

Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center
(formerly Pullman Child Development Center)
Richmond, California

Nomination to the
National Register of Historic Places

(Rev. 10-90)

United States Department of the Interior

National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Pullman Child Development Center

other names/site number: Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center

2. Location

street and number 2730 Maine Avenue Not for publication

city or town Richmond vicinity

state California code CA county Contra Costa code 013 zip code 94804

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
[] entered in the National Register
[] determined eligible for the National Register
[] determined not eligible for the National Register
[] removed from the National Register
[] other (explain):
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	.....1.....	.....0.....	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	.....0.....	.....0.....	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	...0...	...0...	structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	.....0.....	.....0.....	objects
		.....1.....	.....0.....	Total
Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)		Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register		
N/A.....		0.....		

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)		Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)	
Category	Sub	Category	Sub
EDUCATION.....	SCHOOL.....	EDUCATION.....	SCHOOL.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
Modern Movement.....	foundation Wood.....
.....	roof Wood Frame.....
.....	walls Wood Frame.....

	other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See Continuation Sheet.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION.....

SOCIAL HISTORY.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Period of Significance

1943 - 1945.....

.....

.....

Significant Dates

date of construction: 1943.....

.....

.....

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Henry J. Kaiser; Catherine Landreth.....

Cultural Affiliation

N/A.....

.....

.....

Architect/Builder

Kaiser Engineering.....

Architect unconfirmed; possibly Ed Cerruti of Kaiser.....

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed on National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
- #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

National Park Service Pacific Great Basin Support Office

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 10 558764 4197965
Zone Easting Northing

2

3

4

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katherine T. Petrin

organization Architectural Resources Group

street & number Pier 9, The Embarcadero

city or town San Francisco

date May 2004

telephone (415) 421-1680

state CA

zip code 94111

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's locations

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property

Additional items (check with SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Contra Costa County

street & number 651 Pine Street

city or town Martinez

telephone (415) 335-1080

state CA

zip code 94553

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SETTING OF THE RUTH C. POWERS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Located adjacent to the railroad tracks on Maine Avenue in Richmond, the Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center faces north onto Maine Avenue. The building shares the block with the Richmond Housing Authority, which is located on the southern part of the lot. The Housing Authority structure is of approximately the same era and design. The building is set within a neighborhood that is primarily residential, but within proximity to the shipyards along the bay shoreline. The industrial influence of the shipyards is not immediately evident within the grounds of the child development center, though it is because of the nearby shipyards that the need arose to construct the building.

CURRENT APPEARANCE OF THE RUTH C. POWERS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The Powers Child Development Center is, in plan, an irregularly shaped structure built in the Modernist idiom, an architectural vocabulary derived from the philosophy of the International Style. The philosophy of the International Style first took hold around 1920 and was meant to rebuke late 19th century architectural traditions. The tenets of the International Style originated in a number of European movements including the Bauhaus and De Stijl and is closely associated with innovative architects such as Le Corbusier in France, Oud and Rietveld in Holland, Gropius and Mies van der Rohe in Germany. These architects worked with “pure” geometric forms and avoided historic references in their designs. They incorporated innovative use of new materials and technology and exploited the inherent qualities of these materials in their designs. Several of these architects and others who had studied with them fled to the United States to escape the Nazis and war torn Europe importing a style that was popular through 1945 and influential on derivative styles through the 1960s.

Three important principles of the International Style were exterior geometric forms and emphasis of the interior volumes, standardization of details and material production, and no applied ornament. Typical architectural features include floor to ceiling windows, cantilevered sections of the building or roof, balconies without visible support, large sections of blank wall surfaces (no windows or decoration), and horizontal window bands or clerestory windows. The main entrance is generally not accentuated and sometimes deliberately obscured, and other characteristics are multiple roof levels, cylindrical forms, and plain round supports for porches or other portions of the structure. Materials typically associated with the International Style are wood or metal casement windows, plain stucco or plaster surfaces, glass curtain walls, and wood trim. The style was easily adaptable to the California climate and proved a good solution for wartime use, as it required simple and easily obtainable materials.

