Free parking is available at the Navy Yard. Visitors may take advantage of ample on-street parking, or utilize the parking lot located at 13th Street & Normandy Place (see map on page 4).
THE WALKING TOUR

The tour route is approximately 2 miles long and will take the average walker an hour to complete. Restrooms are available at Building 543 on weekdays (Stop 14), Central Green - inside the wooden sunlawn (Stop 9), and at the Courtyard by Marriott Philadelphia South. Food/Beverages are marked as orange stars on the map to the right.

The Navy Yard is open to the public. Refer to Page 3 for complete directions. For additional information about the Navy Yard, visit www.navyyard.org or call 215-THE-YARD. Connect with the Navy Yard on social media for the latest news, events, photos, and more! Please enjoy the tour.

TOUR STOPS

1. Broad Street Entrance & Gatehouses
2. Quarters A
3. Reserve Basin
4. Crescent Park
5. Mural Arts at the Navy Yard
6. Quarters on Broad (M1-M7)
7. Marine Parade Grounds
8. Buildings 100 & 101
9. Central Green
10. Receiving Station Square
11. Chapel
12. League Island Park
13. Dry Dock Park
14. Building 543
15. Building 1
16. Commandant’s Building
1. Broad Street Entrance & Gatehouses (1926)
Since the Navy Yard’s relocation to what was then League Island in 1871, Broad Street has served as its main thoroughfare, and a gate has marked this northernmost entrance ever since. Once restricted to naval workers and personnel, the Navy Yard now welcomes more than 13,500 employees from 150 organizations! The gatehouses you see today (Building 501 on the west side and Building 500 on the east) are not the first to occupy this location. The originals, dating to the 1870s, were replaced in 1926 as the city prepared for the Sesqui-Centennial Exposition, a world’s fair that occupied most of South Philadelphia below Packer Avenue, including the very north side of the Navy Yard. Today, Building 500 houses Bar Amis, Vetri Family’s home cooking Italian restaurant with outdoor terrace. For reservations, call 215-282-3184.

3. Reserve Basin (1897)
As the name suggests, the Reserve Basin serves as a holding area for ships on reserve status. The U.S. Navy places certain ships from each class on “museum hold” for a period of time during which they are eligible for conversion into floating museums if a given port or city is interested. The most notable local example of this is the USS New Jersey, which was constructed at the PNSY, and now has a permanent home on the waterfront in Camden, NJ. One of its gun barrels is on display at the Marine Parade Grounds (Stop 7).

2. Quarters A (1874)
Just west of the gatehouse is Quarters A, the Navy Yard’s oldest building. Built in 1874 to serve as the civil engineer’s residence, it later became an admiral’s quarters. The house is now registered on the National Register of Historic Places and is part of a designated Historic District that protects many of the Navy Yard’s remaining structures. No longer residential, Quarters A now serves as office space for an innovative technology company.

The gates of the Navy Yard mark mile 9.75 of Philadelphia’s Broad Street Run, a Philly tradition that’s grown into the country’s biggest 10-mile race (40,000 participants each year). The Marine Parade Grounds hosts post-race celebrations, not to mention year-round soccer, softball, kickball, and football intramural sports leagues.
5. Mural Arts at the Navy Yard

The public sculpture in front of Five Crescent is designed by Virgil Marti, called *Five Standards (Dazzle)*, and pays homage to the Navy Yard’s history. Dazzle is a type of early 20th century naval camouflage, where naval ships were painted with elaborate, intersecting patterns of contrasting colors, creating optical illusions that disguised the ships’ speed, size, and direction. In 2017, in collaboration with Mural Arts Philadelphia, multiple artworks were installed around the Navy Yard adding to the arts & culture mission, establishing the Navy Yard as a site for creative experimentation and exploration through public art by Miriam Singer and Nate Harris. Along your tour, see if you can spot all of the other installations around the Navy Yard!

LOCATIONS
1. Five Standards at Five Crescent Drive
2. Gate Keepers at the Marine Parade Grounds
3. Murals on the Broad Street Jersey Barriers
4. Collage by Miriam Singer on Navy Yard Transit
5. Shipping Container at FS Investment
6. Dazzle Wall on Admiral Peary Way
7. Patterned graphics in Central Green
8. Mural Scrim on Kitty Hawk Avenue
6. Quarters on Broad (M-1 - M-7)  
(1909-1912)
As you make your way south on Broad Street, you will encounter a row of Georgian revival homes overlooking the Reserve Basin. These former Marine Corps officers’ quarters contribute a neighborhood scale element to a place that strikingly juxtaposes massive naval ships and industrial buildings with historic homes and modern office buildings. Carefully restored in recent years, the buildings now accommodate a variety of small businesses.

