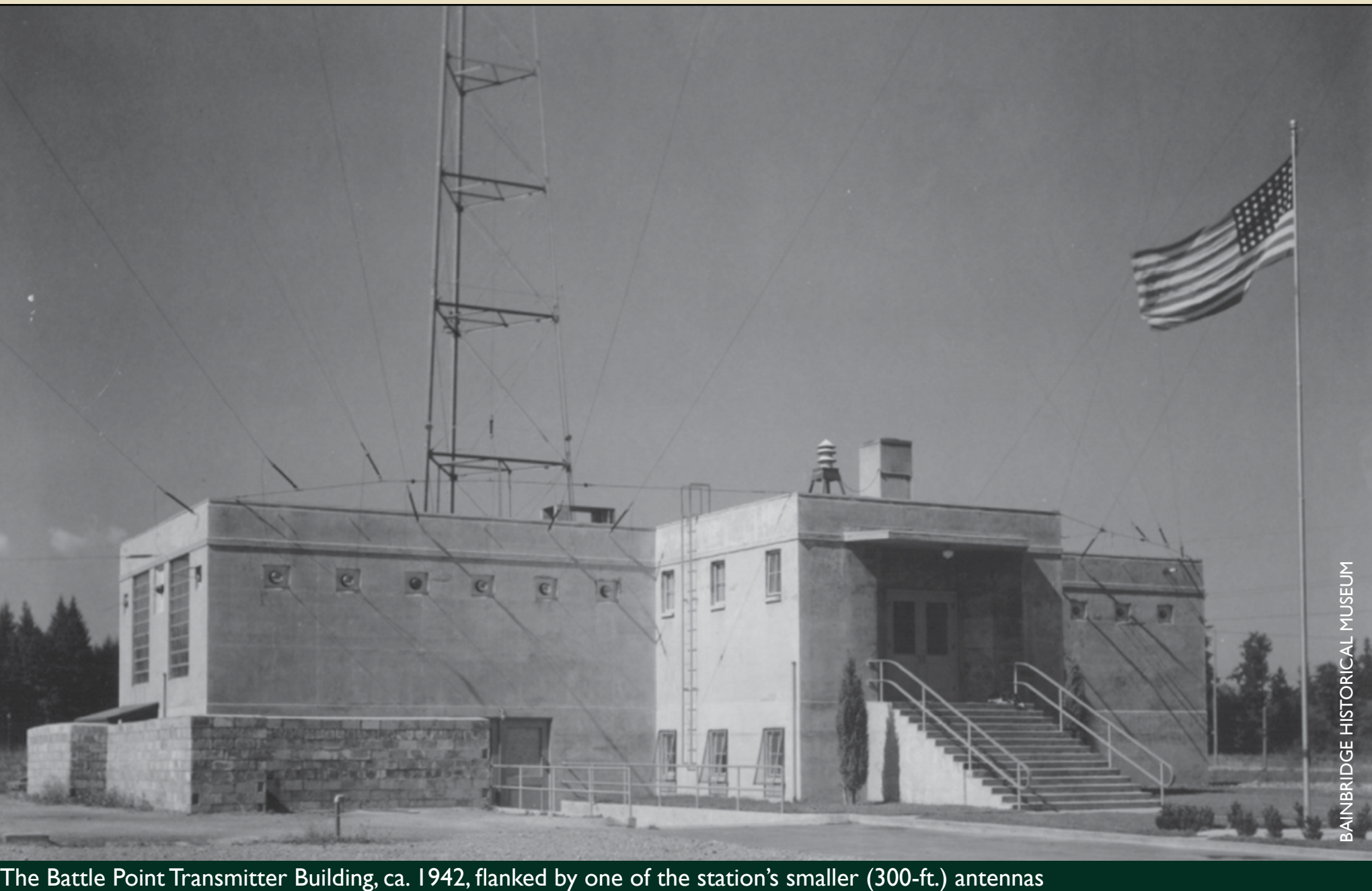


Battle Point's 800-ft radio tower to the Pacific Fleet



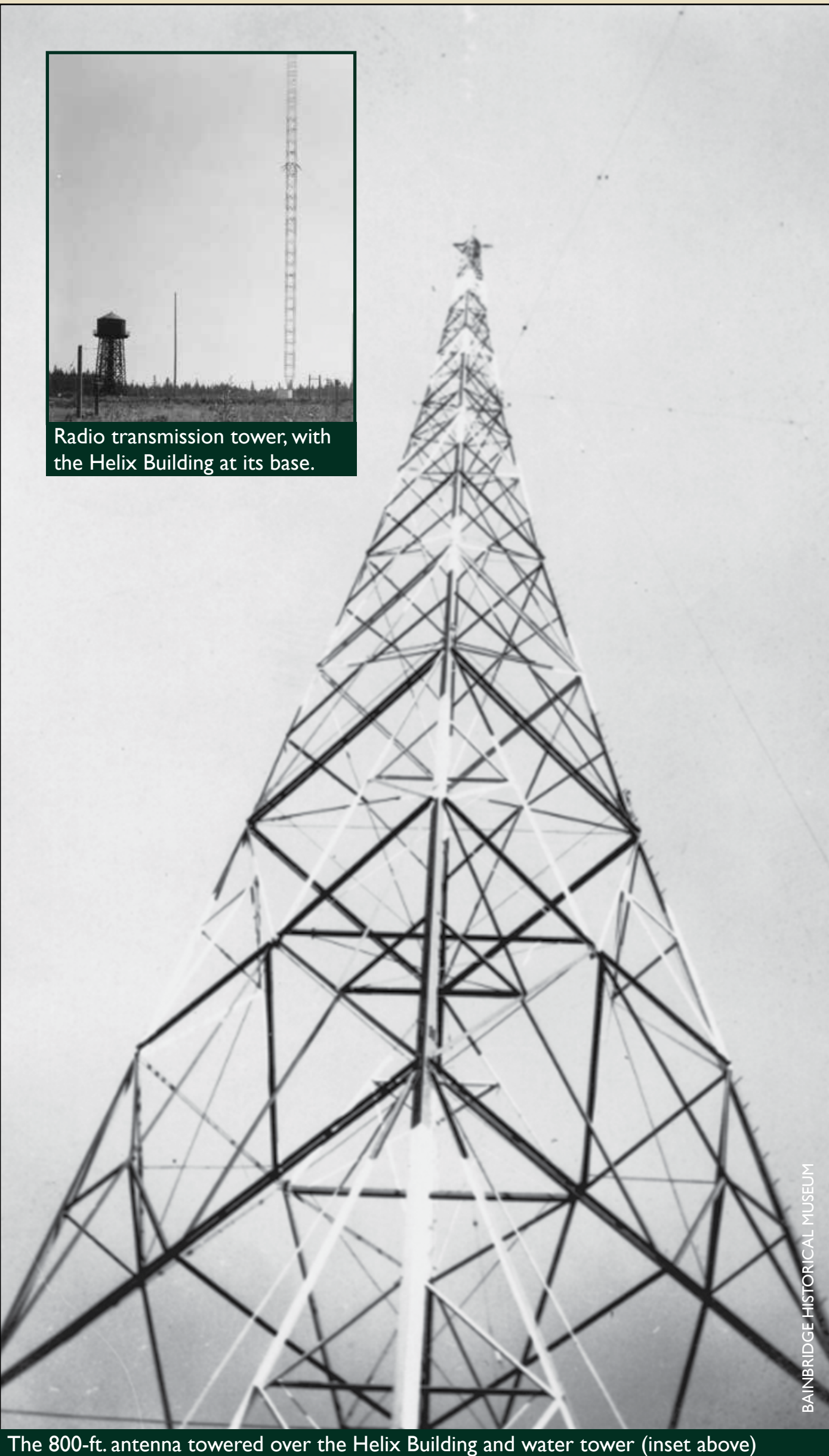
As Fort Ward was “Ear to the Pacific,” Battle Point (built in 1942) was the “voice.” The main radio transmission tower reached 800 feet into the sky, allowing command messages from Fort Ward to reach the US Navy fleet in the North Pacific through World War II and the Korean War.