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The layout of the Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center consists of two double-loaded wings set at a right angle. The wing to the north is a simple rectangle, while the east wing contains a short jog at the end. The overall layout focuses the administrative and support areas closest to the intersection with the classrooms at the end of each wing.

The architectural features of the Powers Center that are characteristic of the Modern movement are a long, low building profile, a flat roof, long expanses of horizontal ribbon windows, flat canopies over doors, and the angular walls that flank the entrance. The building materials are also characteristic of the Modern movement, such as wood-framed clerestory windows, plaster surfaces, exterior horizontal wood siding, exterior plasterboard, and wood trim. The front entrance faces north onto Maine Avenue and protrudes from the main wing of the building, the north wing. A secondary, single-story wing (the east wing) extends from the northeast corner of the site toward the south. The form of the structure is asymmetrical with a set-back second story only on the main wing. The angular entrance portico protrudes from the northeast end of the north wing. Originally this portico contained four tall doors all surrounded by square window openings, creating a window wall. The portico shields the main entrance, now extended by a vestibule with Plexiglas windows. The flat roof over the portico is supported by walls that flank the portico and slant outward at the top.

The north and east elevations of the building are defined by strong horizontal lines and rows of clerestory windows. The playground elevations are comprised of two stories. At the building rear, each classroom exits onto the playground through a set of double metal doors. On either side of the double doors is a solid wall containing a window unit featuring six lights, three up and two across.

The interior of the Powers Center also retains its original layout and many historic features. The main entrance, on the far left, or western, end of the front elevation, leads directly into a lobby, with a built-in reception desk facing the entrance. A long wooden bench is built into the east wall. Corridors lead from the lobby to the east and north wings of the building. The north wing contains the infirmary room, with a rear door leading to a storage area and hallway. The infirmary also contains a small bathroom with child-size facilities. The remainder of the north wing is devoted to four classrooms of approximately equal size.

The east wing is accessed by the corridor that extends back and to the left of the reception desk. Two doors on the right side of this corridor lead to the administrative office and another staff room with attached bathroom. On the eastern side of the corridor another door leads into the kitchen, which contains many original fixtures

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including a center preparation counter with an attached rack containing hooks for pots and pans. One door from the kitchen leads into a walk-in pantry, and another to a back room containing a washer and dryer, with a back door leading outside. Just past the kitchen, the eastern corridor makes a sharp ninety-degree turn to the left and then to the right again, leading to the two remaining classrooms, originally for smaller children.

Each classroom contains a coatroom and bathroom. Each bathroom is fully enclosed with a row of four adult-level, glass-paned windows on the inside wall facing the classroom. There are no partitions between the individual toilets and sinks. Each coatroom is open to the rest of the classroom, with child-size open lockers built into a low partition wall. The lockers in the coatroom are each approximately three feet high and include a shelf near the top for children's belongings. On the classroom side of the low coat room partition are shelving units, with one closed cabinet in the corner.

The second floor is accessed by a staircase located just to the right of the reception desk. The staircase turns ninety degrees to the right at an intermediate landing before connecting to the second floor, which only exists over the north wing. Child-size banisters appear underneath the adult banisters on the stairway walls and down the center of the staircase. A skylight illuminates the stairwell.

The second floor consists of a long open space with a narrow corridor between rows of wooden cross-shaped partitions that are built into the floor. These were originally constructed to divide the room into smaller napping areas for children. Near the far end of the room, taller wooden partitions section off a larger open area. Groups of casement ribbon windows along the top of the walls are well above the nap area partitions. A row of wood structural columns lines the center corridor of the second floor room. A fire exit door is located on the western end of the upstairs room and leads to a metal slide that descends to ground level, opening into the recreation yard. The second floor of the Powers Center is currently used for storage.

The Powers Center is quite similar in design to the Maritime Center, with slight variations in the stairwell and second story configuration. The second story of the Powers Center contains offices that are still being used. The Powers Center has a low concrete curb under the exterior walls and less exterior plasterboard siding than the Maritime Center. Use of these more sturdy materials may partially account for the better overall condition of the Ruth C. Powers Center.