7. Marine Parade Grounds (1901)
More than the site of drills and marches, the Marine Parade Grounds witnessed the birth of naval aviation in 1911, when Lt. Alfred Cunningham became the first marine to fly when he constructed a ramp at one end of the grounds, and attempted, with no success, to launch a small plane into sustained flight. Today, paying homage to the long-lasting history USS New Jersey has to the Navy Yard, a 16'/50 caliber Mark 7 gun barrel — originally installed on USS New Jersey at the Philadelphia Naval Shipyard on February 1943, rests on the northwest corner of the Marine Parade Grounds along side Broad Street & Intrepid Avenue. The Marine Parade Grounds host a variety of events including the weekly Lunch Truck Lineup (third photo on the right), sports leagues, beer festivals, the Broad Street Run, PAWS Mutt Strut, Diner en Blanc, Wanderlust, Philadelphia Art & Antique Show, and more!

8. Buildings 100 and 101  
(1901, 1911)
Two distinctive marine barracks face the Marine Parade Grounds. The newer of the two, Building 101, is the first on the left as you make your way down Broad Street. A handsome example of Renaissance Revival architecture, its Romanesque arches create a pleasant terrace on the ground level with large windows for the floors above. The exterior is largely unchanged from Rankin, Kellogg, and Crane’s original specifications, but its dramatically retrofitted interior is the handiwork of another local architecture firm, Vitetta. Building 101 is a multi-tenant building, home to staff from PIDC, Philadelphia’s public-private economic development corporation responsible for managing and developing the Navy Yard.

Building 100 was completed nine years prior to its companion by architect Henry Ives Cobb. Not unlike Building 101, it features a covered porch overlooking the Marine Parade Grounds, and several Romanesque features along its front facade. Today, with tenants like Ben Franklin Technology Partners of Southeastern Pennsylvania (BFTP/SEP), Building 100 Innovation Center is Greater Philadelphia’s energizing new hub for innovation, entrepreneurship, and business growth.

THE HISTORIC CORE
The heart and geographical center of the Navy Yard is its Historic Core, a nationally certified district on the National Register of Historic Places that stretches from the front gates, down Broad Street, to the Delaware River waterfront. Dotted with late 19th and early 20th century buildings, the Historic Core’s rectangular street grid and abundance of red brick gives it a distinctly Philadelphian ambiance, while hulking naval vessels and a diverse mix of modern office tenants create an environment unlike any other. In recent years, much of the building stock has been preserved and adaptively reused to suit businesses as varied as the architectural styles and forms contained within the Historic Core. Georgian Revival and Beaux Arts homes stand in close proximity to soaring industrial warehouse and manufacturing buildings, which themselves range in style from turn-of-the-century to early modernist.

Near the entrance, the Reserve Basin and the fleet of decommissioned warships serve as a dramatic reminder of the Navy Yard’s history. At the southern end of Broad Street, the Delaware River waterfront is seeing new life as a recreational oasis for the Navy Yard’s 13,500 employees, as the Riverfront Greenway provides a recreational path alongside former officers’ quarters, ending at Dry Dock Park.
11. Chapel, Building 649 (1942)
Built during the height of the Navy Yard's productive World War II period, the diminutive Georgian Revival building seems hardly large enough to accommodate the many thousands of soldiers and workers once stationed and living on the base. Nevertheless, it was the focal point for religious life at the Navy Yard, and serves today as a home for the Chapel of the Four Chaplains, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting cultural harmony and religious tolerance. Its name is a reference to the four men who sacrificed their lives to save others during the sinking of the USAT Dorchester in 1943.

10. Receiving Station Square (1919 - 1942)
Immediately beyond Central Green sit Buildings 104, 608, and 640, a U-shaped Colonial Revival-style complex that once served as a barracks for U.S. Marines, which made up the Navy Yard's security forces, and performed guard duties throughout the shipyard up until the 1970s. This practice was then discontinued, and the Navy converted the building to house support services like payroll, reimbursements, and even a daycare center. A survey of the building years after closure revealed coffee mugs still half full and cribs with blankets and rattles, a reminder of how abruptly naval activities ceased at the Navy Yard. Today, the red brick buildings are under agreement to develop into a 230-room boutique hotel.