Navy Radio Transmitting Station Battle Point opened in 1942, early in the United States war with Imperial Japan. The 90-acre facility was built on farm and forest land requisitioned by the federal government, the site chosen for its clear transmission to the North Pacific and West Coast Naval stations.

The Transmitter Building was the hub of activities at Battle Point, relaying command messages sent from Fort Ward.

From 17 high-powered transmitters, Naval Radiomen sent coded messages to the Pacific Fleet. With a low-frequency transmitter, Battle Point could even reach submarines operating beneath the ocean.



The main 800-ft. antenna towered over the Battle Point facility, and indeed, over the northwest corner of Bainbridge Island and surrounding waters. How tall? Seattle's Space Needle, built 20 years later in 1962, would be 200 feet shorter.

A feat of engineering, it was also something of a balancing act. The 360 tons of steel that comprised the antenna structure sat perched atop a single, insulated concrete pedestal next to the Helix Building at the south end of the station. The antenna was supported in turn by a series of eight, heavily anchored and insulated guy wires to keep it from toppling over.

Smaller antennas arrayed around the Battle Point station reached as high as 300 feet skyward. Inside the Helix Building, diesel generators powered the antennas with a signal strength of up to 50,000 watts.



As many as 40 Navy personnel served at Battle Point during peak operations. Radio activities continued through the Korean War.

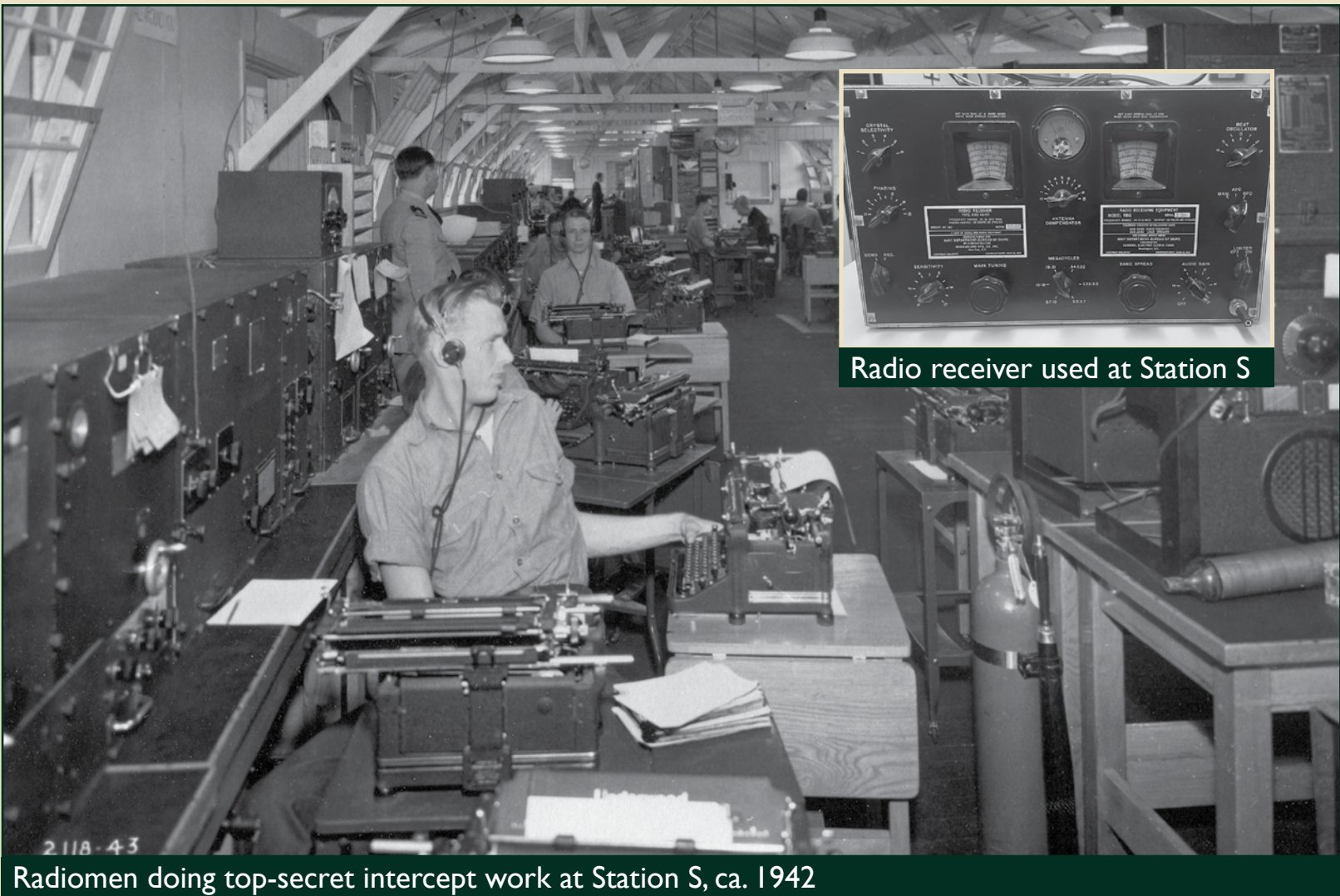
Navy Radio Transmitting Station Battle Point was deactivated in March 1959, and the 90 acres sat idle until surplused to the new Bainbridge Island Park District in 1972.

