

status report
anchor park
january 1980

BOSTON
CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD



NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK / MASSACHUSETTS

STATUS REPORT
ANCHOR PARK
CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD
BOSTON NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

by

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INTRODUCTION

An anchor park is an area, often a grass plot, set aside for the storage of anchors. At the Charlestown Navy Yard, Boston National Historical Park, there have been at least five different anchor parks from 1834 to 1940. Because there is very little written material on the anchor parks, it has been necessary to use photographs and maps as the primary sources in locating the parks.

In tracing the different locations of the anchor parks at the Boston Navy Yard, the historical data and structural development sections will be combined, since they are interrelated.

This document is not intended to be a definitive study of Anchor Park. If information beyond that included in Edwin Bearss' general study of Charleston Navy Yard is needed, additional monies will have to be programmed.

HISTORICAL MATERIAL

It appears that in the early years of the Navy Yard, before 1834, and after 1940 there was not an anchor park. Five anchor parks are known to have existed in the interim and the map on page 6 shows where they were located. The following description of these parks will refer to the locations noted on this map.

LOCATION A (1834-1857)

According to Edwin Bearss' maps, this location, which is now occupied by Building 32 and part of Building 198, was used as an anchor park from 1834 to 1858. It was adjacent to the shot park as indicated in the following description on the Navy Yard from Historic Fields and Mansions of Middlesex:¹

"To the field of deadly projectiles
succeeds a field of anchors...."

However, this anchor park could not have been in this exact location in 1858, since Building 32 was erected in 1857. Mr. Bearss was questioned on this fact and he stated that it was located behind Building 32 (on the west side of the building) during this period. It has not been possible to verify this location through other sources and there are no known photographs of this anchor park.

¹. Samuel Drake, Historic Fields and Mansions of Middlesex (Boston, 1874), p. 38.

LOCATION B (1859-1862)

Located south of Building 5, this anchor park is noted on Ed Bearss' 1862 map. It is also situated in this same location on the following Boston Navy Yard site plans: August 1859 (399-94), July 1860 (399-95), August 1861 (399-96) and August 1862 (399-97).² As can be seen in a photograph (Illus. 1) of this park, the anchors are resting on a grass plot and enclosed with a rope fence. The north side of Building 10 and an unidentified three-masted ship can be seen in the background. This photograph is not dated, but since the original is a tintype it would have to have been taken after the 1850's.

LOCATION C (1863 - c. 1900)

This anchor park once occupied the area where Building 107 is now located. It does not appear on any of Ed Bearss' maps, but it is noted on a 1868 site plan (391-Sh8) of the Navy Yard.³ In an article written by Samuel Cochran in 1917, he mentions:⁴

" . . . since 1863, it may be stated that the land now occupied by Building 107 was used in the old days as an anchor park, where all anchors taken from the ships were stored. . . "

Two photographs verify this location. The first one (Illus. 2) was taken in 1869 and shows the ropewalk (Building 58) to the left of Ropewalk Avenue

2. These site plans are located at the Boston Navy Yard in Building 136 in the Maintenance Dept.; file drawer entitled: "Site Plan 1857-1897".

3. Ibid.

4. Samuel Cochran, "Reminiscences of the Boston Navy Yard by an Old Employee" (1917), p. 21, in Ltjg. P.W. Hamlin, U.S. Navy, History of the Boston Naval Shipyard, 1800-1937 (1937).

and a portion of the anchor park to the right. The other photograph (Illus. 3), dated c. 1895, shows a larger section of the park with the ropewalk in the background behind the trees. It is not certain when this area was no longer used as an anchor park, but it would have to have been before 1904 when Building 107 was constructed.

In 1904 Building 103 was completed to serve as a chain and anchor storage shed. It continued to serve this purpose until 1919. Until 1921 there does not appear to have been another anchor park at the Navy Yard.

