

PROJECT National Museum of the Pacific War, Fredericksburg
CLIENT The Admiral Nimitz Foundation and The Texas Historical Commission
ARCHITECT Richter Architects
DESIGN TEAM David Richter, FAIA; Elizabeth Chu Richter, FAIA; Sheldon Schroeder, AIA; Blake Hillin, Assoc. AIA; Sam Morris, AIA
CONTRACTOR Duecker Construction Company
CONSULTANTS Calvetti & Associates Professional Engineers (structural); Randy Thompson PE (civil); Stridde, Callins & Associates (MEP); Doug Wade Landscape Architect (landscape); Cleary Zimmermann (commissioning); Stehling, Klein, Thomas Architects (field liaison); The Douglas Group (exhibit design); Marek-Hill (assoc. exhibit design); Boston Production (A/V); Bowen Technovation (A/V); Wilson Dolman Ph.D (interpretive planning/writing)
PHOTOGRAPHERS: David Richter, FAIA; Richard Payne, FAIA; J.Griffis Smith/*Texas Highways*



Harmony in Contrast

by LAURINE MILLER, HON. TSA





WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, I knew that my uncle served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and saw action in the Pacific. The details were too harsh for young ears, so he spoke instead of ship reunions and wartime friendships sustained over time.

Eventually, I learned more about the war's European Front than the Pacific Theater. There were knowledge gaps between Japan's attack on the U.S. Fleet at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which led to Japan's surrender in August 1945.

I've since filled those gaps at the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg. There, the story unfolds with a compelling narrative, authentic artifacts, and multimedia displays in a striking new building.

Fredericksburg was the hometown of Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, who commanded the Pacific Fleet during World War II. Born in 1885, he spent his early childhood at his grandfather's steamboat-shaped hotel on Main Street. In 1964, local citizens proposed establishing a museum in Nimitz's honor at the property. Nimitz agreed, with two conditions: that the museum honor all those who served in the Pacific and that the modernized hotel be restored to its steamboat appearance. The fledgling museum opened in 1967.

Today, the National Museum of the Pacific War is a six-acre complex comprising the Admiral Nimitz Museum, the Japanese Garden of Peace, the Plaza of the Presidents, the Memorial Courtyard, and the George H.W. Bush Gallery. It's a Texas Historical Commission property managed by the non-profit Admiral Nimitz Foundation.

The Bush Gallery is the museum's centerpiece, named for the former U.S. president, a decorated Pacific War naval aviator. When it first opened in 1999 in a renovated supermarket, plans already were under way to enlarge the 22,000-sf building to better display the burgeoning collection of artifacts.

Rear Admiral Charles D. Grojean, (Ret.), who headed the Nimitz Foundation from 1990 until his death in 2008, envisioned an institution of national prominence. He led the capital expansion campaign and the committee that selected Richter Architects of Corpus Christi for the Bush Gallery's redesign.



(preceding spread) Design by Richter Architects, the George H.W. Bush Gallery doubles its original exhibition space to 33,000 square feet. Exhibits feature artifacts either on loan from the Navy or donated by private citizens.

(this spread, counterclockwise from top left) The conning tower of the USS Pintado appears to surface from sculpted waves in a sea of Asian jasmine outside the new gallery's entry. Names of famous battles call out from the building's curtainwall spandrels. An enlarged map of the Pacific Theater in the lobby orients visitors before they enter the exhibition space. Exterior materials allude to both the museum's Hill Country setting and the utilitarian Quonset huts that were commonplace during WW II. The streetside scale of the new building complements the small-town look of historic downtown Fredericksburg before stepping up to three stories in height.



The \$16.2 million project, built with public and private funds, opened in 2009 on Pearl Harbor Day. Its setting in Fredericksburg's pedestrian-scaled downtown challenged the architects to represent the big story of the war while respecting the character of the Hill Country town.

"Our inspiration was to compose an architectural duet with two seemingly disparate influences—the context of place—historic, small-town Fredericksburg—and the museum's meaning of monumental, immense sacrifice and impact across nations and generations," says Elizabeth Chu Richter, FAIA. She and her husband, David Richter, FAIA, are the firm's principals.

From the first sketches, Museum Director Joe Cavanaugh recalls, "Admiral Grojean and I fell in love with the Richters' vision. It was a stunning design that was going to attract attention."

That vision was to "create harmony in contrast," explains Elizabeth Chu Richter.