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HISTORIC APPEARANCE OF THE RUTH C. POWERS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The configuration and massing of the Powers Child Development Center remain unchanged from the time of original construction. Exterior building materials have changed in limited areas where the original horizontal siding has been replaced with stucco. The immediate setting of the building is mostly unchanged. The Pullman Child Development Center, located adjacent to the railroad tracks on Maine Avenue, was built sometime after September 1943, in USMC Division No. 2.¹

MODIFICATION HISTORY OF THE RUTH C. POWERS CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER

The structure itself has changed remarkably little since its construction in 1943, contributing to the building's historical significance. Some modification has occurred at the entrance portico. At the building rear, each classroom originally had a large window wall of ceiling-height folding doors that opened directly onto the playground to allow unobstructed movement between the classroom, its covered patio and the open space beyond. On either side of the hinged central doors was a set of three sliding glass doors that slid one behind the next. These large folding partitions were replaced with standard windows and a set of double metal doors at an unknown date.

Many structures built in wartime Richmond relied on construction materials that were sometimes inferior, using plasterboard siding, tar and gravel roofs, and minimal insulation.² A 1950 City Planning Division Report on the War Housing reported that "buildings constructed in 1943 were built to last only five years. While buildings are not structurally unsafe, they contain many sub-standard deficiencies, such as plasterboard exterior surfaces, faulty flues, fire hazards, improperly vented plumbing fixtures, haphazard electrical wiring, inferior roofing, etc."³

The Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center exhibits some parallels with regard to construction materials, wood frame structure, and insufficient building foundation and may have experienced similar problems. The exterior siding is, at present, a combination of horizontal wood clapboards and sheets of plasterboard. The plasterboard is located on the entrance portico and along the upper sections of the walls. The structure lacks a

¹ Barber, Alicia. "Maritime Child Development Center" *Historic American Buildings Survey*, HABS No. CA-2718, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Summer 2001. Barber cites Residential Land Use Map, "Richmond Planning Commission Report on Housing and Development," City of Richmond, January 1950, Richmond Collection, Richmond Public Library.

² Barber cites Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 109.

³ Barber cites "A Report on Housing and Redevelopment," 37.

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masonry foundation. Vents to allow air circulation under the building are located approximately every five feet along the front and side facades.

The Powers Center retains the outside slide extending from the second floor to the ground on the western side of the building. There is also a small addition built onto the east side of the Powers Center. A men's room and storage space is located in this addition. The building is currently being modified with an addition under construction at the rear.

INTEGRITY

The exterior of the Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center retains a high degree of integrity according to the seven aspects of integrity defined by National Register 36: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The building remains at its original historic location. The building's original modernist design, room configuration and circulation, and features, finishes and fixtures remain intact. The current setting within proximity to the shipyards has not changed although many of the various buildings and structures associated with the shipyards are no longer extant. The historic materials originally employed on the exterior portions of the building are extant, though some have been replaced or covered. The workmanship of the building is still evident in the exterior, and the feeling or historic sense of the child development center building is articulated through its form and details, as well as its continued use as a Child Development Center. While minor modifications have occurred inside the building, the interior retains its original configuration and circulation and a significant amount of original material.

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SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANCE

The World War II Home Front is a significant chapter in United States history and is the subject of a theme study currently underway. The Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front Feasibility Study, June 2000, found that numerous buildings and sites in Richmond, California associated with the Home Front theme are of national significance. The Feasibility Study named a number of structures both at the intact dry docks and scattered historic remnant structures, including the building that is the subject of this nomination, the Kaiser Permanente Field Hospital, the Maritime Child Development Center, Fire Station 67A and the Atchison Village worker housing cooperative, which was recently designated as a National Historic Landmark. Although many of the Kaiser shipyards are no longer extant, Shipyard #3 was built to be permanent. Shipyard #3 is listed on the National Register at the national level of significance.