LOCATION D (1921-1937)

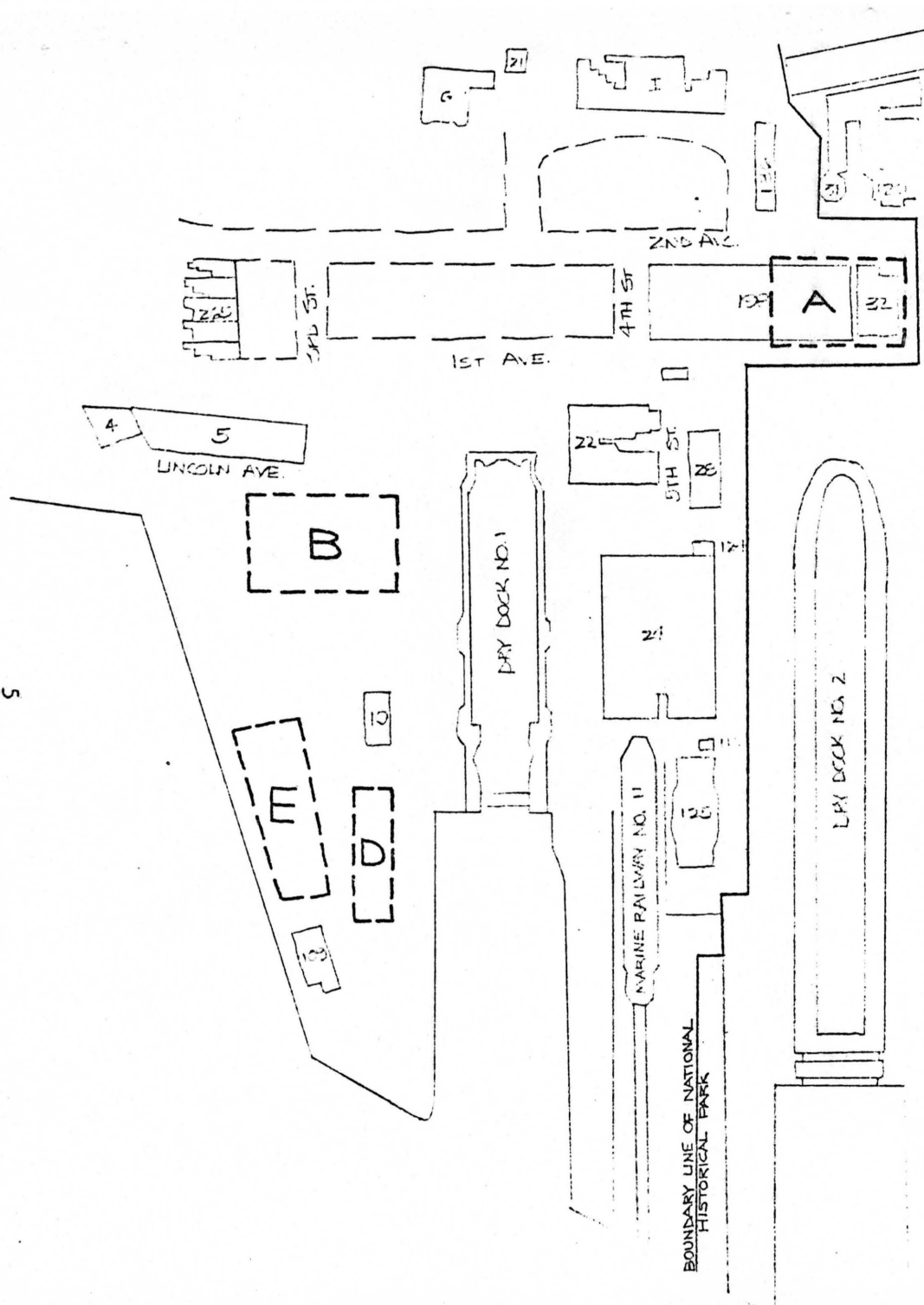
This anchor park, located south of Building 10 on Pier 1, is noted as "anchor storage" on Bearss' map and on the Boston Navy Yard's yearly site plans from 1921 through 1937.⁵ As can be seen in the two 1929 photographs (Illus. 4 and 5), this anchor park was not as formal or large as the previous ones.

LOCATION E (1939-1940)

Located north of Building 109 on Pier 1, this site is noted as "Plate Chain and Anchor Storage" on Bearss' 1940 map and the 1939 (399-116) and 1940 (399-117) Boston Navy Yard site plans.⁶ There are no photographs or other sources on this location, but it could be assumed that this area was similar to Location D.