Central Green, a five-acre park set between 12th Street, Rouse Boulevard, Intrepid Avenue, and Normandy Place, is designed by world-renowned landscape architecture firm James Corner Field Operations. A 20-ft wide “Social Track” organizes the project and frames a unique, immersive interior park. Marked by a large digital clock and oversized chaise lounge chairs, this 1/5 mile loop allows for measured exercise, sunbathing and socialization. The park interior is home to a hammock grove, sunlawn, coworking conference table, bocce court, table tennis, and TRX fitness area. Many sustainable design elements are included in the design of the park, including plantings of more than 24,000 trees, shrubs, groundcover plants, and bulbs, and stormwater management features like 41,100 square feet of pervious pavement throughout the park and the Bio Basin, which treats the first inch of runoff from 12th Street. Restrooms are located here, inside the wooden sunlawn.

GREEN AT THE YARD

The Navy Yard's Smart Energy Campus brings Philadelphia closer to the goal of becoming America's greenest city. The Smart Energy Campus is a collaboration of businesses, universities, and government, focused on making the Navy Yard a national center for energy research, education, and commercialization. By actively engaging all of the Navy Yard’s assets - its people, infrastructure, and buildings - the Smart Energy Campus is developing and deploying next generation solutions in energy efficiency, smart grids, and related engineering and IT fields. The Smart Energy Campus’ assets and infrastructure include LEED® certified buildings, innovative stormwater management practices, and an expansive open space network, combined in one highly integrated and sustainable community.

Unparalleled opportunities exist to experiment with innovative building and operating practices and to set new standards for sustainable design in Philadelphia. To date, these include:

Green Infrastructure: A grid of ‘green streets’ throughout the Corporate Center features rain gardens and bioswales to manage stormwater runoff. A series of new and revitalized public spaces increase the amount of pervious surface while providing room for healthy activities.

Green Buildings: The existing stock of historic structures present ample opportunities for adaptive reuse of original materials and the buildings themselves. New high-performance and LEED construction in the Corporate Center sets a standard for office districts everywhere.

Green Energy: The Navy Yard’s unregulated energy grid provides a unique platform for research, testing, and deployment of innovative solutions to national energy management, storage, and distribution issues. Many of The Navy Yard’s tenants work daily in research, development, and commercialization of green technology.

Green Power: In 2017, the Navy Yard embarked on the first phase of a community-shared solar power project. The initial installation includes 1,295 rooftop solar panels in the Navy Yard and provides a total of 440kW system capacity. Navy Yard Community Solar is the first of its kind in Pennsylvania, joining just 25 states in the U.S. with community solar projects underway.
14. Urban Outfitters, Inc.’s Corporate Campus & Building 543 (1939)

Sculptural stone signage marks the campus of one of the Navy Yard’s best-known tenants: Urban Outfitters, Inc. (URBN). The international clothing brand began in a West Philadelphia rowhouse, and has been based in Philadelphia ever since. As it outgrew its Center City office space, URBN sought a place that could accommodate the growing company in one location. The Navy Yard’s distinctive industrial buildings appealed to URBN officials, and the rest is history. Their reuse of several adjacent buildings in the Historic Core has won several design awards and serves as a vibrant reminder of the opportunities the Navy Yard presents for companies looking for distinctive new headquarters.

The centerpiece of URBN’s corporate campus, Building 543’s conversion from a pipe and coppersmith shop to fashion headquarters and bustling commons is nothing short of jaw-dropping. Built in the expansive period of construction that preceded World War II, the former metalworking facility has soaring 80-foot ceilings that give the building’s many public facilities a light and open feeling. The cafeteria-style restaurant, Shop 543, and coffee shop/cafe, Jharoka, are open to the public, drawing crowds from across the Navy Yard and the city. A koi pond, fitness center, and designer work spaces all face into the central space, where an all-glass southern facade affords breathtaking views of the aircraft carrier currently docked at the Navy Yard - the USS John F. Kennedy.