The towering antennas were finally taken down, leaving familiar structures still used at today's Battle Point Park: the Transmitter Building (kindergym), Helix Building (observatory), and the Commander's Residence (Park Services administration office) – and the water tower.

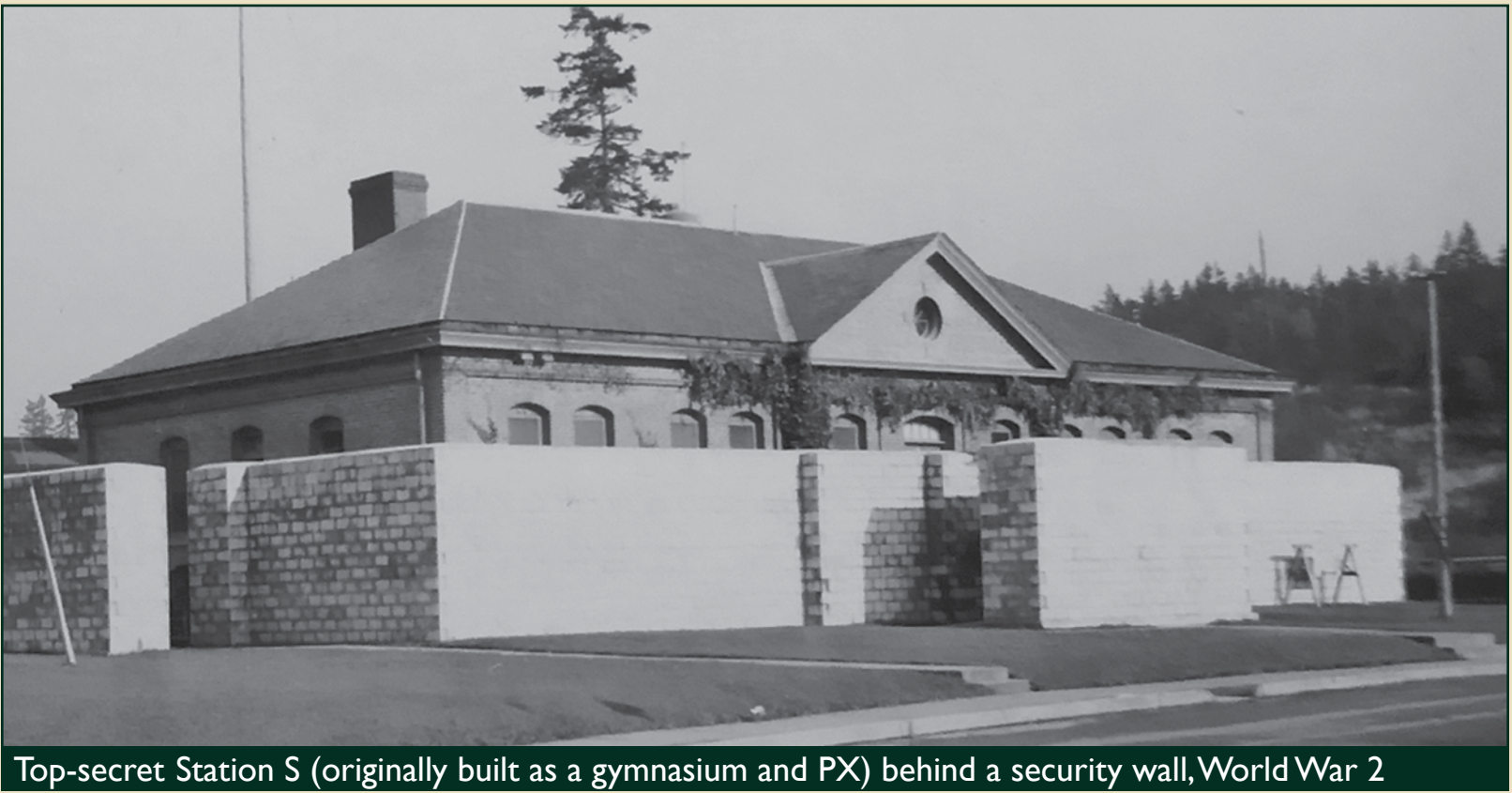
U.S. Navy service at Fort Ward and Battle Point