5. These site plans are located at the Boston Navy Yard in Building 136 in the Maintenance Dept., file drawer entitled: "Site Plan 1920-1950".

6. Ibid.



BOSTON NAVY YARD

ANCHOR PARKS

A	1834 - 1857	
B	1859 - 1862	
C	1863 - 1900	(APPROXIMATE DATE)
D	1921 - 1937	(ANCHOR STORAGE)
E	1939 - 1940	(PLATE CHAIN & ANCHOR STORAGE)



COMPARATIVE DATA

Anchor parks were not unique to the Boston Navy Yard. The Portsmouth Navy Yard in Kittery, Maine also had an anchor park, as can be seen in a c. 1880⁷ photograph (Illus. 6) of this park, it was in close proximity to the gun and shot parks. A similar arrangement of storing the cannons, shot and anchors in the same general area existed at the Boston Navy Yard (i.e. Location A). As at Boston, there is no longer an anchor park at the Portsmouth Navy Yard.

EXISTING CONDITIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Since 1940, there has not been an anchor park at the Boston Navy Yard. The 1940 park (Location E) was not a park in the truest sense. It was a storage area on a paved surface for some anchors, as well as for plates and chains. The most recent site that was truly an anchor park would have to be Location C (1863-c. 1900), and that area is now occupied by Building 107, as well as being outside the boundary line of the National Historical Park. There is a similar problem with Locations A and B. The former is now occupied by Buildings 198 and 32 and the latter is now a paved surface, used as a parking area and also obstructed by railroad tracks.

If the intention of the National Park Service is to interpret this area as a working Navy Yard as it was in the early 1970's, it would be inconsistent to have an anchor park at all. Since the need for one did not exist, no anchor park existed when the yard was disestablished by the Navy in 1974.

7. Effie Malley, Historian at the Portsmouth Navy Yard, was able to estimate the date of this photograph. She is presently working on a history of the Portsmouth Navy Yard.

As a possible alternative to having an anchor park, the National Park Service could display plaques at the various locations depicting the anchor parks. Such plaques, showing different historical aspects of the Navy Yard, have recently been incorporated at the National Park in a "Walking Tour." Near the flagpole across 2nd Avenue from the Commandant's house there is a plaque (#13) entitled, "Supplies", and shows the same photograph as Illustration 3 in this report. The following description is written beside this photograph and photographs of the cannon and shot parks, which are on the same plaque:

"The area you are now standing on was used for the storage of cannon, shot and anchors during the 19th century."

This photograph obviously shows the anchor park when it was at Location C, next to the ropewalk. This discrepancy has been brought to the attention of Peter Steele, Director of the Curatorial Department at the Navy Yard. Mr. Steele believes that it is not necessary to correct this particular plaque.

ILLUSTRATIONS

Illustration 1

Boston Navy Yard, Anchor Park (Location B).
Looking south, n.d.

Courtesy of the Society for the Preservation of
New England Antiquities.