The 65,000-sf Bush Gallery faces northeast along Austin Street at the opposite corner of the block from the historic Nimitz Hotel. The new building encapsulates the old gallery and doubles the original exhibition area to 33,000 square feet. The remaining space includes a gallery for temporary exhibitions, a research-and-education center on the second and third floors, and a gift shop.

The design meets the required scale and the three-story height limit of the historic district while reflecting the museum's monumental mission. Along the street fronts, courtyards and low stone walls link a series of one-story stone building facades. They're fenestrated with storefront windows, reminiscent of the windows of the retail shops on Main Street. Here, they give passersby views of the gift shop, the lobby, and several large-scale exhibits. Inboard from the perimeter, the scale steps up to convey the museum's national significance and the magnitude of the Pacific War.

"It's a very large building, the largest at this end of town, and [the architects] were able to hide the massing of it very well," Cavanaugh says. "At street level, most folks have no idea the two upper floors each contain over 9,000 square feet."

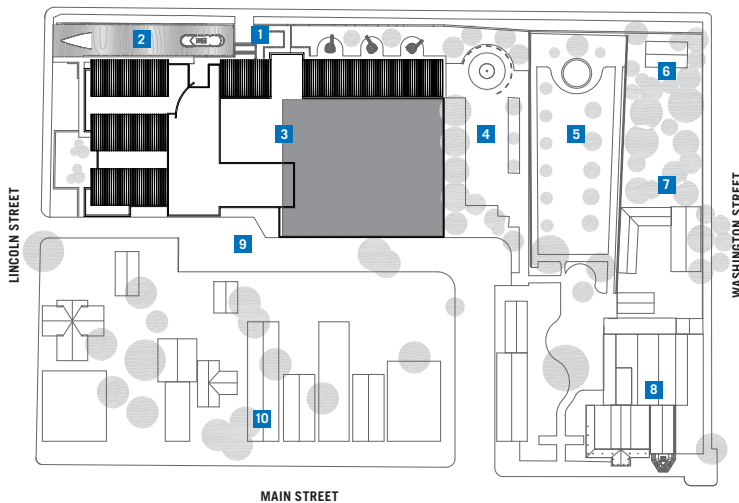
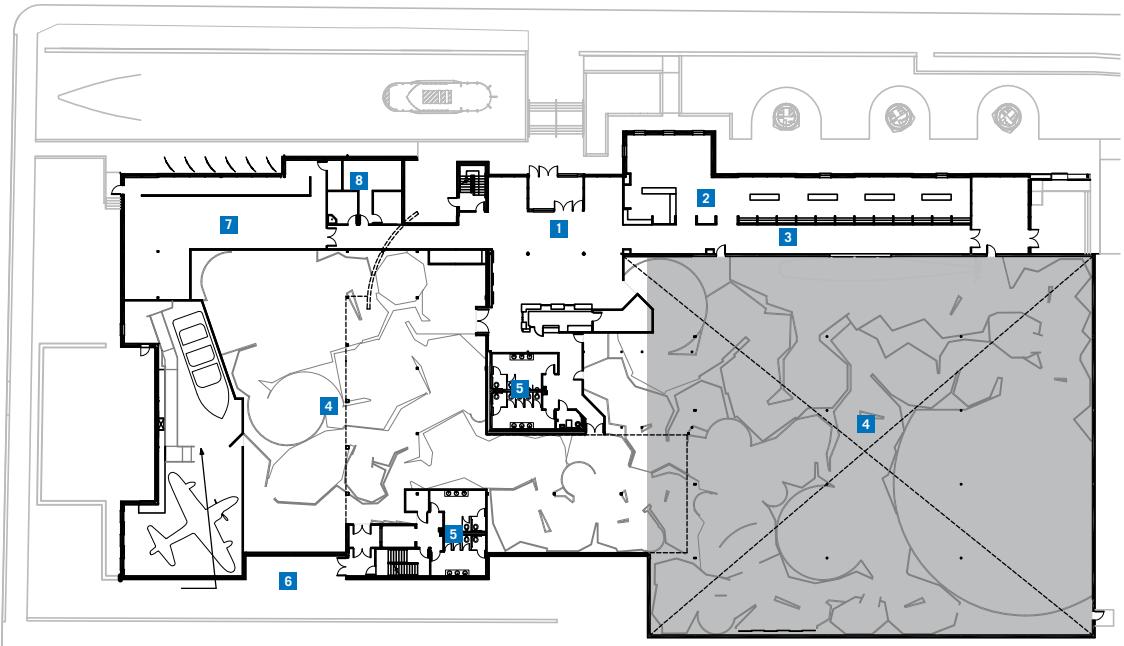
The design is a layered, metaphorical composition. Vaulted metal roofs march to a military cadence, evoking the area's agricultural structures

(this page, clockwise from right) History flows chronologically through displays designed by the Douglas Group of Houston. Monumental images are haunting, especially at night, when the gallery is illuminated. Exhibits illustrate Japan's pre-war rise as a military power. Using the submarine's original bridge and conning tower, the architects based their recreation of the USS Pintado on historical photographs.



