



**MARE ISLAND  
SHORELINE  
HERITAGE  
PRESERVE**

## EVENT ADVISORY

June 1, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Remembering a Month of Explosions

#### **AT THE MARE ISLAND SHORELINE HERITAGE PRESERVE**

SUNDAY, JUNE 5 AFTERNOON SLIDE SHOW AND GUIDED WALK AND

SUNDAY, JUNE 12 MEMORIAL SERVICE TO COMMEMORATE 119<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF EXPLOSION  
THAT KILLED 15 USS BOSTON CREW BURIED AT HISTORIC NAVAL CEMETERY

[VALLEJO}, CA – Sunday, June 5, 2011 at 2:30pm the public is invited to view a slide show at the Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve Visitors Center about explosions that occurred in the months of June and July at the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot, the oldest in the Pacific, and take a docent led walk to commemorate the 110<sup>th</sup> anniversary of an explosion of an estimated 300 pounds of black powder at the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot Sunday, June 5, 1901. In a rare photo attached (courtesy of the Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum), photographer, W.F. Henry who had set up his photography equipment on the edge of the Napa River to photograph a new ferry, captured an image of the massive cloud from the explosion at 6:05am. It was available for sale in black and white and hand-tinted versions.

Sunday, June 12, 2011 at 2pm the public is invited to participate in a memorial service at the Mare Island Naval Cemetery to honor 15 members of the crew of the Protected Cruiser USS Boston who died June 13, 1892, one hundred and nineteen years ago in an ammunition explosion at the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot. The USS Boston crewmen lie at rest in their gravesites in the Mare Island Naval Cemetery and are honored by their fellow shipmates by the largest monument in the more than 150 year-old cemetery, the Navy's oldest in the Pacific. Attending members of the public will be asked to locate one of the graves of the young sailors and be given information from which to call out their name, rank and age. The service will include the raising of an American flag flown over the last of a line of seven U.S. Navy vessels named USS Boston, a fast attack nuclear submarine, SSN703, sent in the crew's honor by the USS Boston Shipmates [www.ussboston.org](http://www.ussboston.org). The USS Boston Shipmates is a reunion group for former crew of the last 3 vessels named the USS Boston and their families and is based in Amherst, New Hampshire.

The final commemoration in the Month of Explosions at the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot will be held on the July Second Saturday Access Day, July 9, 2011, at 2pm at the Naval Cemetery. Preserve volunteers will hold a special memorial commemorative service for yet another explosion that occurred July 9, 1917 in which the Chief Gunner at the Naval Ammunition Depot, his wife and two young daughters were killed by the blast of an explosion blamed on a German saboteur. They too, are buried in the Mare Island Naval Cemetery.

## Guided hikes at the Preserve

Friday June 2, Preserve volunteers continue their weekly Friday evening *Wine and Walks in the Preserve* 4:30-7pm. Share good company, appetizers and cheap, good wine supplied by Preserve volunteers or bring your own at the Visitors Center and other locations in the Preserve, followed by a docent led Preserve walk to view sunsets and visit sites such as the naval cemetery, Rowser Garden and former ammunition bunkers.

Volunteer Preserve manager and long-time Mare Island volunteer Myrna Hayes, leads a daily afternoon wildflower, nature and history walk along a portion of the main trail, including a visit to the Bill and Alma Rowser Legacy Gardens to learn about progress on the discovery and plans for rehabilitation of the more than 80 year-old garden. This walk is about 1.5 miles and leisurely and will leave from the Preserve Visitors Center at 3:30pm. Meet at the Preserve Visitors Center through the gate at the south end of Railroad Ave. on Mare Island. Wear comfortable shoes and a hat and bring water and snacks, sunscreen, binoculars and cameras.

## Public access at the Preserve

The Preserve will continue to open three days a week every Friday through Sunday 10am-sunset staffed by volunteers of the Mare Island Heritage Trust. The public is welcome to visit the Preserve free of charge. The Preserve is located at 1595 Railroad Ave. at the southern end of Railroad Ave. south of Touro University and the Army Reserve on Mare Island.

