

ANTOINETTE MAURO ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

Biography

Antoinette Irrera Mauro (b. 1925) began working at the Brooklyn Navy Yard just after she finished high school at the age of eighteen. Antoinette worked as a draughtswoman from 1943 until she was laid off just a few weeks after the war ended in 1945. She started working in Building 3 and later in Building 77 when her department was moved. Antoinette was called back to work in 1947 and again in 1950, until she became pregnant with her son the following year. Her husband, Louis Mauro, first worked with blueprints at the Navy Yard after he came back from the war and then was employed in the technical library until the Yard was decommissioned.

Summary

In this oral history, Antoinette details the work she did as a draughtswoman in the electrical department at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. She emphasizes how nice her co-workers were, even though there were only two women working in her department of twenty-seven workers. Antoinette also discusses her commute, Yard security, friendships with co-workers, and watching various ship launchings, like that of the U.S.S. *Missouri*.

Keywords

Italian American, New York, women, Brooklyn Navy Yard, wartime production, ships, draughtswomen, Sands Street, U.S.S. Missouri, Margaret Truman

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STORY TRANSCRIPTS

Story 1: The Beginning of Work at the Navy Yard [02:28 – 03:46]

JE: How and when did you come to work at the Navy Yard?

I came to work there—well, there was a war going on, and my parents wanted me to go to college. I said, “No, I have to help my country. I’d like to help my country.” So I took this defense course, which they were pushing all the students to do. And the defense course was a drafting class that we took downtown on Lawrence Street. And then we went to Pratt Institute for foundry courses. And I don’t remember if we did welding, but we did the foundry.

And we went to class, and we did this all summer long from say July to September. Then, they sent me over to the Navy Yard and I was put in the electrical department. I was off working on damage control, which is when the draftsmen or the engineer goes down—the ships come in damaged, they changed the blueprints. And then we worked from what they do—you know, the corrections that they make. We work on the actual prints. So that's what I did during World War II.

Story 2: Working in Buildings 3 and 77
[06:28 – 07:15]

JE: *So, where in the Navy Yard did you work? Do you remember the building?*

I worked in Building 3. And then later on, there used to be a ramp that we used to walk to 77 to have the blueprints printed, whatever, you know? We used to walk to Building 77. Then they moved us to Building 77 and we worked there for a long time.

And then when the [U.S.S.] *Franklin* was hit, I saw it come in. See, they wouldn't let the ladies down to the ships. But they let the men, because they were afraid sailors would be, you know, walking around naked or be exposed, whatever it is.

Story 3: Daily Life on the Yard
[08:55 – 10:46]

Well, I thought it was nice [working on the yard], you know? I enjoyed it. We worked six days a week, even Saturday. And I went home with \$27 a week and I was a rich woman. All my friends were getting \$17, \$18 in the banks, and here I was making a lot of money—but I was working Saturday. And \$27 a week went a long way.

JE: *So your friends in other jobs didn't make as much money?*

No, they didn't make as much. They worked for insurance companies. They didn't make as much as we did, you know? It was very nice. It was a nice experience.

JE: *What hours of the day did you work?*

We worked from 8:00 to 4:30, Saturday included. The only day we had off was Christmas day. New Year's Day we worked. We worked *all* the time. But we were never in the Yard; we were always in the office working on the plans of the ships. We saw the *Missouri* was launched there. And then I have some pictures of another launching.

Story 4: Margaret Truman Launching the U.S.S. *Missouri*
[1:05:27 – 1:07:10]

JE: *Any other memories of sort of unusual events at the Navy Yard?*

Well, I remembered seeing Margaret Truman when she launched the *Missouri*. We were all on this balcony; we weren't that close, but we could see. They gave us permission to see. Naturally, she was at a distance; you couldn't see it. It was almost like going to a ball game. But I remember her coming in and launching the ship. She hit it with a bottle and it splashed. That I remember.

It was the *Missouri*. The balcony where we were was over towards the back. We must have seen it from 77. They made us all go down—I think we were told to see her. That was a big moment, because we worked on the BB-63. It was called the BB-63, the *Missouri*. That was built in the Navy Yard. We worked on that ship when they built it.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Artifact 1

Antoinette Mauro (in center) standing next to Brooklyn Navy Yard colleagues who are carrying supplies (Courtesy of Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation Archives)