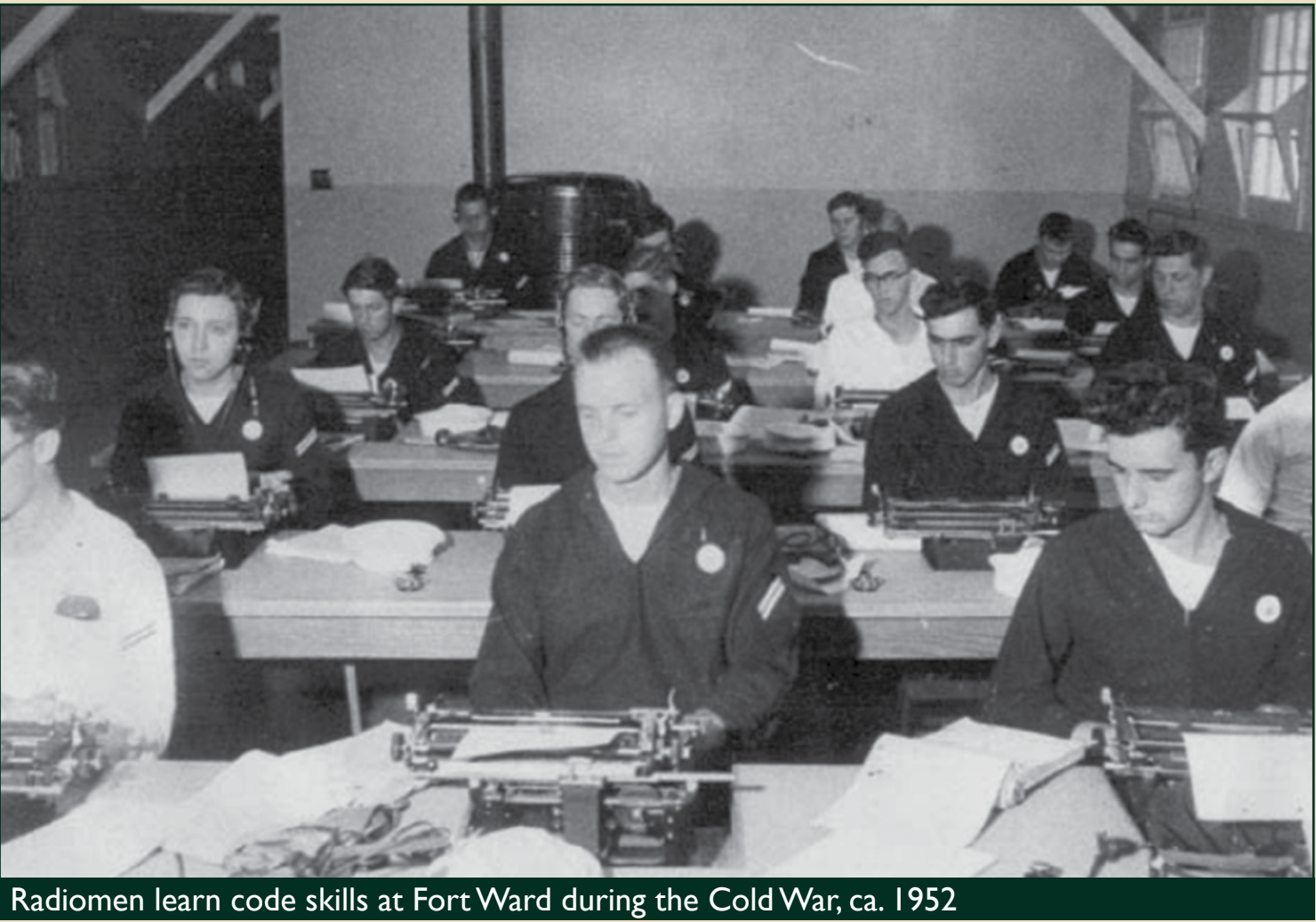
Built for the Army Coast Artillery Corps in 1910 and dormant by the 1930s, Fort Ward found new life as Naval Radio Station Bainbridge Island and intercept site during World War II. At top-secret Station S, enemy communications were plucked from the airwaves, providing intelligence critical to winning the war.