- FIRST FLOOR PLAN**
- EXISTING BUILDING
 - 1 LOBBY
 - 2 MUSEUM STORE
 - 3 PUBLIC GALLERY
 - 4 EXHIBITS
 - 5 RESTROOMS
 - 6 SERVICES
 - 7 TEMPORARY EXHIBITS
 - 8 CONFERENCE

- SITE PLAN**
- EXISTING BUILDING
 - 1 ENTRY PLAZA
 - 2 SUBMARINE MEMORIAL
 - 3 MUSEUM OF THE PACIFIC WAR
 - 4 PLAZA OF THE PRESIDENTS
 - 5 MEMORIAL PLAZA
 - 6 JAPANESE TEA HOUSE
 - 7 JAPANESE TEA GARDEN
 - 8 NIMITZ MUSEUM
 - 9 SERVICE ALLEY
 - 10 HISTORICAL RETAIL DISTRICT



RESOURCES EXHIBIT FABRICATION: Exhibit Concepts; CONCRETE STAIN: L.M. Scofield Company; CAST STONE: Advanced Cast Stone; ARCHITECTURAL WOODWORK AND MANUFACTURED CASEWORK: Imperial Mills & Fixtures; ROOF/WALL PANELS AND EXTERIOR SUN CONTROL: Durst Sheet Metal; MEMBRANE ROOFING: IB Roof Systems; METAL ROOFING: Spanco Building Systems; METAL DOORS: Hollow Metal Xpress (Trinity Doors & Windows); WOOD DOORS: Graham Wood Doors (Trinity Doors & Windows); ENTRANCES, STOREFRONTS AND GLAZED CURTAINWALL: United States Aluminum/Sage Architectural Products (D&E Glass); WOOD WINDOWS: Jeld-Wen Windows & Doors (Trinity Doors & Windows); GLASS: Guardian (Arch Aluminum & Glass Co.); PAINT: Kwal Paint; SIGNAGE: CCSW Architectural Graphics & Sign Systems; ELEVATOR: Otis Elevator Company; DESIGN SOFTWARE: Autodesk Revit (DICICADD)

and also the iconic Quonset huts of the wartime era. Gray galvanized steel panels clad the three-story entrance tower. The cast-in-place concrete vestibule suggests a bunker, a transitional space reflecting a change in tone between the Hill Country outside and the Pacific War displays inside.

The architects also designed an outdoor exhibit for a significant artifact, the fairwater (a submarine's bridge and conning tower) of the USS Pintado, which marks the museum entry. The recreated bow appears to surface from sculpted waves in a sea of Asian jasmine.

Protecting fragile artifacts from daylight within the exhibition space was critical to the design, as was connecting the Bush Gallery to the rest of the museum complex. "The plan was to generate transparency in a building type that generally does not want transparency and to create linkages within the whole complex that would lead people through the site," says David Richter.

Along the west end of the museum's facade, six steel-gray monoliths stand like sentries. They bear the seals of the U.S. armed services – Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Merchant Marine, Coast Guard, and Army Air Forces – that fought in the Pacific. Behind them is the temporary-exhibition space where enlarged photographs of wartime events engage pedestrians.

Multimedia exhibits range from interviews with survivors of the Bataan Death March to artifacts, such as a Japanese midget submarine from the Pearl Harbor attack and the casing of an atomic bomb. The presentations are balanced and powerful, preserving the stories of the eight million Americans who served in the Pacific.

After visiting the museum, I called my uncle to learn the details of his wartime service. He talked about the Japanese suicide bombers that damaged his destroyer and sank another while they were patrolling Leyte Gulf off the Philippines. Men were killed and wounded, but amid the chaos the disabled destroyer rescued 187 survivors from the sinking ship.

The next day, I ordered a paver brick in my uncle's honor. It's installed on the Veteran's Walk in the museum's Memorial Courtyard.

Lauraine Miller, Hon.TSA, is the producer/editor of *The Shape of Texas* radio show supported by the Texas Society of Architects.