The Pullman (now renamed the Ruth C. Powers) Child Development Center is significant under National Register Criterion A under the category of social history, defined in *National Register Bulletin 16A* as the history of efforts to promote the welfare of society, the history of society and the lifeways of its social groups. The Powers Center, a wartime-era facility benefiting working mothers in the Kaiser shipyards is significant for its association with historical events related to women's employment in the Kaiser shipyards. Publicly funded child care for children of working parents began in World War II and has changed American culture ever since.

The Powers Center is also significant under National Register Criterion A under the category of education, as a symbol of the development of advanced care and educational facilities for the children of working mothers during the Second World War. *National Register Bulletin 16A* defines the category of education as the process of conveying or acquiring knowledge or skills through systematic instruction, training, or study.

Additionally, the Powers Center is significant under National Register Criterion B for its association with industrialist Henry J. Kaiser and Dr. Catherine Landreth. Built under the direction of Henry J. Kaiser, the Powers Center incorporated and still embodies progressive educational programming ideals of the era as developed by national experts of the stature of Dr. Catherine Landreth. The Powers Child Development Center is a near-twin to the Maritime Child Development Center; both remain impressive child care facilities in Richmond.

DISCUSSION OF SIGNIFICANCE

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The Powers Child Development Center, a wood frame structure executed in a spare, Modernist style, was one of approximately thirty-five nursery school units of varying sizes established in the Richmond area during World War II in order to assist women working in the Kaiser shipyards. The Powers Center was one of two purpose-built, stand-alone, child care facilities constructed in Richmond during the war. The construction of the Powers Center was a collaborative effort between various parties. The Maritime Commission was responsible for construction with some federal funding. Kaiser Industries collaborated in the design with proposed plans drawn by Ed Cerruti of Kaiser Engineering. Henry Kaiser advocated for government assistance in services for women and consulted with national experts in the field of child development on the design of the child development centers. At its peak, with 24,500 women on the Kaiser payroll, Richmond's citywide child care program maintained a total daily attendance of 1400 children. Unlike the federally-funded WPA day care facilities implemented during the New Deal, the World War II centers were not intended for use by the destitute, but for working mothers. Women began working at the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond in the summer of 1942.

Industrialists like Kaiser realized it was important to give women the support they needed to allow them to join the wartime work force and keep production going. Women had worked outside the home before, but never on such a large scale, and rarely in the realm of heavy industry. In 1943, Kaiser testified before Congress, arguing that essential services for women in war industry, including child care facilities, shopping centers, and recreation, were essential to improve the manpower situation. He stated that industrial sites should include child care centers as well as health clinics, cleaning services, recreation centers, and other facilities to assist women in their performance of work and domestic duties. It was his belief that the government should finance such services, since many individual factories did not have the available funds to do so.¹

By June 1944, women made up more than 27 percent of Kaiser's shipyard labor force. These were not, for the most part, middle-class housewives, but local working class and mid-to-low income migrant women.² Perhaps the most critical service needed by female employees, however, was the provision of child care while they were working at the shipyards. Kaiser hired record numbers of women in his shipyards, and the need for child care rose accordingly. According to a 1942 analysis of 3,675 families in Richmond, 712 children under the age of five were in need of child care, either because both parents were working in the shipyards or because they

¹ Barber, Alicia. "Maritime Child Development Center" *Historic American Buildings Survey*, HABS No. CA-2718, Summer 2001, cites Lucy Greenbaum, "As Kaiser Sees It," *The New York Times*, 31 October 1943.

² Barber cites Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 46, 47.

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would do so if child care were available.³ In a report released January 1, 1943, the Kaiser Company revealed that a total of 1989 mothers working in the Richmond Shipyards together had a total of 3,471 children. More than 1,300 of these children were aged five years or younger.⁴ The need for child care was becoming acute.