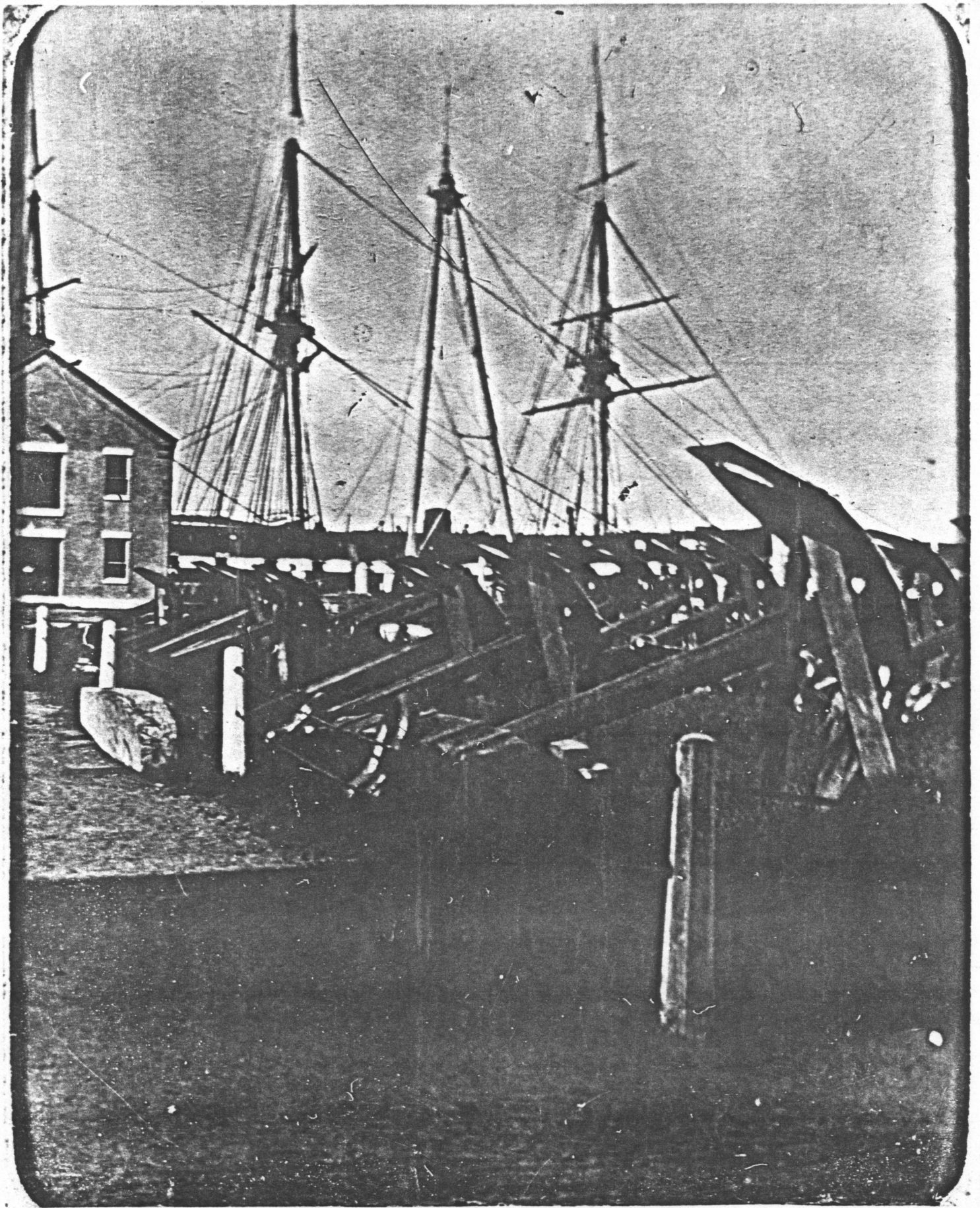


Illustration 2

Boston Navy Yard, Anchor Park, (Location C),
looking east. 1919.

Charlestown Navy Yard Files.



Illus. 2 - Boston Navy Yard, Anchor Park (Location C)
View looking east, 1869

Illustration 3

Boston Navy Yard, Anchor Park, (Location C),
looking northeast, c. 1895.