13. Dry Dock 1 (1891)

The most notable thing about the Navy Yard’s first dry dock is its designer: civil engineer Robert E. Peary, who went on to become an admiral, and then a polar explorer. The boulevard that parallels the waterfront extending east from this dry dock is named in his honor. At 500 feet long, 90 feet wide, and 25.5 feet deep, this dry dock was not large enough to handle modern naval vessels, and even in its time, it was smaller than granite docks at other yards (it is made of timber piling). Obsolete as a work space, the dry dock is incorporated as a water feature into the Riverfront Greenway extending along two miles of the Navy Yard’s waterfront. Its location within the URBN campus makes it ideal for conversion to recreational use as Dry Dock Park, created by DIRT Studio in 2009.

FILM AT THE YARD

The Navy Yard is a preferred location for directors and producers shooting films in Philadelphia. A former airplane hangar in the port is now a go-to soundstage for M. Night Shyamalan, Paramount Pictures, and many others. M. Night Shyamalan, in fact, took a liking to Building 10, one of the buildings on URBN’s campus, and included it in the film Unbreakable. The Navy Yard’s eclectic buildings and landscape have also made their way into many other Philadelphia films, including Annapolis, The Woodsman, Jesus’ Son, and the CBS television series Cold Case.
15. Building 1 (1875)

As a general rule, buildings at the Navy Yard are numbered in the order they were constructed, but Building 1 actually opened a couple months after Quarters A (naval residences followed a lettering system to differentiate them from numbered commercial and industrial buildings). Noting building numbers as you move through the site provides clues as to the sheer scale of construction over the years. The Navy Yard has already experienced many redevelopments as it has adapted to military needs and technological advancements, but its historic structures have remained largely intact despite this rapid cycle of construction and demolition.

The U.S. Navy still uses Building 1 to this day - it is now the Public Works Office.

16. Commandant’s Building, Building 6 (1901)

In the U.S. Marine Corps, the Commandant is the highest ranking officer, as well as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Building 6, the Commandant’s Building, provides accommodations commensurate with the title, featuring a striking Beaux Arts exterior and landscaped driveway opening into Broad Street. The building filled in for Washington, D.C. in the movie National Treasure. Philadelphia also got the chance to play itself in the 2004 thriller, which featured many of the city’s most famous sites, including a memorable chase along the rooftop of Independence Hall.

U.S. NAVY

The Navy Yard has a 125 year history of innovation in our nation’s defense and its future lies in bringing new ideas and state-of-the-art technologies to the marketplace. Whether it’s through innovative design solutions, technological breakthroughs, or leading policy initiatives, research and development at the Navy Yard is driving Philadelphia and our nation to a more sustainable future.

The Naval Ship Systems Engineering Station (NVSSES), Carderock Division of the Naval Surface Warfare Center, is the U.S. Navy’s only organization responsible for shipboard machinery systems research and engineering. NVSSES focuses on the full spectrum of machinery engineering: from science and technology, through research, development, testing, and evaluation, to in-service engineering. With a $1.2 billion annual defense budget and nearly 3,000 civilian employees, NVSSES is keeping the Navy’s heritage of military innovation alive at the Navy Yard.
Since 2000, when PAID acquired 1,000 acres on behalf of the City of Philadelphia, more than $150 million in publicly funded infrastructure improvements have leveraged in excess of $750 million in new, private investment. The Navy Yard Master Plan, updated in early 2013 by Robert A.M. Stern Architects, allows for expansion of this dynamic, mixed-use campus, based on historic preservation, sustainability, and smart growth. The Plan’s vision includes environmentally friendly workplaces, notable architecture, industrial and commercial development, great public spaces, waterfront amenities, improved mass transit, and residential development. At full build-out, the Navy Yard will support up to 13.5 million square feet of facilities, attract $3 billion in private investment, and employ more than 30,000 people. The continued development of the Navy Yard as a progressive, sustainable, urban, waterfront community, includes the following:

**Corporate Center Expansion:** As development spreads down Rouse Blvd, two new districts are proposed: the dynamic new Canal District, along the Delaware River, which features the creation of a new 100’ x 1,000’ canal as the anchoring open space element, and the Mustin Park District, southeast of the Corporate Center District, organized around a new 7-acre park. These two new districts will add nearly two million square feet of commercial and mixed-use development to the Navy Yard.

**Subway Extension:** A 2008 feasibility study determined that the Navy Yard could one day be the new southern terminus of the Broad Street Subway, with a new station serving the community. This extension down South Broad Street and into the Navy Yard would accelerate development, ease congestion along nearby highways, and provide convenient, high-speed connectivity between the Navy Yard, the Sports Complex, Center City, and the region as a whole.

LOOKING AHEAD