Although Kaiser seemed to consider child care to be a woman's right, most public figures cited necessity rather than entitlement when establishing their child care services. It was widely believed that child neglect could lead to juvenile delinquency, and lack of adequate child care caused high turnover and absenteeism among women workers, leading to declines in wartime production.⁵

Kaiser recruited new employees from the South and Midwest, and migrants swarmed to the shipyards on the West Coast. Richmond was almost instantly transformed from a small industrial town to an overcrowded small city, as the population rose from 23,642 in 1940 to 130,000 by April 1943.⁶ Housing and services were strained. Increasing the impact on the community, many of these workers brought their families with them, resulting in a massive increase in the numbers of children in the area. Before World War II, there were approximately 7,000 children in Richmond; by September 1944 there were around 35,000.⁷ An incredible surge of enrollment in the public school system led to enormous classes, split shifts, and chronic overcrowding. The school population of Richmond nearly quadrupled, growing from 7,327 in 1940 to 28,851 by 1945. A number of facilities were established in Richmond to keep children occupied and supervised, including a YMCA Hospitality House, an Industrial USO, and a boys' club.⁸

Kaiser was intensely aware that he needed to arrange for the provision of additional services for workers' families immediately, or risk losing his work force. Caring for families took on a whole new meaning for the defense industry with the influx of female workers during World War II. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, in 1944 approximately 1,250,000 women with children under fourteen years old had husbands serving in the

³ Barber cites "Proposal," [ca. 1942], Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 287, Folder 24.

⁴ Barber cites "A Graphic Portrayal of the First Six Months Experience of Women Employed in the Kaiser Shipyards, July to December, 1942," Progress and Programs Department, Richmond Shipyard Number Three of Kaiser Company, Inc., Richmond, California, 1 January 1943. Henry J. Kaiser Papers, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Carton 289, Folder 20.

⁵ Barber cites Riley, 253.

⁶ Barber cites Johnson, *The Second Gold Rush*, 33.

⁷ Barber cites "Growing Pains," *Fore 'N' Aft*, 1 September 1944, 8.

⁸ Barber cites "Growing Pains," 8.

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armed forces.⁹ With their husbands away, a large number of these women would need to somehow juggle homemaking and employment as they struggled to contribute to their household income and to the larger war effort. The provision of child care during the workday therefore became a new challenge for industries and defense communities to pursue together.

In 1943, Alan Johnstone, general counsel of the Federal Works Agency, consulted with Kaiser and other industrial leaders regarding services to support women workers. Some of the suggestions to emerge from the meeting were underwritten child care centers, as well as medical facilities near war plants.¹⁰ Overall, it is clear that Kaiser was both personally and professionally supportive of the establishment of child care and other facilities and services for his female workers, and did what he could to facilitate federal funding for them in Richmond. As his shipyard newsletter asserted, “failure to provide adequate care for the children of working mothers...is probably the gravest home problem we face. For it would be folly to win the war—and find that we had lost our children.”¹¹ At the same time, members of the local community were working diligently toward the same goal of accessing federal funds for local child care and other services. The system that emerged from these efforts would be an unprecedented collaboration between local, federal, and industrial entities.

Although a number of Richmond’s new child care centers were established in existing schools, the majority were located in the new public housing developments, financed by the federal government. Child care centers, an accepted wartime necessity, were a central component of these community housing developments. The Pullman Child Development Center was located adjacent to the railroad tracks on Maine Avenue. It was built sometime after September 1943, in USMC Division No. 2.¹²

The Ruth C. Powers and Maritime Child Development Centers continue to function as child care facilities nearly six decades later. The buildings are a testament not only to their effective design, but also to the continuing demand for assistance for mothers who work and a historical remnant of the working women who participated in the World War II wartime effort.

⁹ Barber cites Susan Elizabeth Riley, “Caring for Rosie’s Children: Child Care, American Women and the Federal Government in the World War II Era” (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1996), 252.

¹⁰ Barber cites Raymond Clapper, “Aid for Mothers,” *The Washington Daily News*, 29 September 1943.

¹¹ Barber cites “Eight Hour Orphans,” *Fore ’N’ Aft*, 7 May 1943, 6.

¹² Barber cites Residential Land Use Map, “Richmond Planning Commission Report on Housing and Development,” City of Richmond, January 1950, Richmond Collection, Richmond Public Library.