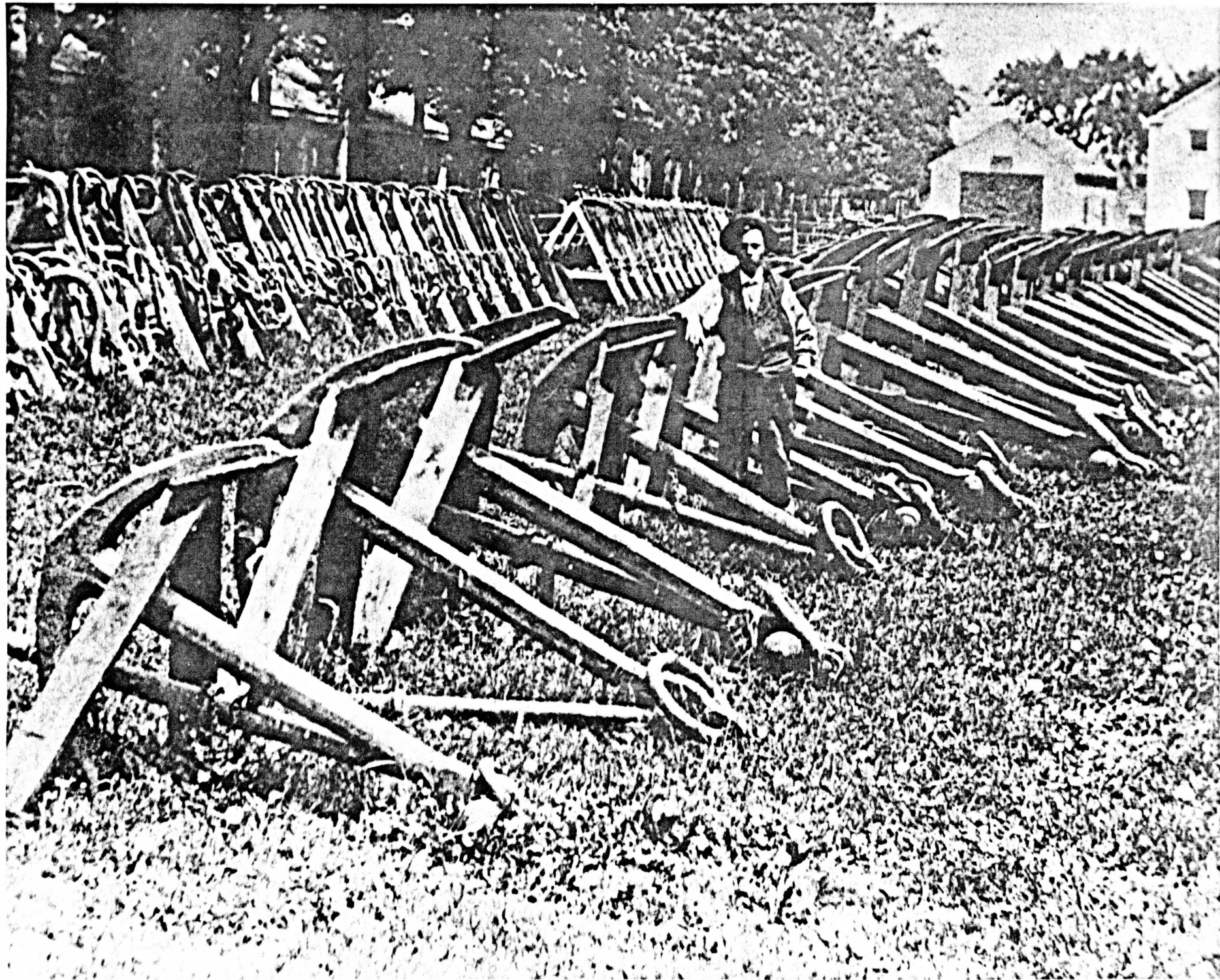


Illustration 4

Boston Navy Yard, Anchor Park, (Location D),
looking north. 1929.

Charlestown Navy Yard Files.

