

Historic Coast Guard Island

by
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Coast Guard Island is in the Oakland Estuary between Oakland and Alameda, California. The 67-acre island is situated in the historic Brooklyn Basin, now known as Embarcadero Cove.

The Island supports a number of U.S. Coast Guard facilities managed by Integrated Support Command Alameda, including Commander of Pacific Area, Commander of District Eleven, Sector San Francisco, an industrial service center, a training center for reserve and enlisted Coast Guard personnel, living quarters, three 378-foot high endurance cutters, one 418-foot National Security Cutter, a medical and dental clinic, and public works facilities to service the island.

Originally known as Government Island, this artificial



island was formed in 1913 by the dredging project that extended the Oakland Estuary to San Leandro Bay. The Coast Guard first came to the island in 1926 when it established Base 11. An Executive Order signed in September 1931 gave title to a 15-acre tract for a permanent base. Improvements were started at that time and by 1933 included streets, utilities, spur tracks, a trestle bridge from Oakland, a transformer station, and rebuilding of the existing wharves. The cost was more than one and a half million dollars and provided facilities for Base 11 and the Coast Guard Store (warehouses). The shore establishment expanded in 1939 with the amalgamation of the Lighthouse Service. A training center was established in 1940 to meet the service's increased personnel needs.

An area of 35 acres was acquired from the City of Alameda in 1939 with an additional 17 acres purchased by the U.S. Coast Guard in 1942. The entire island was devoted to training center facilities. The training center was first opened in June 1, 1942 with accommodations for 900 men. It was solely to train recruits. Specialty training was added later to include fireman, signalman, laundryman, radioman, boatswain's mate, cooks and bakers, and volunteer port security.

After the war, Government Island (aka Base Alameda) remained a Coast Guard Training Center with addition of the Weather Bureau, Internal Auditors, and the Bureau of Roads. During the late 1960s the Training & Supply Center was the Coast Guard's largest field unit on the West Coast. The Training Center graduated 60-100 seaman and fireman apprentices each week. The Supply Center provided support to the western area districts.

In 1982, the Training Center was closed and recruit training was accomplished exclusively at Cape May, New Jersey. Support Center Alameda was established June 1, 1982 and the island was renamed Coast Guard Island. The Pacific Area Command, Twelfth Coast Guard District, and Marine Safety Office San Francisco Bay moved from downtown San Francisco to the island. On June 24, 1987 the Maintenance & Logistics Command Pacific was established and located on the island. The Support Center was redesignated as Integrated Support Command Alameda on March 15, 1996. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coast_Guard_Island]

“David Rosen, who serves as the historian for the Coast Guard’s Pacific Area, said that since the service established a presence on the 67-acre island, some of its most storied leaders and well-known vessels have rotated through the unusual military base. ‘As a facility, the island has stood witness to much of the Coast Guard’s modern-era development,’” Rosen said. ‘Its streets carry the names of leaders who have distinguished themselves in battle or service over the years.’”

“While a variety of Coast units operate there, the island is mostly known for being the home to four of the Coast Guard’s so-called Hamilton-class high endurance Cutters—the *Sherman*, the *1111*, and the *Boutwell*. These ships—gleaming white with the traditional orange stripe across their bows...are the same size as the U.S. Navy’s current fleet of guided missile frigates.”

“Generally, if people know about the island it’s most likely because of the cutters they see moored our on wharf,” said spokesman Dan Dewell, a retired Coast Guard chief warrant officer who served on the island at various times during his active service career. “They’re a little hard to miss.” [[Sacramento Bee, November 9, 2009](http://www.sacbee.com/2009/11/09/coast-guard-island-a-new-home-for/)]

The Coast Guard is in the midst of a \$24 billion modernization program, and part of that will be for new cutters, which cost \$640 million each and can travel further, stay out longer, gather more electronic intelligence, and deliver more firepower.