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Operated by the Richmond School District, the Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center was staffed with nutritionists, psychiatrists, and certified teachers. The Kaiser-affiliated centers gained a reputation for innovative and high quality child care and appear to be the only Kaiser-affiliated centers to continue in operation after the war. The design of the Powers Center appears to correspond closely to that of other nursery schools constructed both before and during the war. The floor plan, interior design, and equipment are reflected in illustrations and photographs of child care centers across the country, as published in architectural journals, training manuals, and educational studies. Like the Maritime Center, the Powers Center benefited from the expertise of Dr. Catherine Landreth who acted as a consultant and was appointed in the fall of 1942, the same time when plans were being developed for the center. Her ideas would have influenced the center's design.¹³

In 1943 Landreth was a professor of Home Economics and the head of the nursery school at the Institute of Child Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley, located just a few miles from Richmond. She received her doctorate in Psychology from Berkeley in 1936. In her capacity as a child education expert, she wrote several books and articles about child development, including *Education of the Young Child: A Nursery School Manual*, which was published in 1942. The book contains information on the history of nursery schools, facilities, staffing, physical care of children, suggested programming, and the latest research findings regarding early cognitive ability.¹⁴

In a section on "Housing and Equipping the Nursery School," Landreth outlined fifteen requirements for buildings and equipment. All centered on creating the best possible experience for the children. Some of her suggestions correspond with features implemented at the Powers Center including the outdoor recreational area with unobstructed southern exposure, and sliding exterior doors for the classrooms creating a "semi-shelter." Landreth's book also recommends open patios for multiple uses, such the fenced-off area for younger children, a well-lit locker room, and isolation space for ill children. Another requirement, adequate facilities for children's naps, was accompanied in Landreth's book by a photo of a Cornell University child care center nap room featuring individual screens between cots, closely resembling the partitions built into the second story of the Powers Center.

The Powers Center appears to have been designed according to Catherine Landreth's recommendations, with its six classrooms, enclosed play area, diet kitchen, sleeping room, and infirmary. Because the center's second

¹³ Barber cites "12 Families in Building on South Sixteenth," *Richmond Independent*, 10 November 1942, 1.

¹⁴ Obituary of Catherine Landreth, 22 February 1995.

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story was never utilized due to code violations, the teachers set up individual cots in the classrooms at naptime. These were constructed of wooden frames and stretched canvas. Each was labeled with a child's name, and the children brought their own blankets. Tables were located on the other end of the classroom, where the children worked on projects and ate their meals and snacks. The furniture used at the center was built to scale, with different sizes to fit different ages. Even the two- and three-year olds were provided with differently scaled chairs and tables to fit their individual sizes. Since the centers housed extended day care up to age twelve, the Powers Center contained larger furniture for older children as well. The goal was to establish good posture habits, reflecting current developmental research which indicated that "wherever a group includes children of more than one-year age range, duplicates of furniture of different heights are necessary for children's comfortable use of work tables and work benches."¹⁵

Although the various child care facilities in Richmond seem to have differed considerably in appearance and capacity, the Richmond School District apparently provided common programming for them all. According to the program's administrators, the stated purpose of these nurseries was to guide the [children's] mental, social, and physical development along proper channels, keep them clean, safe, and well-fed, and teach them good health habits and social interaction skills such as sharing. "Free play" was encouraged, in order to allow each child to pursue his own interests. Creative activities such as playing with clay encouraged self-expression.¹⁶

These references to the encouragement of children's creativity and self-expression suggest a familiarity with progressive nursery school curriculum and contemporary philosophies of child development. National experts on child development were recommending that the latest advances in nursery education be incorporated into these wartime child care centers once established. Emma Lundberg of the U.S. Children's Bureau recommended in early 1942 that "the day-care center should include the recognized features of a good day nursery, incorporating the methods and equipment of a nursery school. During the past few years day nurseries have increasingly come within this definition by adopting nursery-education methods, and recently many nursery schools have readjusted their programs so as to provide the full-day service of a day-care center."¹⁷ The building is now owned by Contra Costa County, which runs an innovative series of educational programs at the site as well as day care.

¹⁵ Barber cites Landreth, 32.

¹⁶ Barber cites "Eight Hour Orphans," 6-7.