During the open days the public can walk or ride bicycles on a self-guided paved roadway trail with 14 interpretive stops along the 3-mile roundtrip route to the top of the hill and beyond. At this time of year, Preserve users will have the opportunity to view nesting osprey and great blue herons on their walk on the paved road trail leading to the oldest U.S. Naval cemetery in the Pacific and winding through portions of the Naval Ammunition Depot National Register Historic District to the scenic lookout at the top of Mare Island Hill with panoramic views of seven counties, Mt. Tamalpais, Mt. Diablo and the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. The Preserve is open rain or shine. Dress in layers. Picnic grounds are located on a former tennis court adjacent to the Naval Cemetery with nearby ammunition bunkers to explore. Refreshments are available at the Visitors Center. Dogs are allowed on leash.

Although entrance to the Preserve is free, donations help to keep the Preserve open regularly. Donations will also make possible Preserve volunteer's ability to increase the number of open days in the future and provide funds for purchase of tools and supplies for work parties, nature club activities, historic preservation, native plant restoration and special events.

Key features of the Preserve are spectacular scenic vistas encompassing seven Bay Area counties, Mt. Diablo, Mt. Tamalpais and Mt. St. Helena, the Carquinez Strait and Sonoma and Napa Valleys and the U.S. Navy's first cemetery in the Pacific, founded in 1858. Visitors may also view interpretive displays and an art show by members of the Benicia Plein Air Group portraying the Preserve at the Visitors Center in a former munitions storage magazine, Building A-167. Visit [www.mareislandpreserve.org](http://www.mareislandpreserve.org) for directions to the Preserve, located at 1595 Railroad Ave. on Mare Island.

The first parcels of the Preserve, were transferred to the City of Vallejo in a grant from the legislature through the California State Lands Commission in 2002 for public trust uses such as a park, for all Californians. Additional parcels were transferred in the Fall of 2010. The remainder of the 215-acre site is still undergoing environmental cleanup by the U.S. Navy. Volunteers have hosted free public access on the second Saturday of each month since April 2008 with expanded hours to every weekend Fri-Sun beginning in October 2010 through a use agreement with the City of Vallejo.

## Upcoming Events at the Preserve:

**June 11 Second Saturday Access Day** 9:00am-8:00pm. On Sunday, June 12 a 2pm Naval Cemetery service of history and music will honor 15 members of the crew of the USS Boston killed in an explosion at the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot, one hundred and nineteen years ago on June 13, 1892. Nature and history docent led walk at 3:30pm.

**June 24 Friday, Historic Naval Ammunition Depot and Shipyard Boat Tour with Dolphin Charters, Mare Island Heritage Trust and The Society for the History of Navy Medicine.** 10:00am-3:00pm. \$60 per person. Bring lunch. Leave from Vallejo Marina Guest Dock. Reservations: call 510-527-9622 or 1-800-472-9942. (this is an expected date, call to confirm)

**July 9 Saturday July Second Saturday Access Day** Preserve open 10am-8pm. Preserve volunteers will hold a special memorial commemorative service at the Mare Island Naval Cemetery for an explosion that occurred July 9, 1917 in which the Chief Gunner at the Naval Ammunition Depot, his wife and two young daughters, ages 12 and 8, were killed by the blast of an explosion blamed on a German saboteur. They are buried in the Mare Island Naval Cemetery.

**July 30 Saturday Mare Island Heritage Trust** volunteers will host two free tours with no pre-registration required, as part of the 18th Annual Laborfest 2011. Participants in the first tour starting at 11:30am, will learn about some of the labor issues that influenced work life at the shipyard and walk through the central shipyard with some of the workers who built and repaired Navy vessels up until the base closure in 1996. Following an optional brown bag lunch where complementary drinks will be served at the Shoreline Heritage Preserve picnic grounds, a second narrated walking and driving tour is scheduled to begin at 2pm with retired ILWU member Jeff Bonneville and Mare Island Shoreline Heritage Preserve manager Myrna Hayes. "A 'Mutiny' that Changed History" will describe what became known as the Port Chicago Mutiny that took place at the Mare Island Naval Ammunition Depot August 9, 1944, 3 weeks after the Port Chicago Explosion that resulted in the greatest loss of life on home soil during WWII.

**August 12-14 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Mare Faire** 10:00am-8:00pm. Naturalist and docent-led hikes throughout the Island, exhibits, music, food and a silent auction at the Preserve Visitors Center.

**Info.** Call 707-557-9816 or 707-249-9633.

Visit our website: [www.mareislandpreserve.org](http://www.mareislandpreserve.org)

**Please note:** High resolution photos of the Historic Shoreline available. Tours of The Preserve are available to any reporter or photographer covering these events. Call Myrna Hayes, 707-557-9816 or 707-249-9633 (cell) to schedule.

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