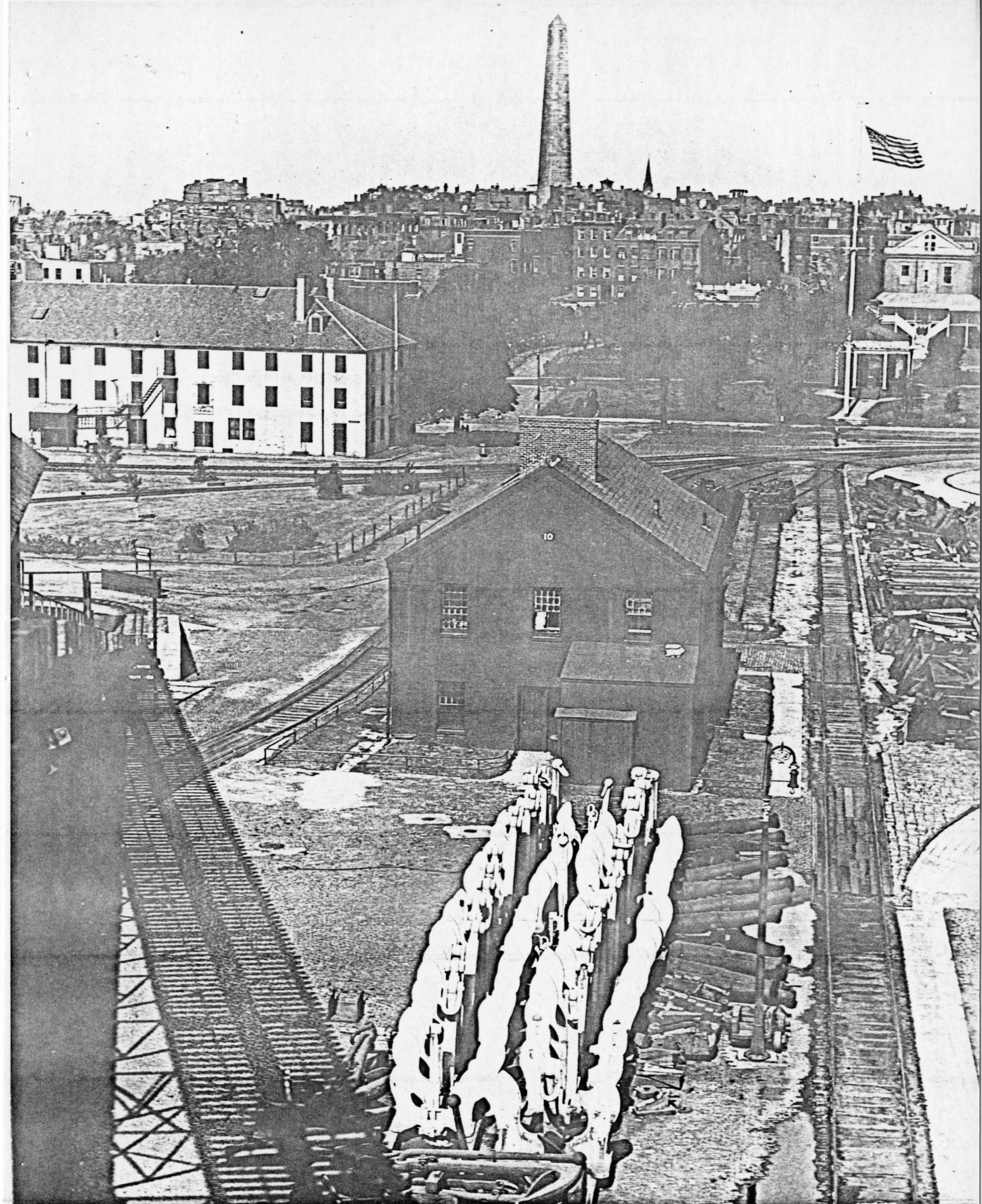


Illustration 5

Boston Navy Yard, Anchor Park, (Location D),
looking northwest. 1929.