Station S – an intercept site of OP-20-G, the U.S. Navy’s intelligence signals and cryptanalysis group – moved from Astoria, Ore., to Fort Ward in late 1939. Operating from the old Post Exchange building, specially trained radiomen intercepted Japanese naval and diplomatic communications from the Pacific. It was the Navy’s first stateside intercept station, an “Ear to the Pacific.” Encrypted Japanese messages intercepted at Station S were sent to Washington, DC for decoding and analysis.



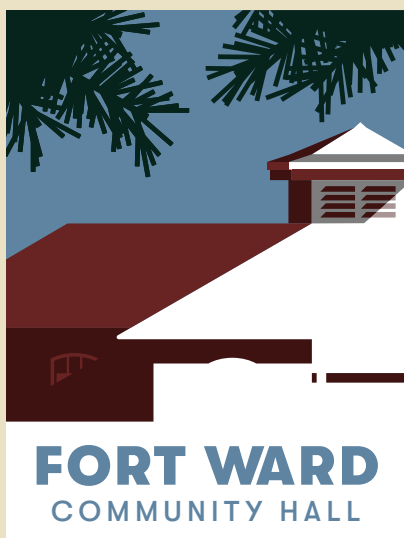
Top secret radio intercept was well underway at Station S when the Navy established a general radio school at Fort Ward in late 1940. The fort’s old brig was converted to classrooms, where reservists and recruits underwent four months of training in Morse code, basic communications procedures, and general seamanship. Graduates were deployed world-wide to ships as fleet communicators. At the height of the war, the Naval Radio Station had some 1,200 personnel assigned. The code school continued operations through the 1950s, to meet the emerging threats of the Cold War.



In June 1944, the “Pioneer WAVES” reported for duty at the Bainbridge Island Naval Radio Station. So called because they were the first class of WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service) to be deployed for advanced radio work, the women came to Bainbridge Island from Oxford College at Miami, Ohio, where they underwent training in Morse code and radio communications. Among them were Barbara Whirl and Sue Lake (shown standing on an old Army Coast Artillery Corps shore battery), and Helen Whalen, all Radiomen 3rd Class. In early 1945, after communications intercept training at Fort Ward, the women took up their posts at Station S. They eavesdropped on enemy communications from the Pacific, serving with distinction through the end of the war.



Learn more from the US Naval Cryptologic Veterans Association



Learn more about historic Fort Ward