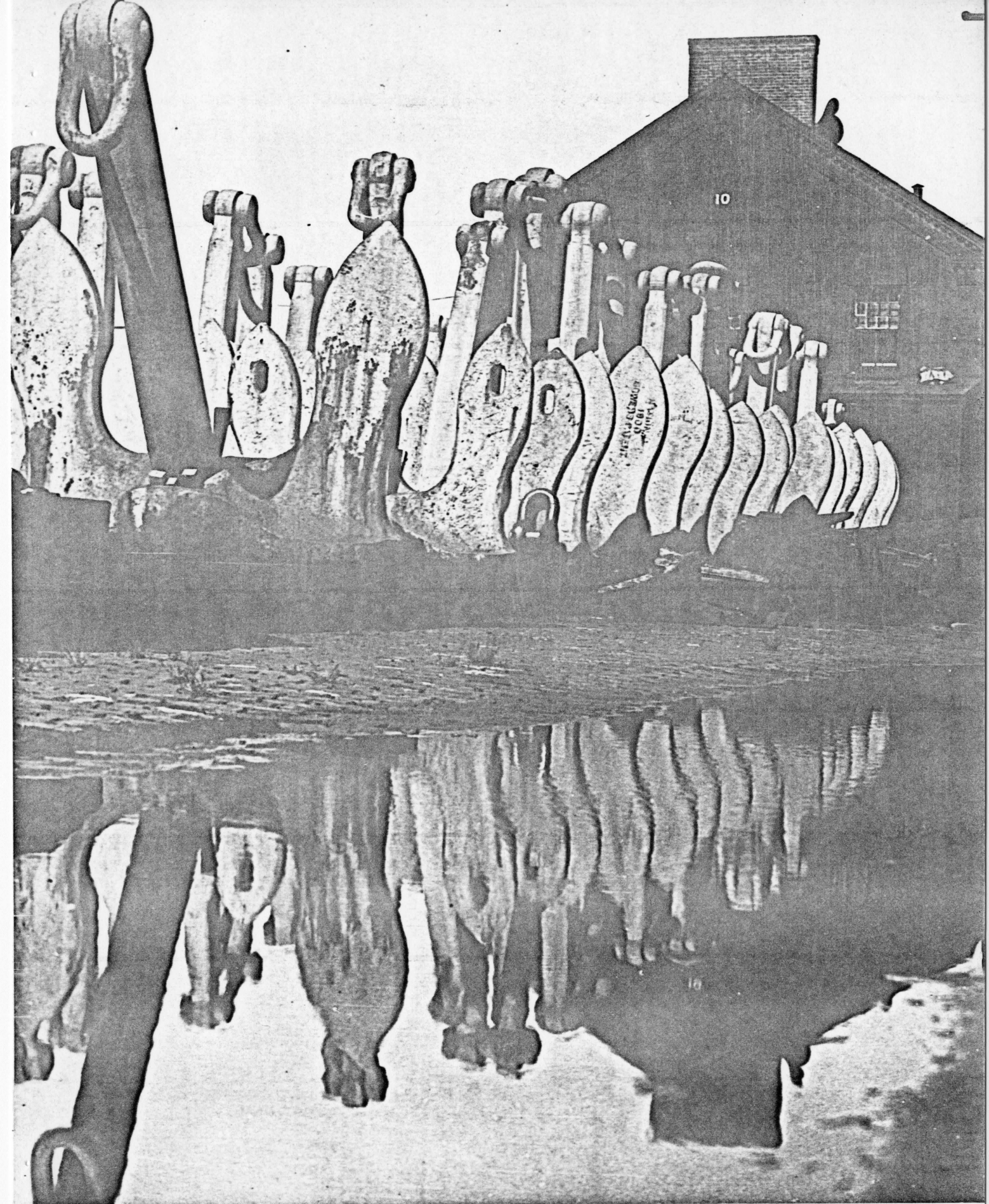
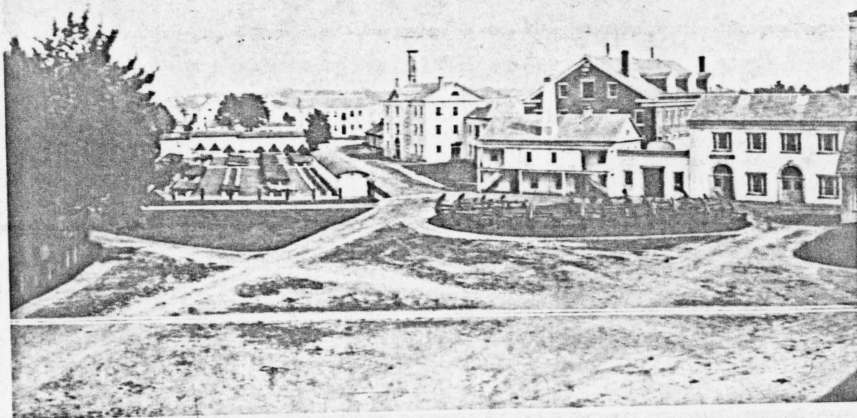


Illustration 6

Anchor Park, Portsmouth Navy Yard
(Kittery, Maine), c. 1880.



OLD VIEW LOOKING EAST ON
MACDONOUGH AVENUE. GUN
PARK ON LEFT IS PRESENT SITE OF BLDG. 86
THE SHIPYARD'S GENERAL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES.

✓ (half-size)

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