¹⁷ Barber cites Lundberg, 157.

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Criterion B

The Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center is eligible for inclusion on the National Register Criterion B for its association with significant persons, industrialist Henry J. Kaiser and Dr. Catherine Landreth.

Henry J. Kaiser (1882-1967)

The country's most famous industrialist during the Second World War, Henry J. Kaiser directed the construction of the Powers Child Development Center by the Kaiser Company and sought the advice of professional in the field of child development to create child care facilities with a reputation for innovative and high quality child care.

Kaiser was one of the most prominent American industrialists of the twentieth century. Born in upstate New York in 1882, he migrated westward at a young age and established his first company, Kaiser Paving, in British Columbia in 1914. He then worked on a number of road and irrigation projects throughout the American west.¹⁸ In the 1930s, he earned federal contracts to work on a number of the major dams of the New Deal, including Hoover, Grand Coulee, Bonneville, and Shasta. Working at sites often far from established facilities, he had to arrange medical care for the enormous numbers of workers on these projects.

With the onset of World War II, Kaiser was determined to be a part of military production. In late 1940, Kaiser, in partnership with the Todd Shipbuilding Company of Seattle, won a contract to build thirty ships for the British government at the new Richmond shipyards. One month before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Kaiser formed the Permanente Metals Corporation. He bought out Todd to become the sole owner of both the shipyards at Richmond and the Oregon Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland. He then won a contract with the United States Maritime Commission (USMC) to build Liberty cargo ships for the American military. Kaiser built four shipyards in Richmond by 1943, the same year he established the Swan Island and Kaiser-Vancouver shipyards in the Oregon/Washington State border area. He also established a steel mill in Fontana, California, to supply steel for his ships. By 1944, the Kaiser Company was the largest shipbuilder in the country.¹⁹ Richmond, California was completely transformed at the onset of World War II by Kaiser's choice of the town as the site of massive shipyard operations.

¹⁸ Barber cites Rickey Hendricks, *A Model for National Health Care: The History of Kaiser Permanente* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1993).

¹⁹ Barber cites Hendricks and Nancy Goldenberg and Jody R. Stock. "Richmond Shipyard Number Three," Contra Costa County,

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Dr. Catherine Landreth (1899-1995)

As a leading child education expert and consultant to Henry Kaiser, Dr. Catherine Landreth influenced both the design of and program of activities at the Powers Child Development Center. In the 1940s Landreth was a professor of Home Economics and the head of the nursery school at the Institute of Child Welfare at the University of California at Berkeley. She received her doctorate in Psychology from Berkeley in 1936 and wrote several books and articles about child development, including *Education of the Young Child: A Nursery School Manual* (1942). The book contains information on the history of nursery schools, facilities, staffing, physical care of children, suggested programming, and the latest research findings regarding early cognitive ability.

In a section on “Housing and Equipping the Nursery School,” Landreth outlined fifteen requirements for buildings and equipment. All centered on creating the best possible experience for the children. Some of her suggestions correspond with features implemented at the Powers Center including the outdoor recreational area with unobstructed southern exposure, and sliding exterior doors for the classrooms creating a “semi-shelter.” Landreth’s book also recommends open patios for multiple uses, such the fenced-off area for younger children, a well-lit locker room, and isolation space for ill children. Another requirement, adequate facilities for children’s naps, was accompanied in Landreth’s book by a photo of a Cornell University child care center nap room featuring individual screens between cots, closely resembling the partitions built into the second story of the Powers Center.²⁰

Landreth, who died in Berkeley in 1995, designed UC-Berkeley’s Child Study Center with architect Joseph Esherick, in 1964. Her research on children’s ability to make color-based racial distinctions was said to have helped lead to the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision banning segregation in schools.²¹

California, (National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 1999), 15, U. S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Washington, D. C..

²⁰ Barber cites Landreth, 32.

²¹ Obituary of Catherine Landreth, 22 February 1995.

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PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

A building's period of significance is defined as the span of time in which a property attains the significance for which it meets the National Register criteria. The Powers Center period of significance begins with the year 1943, the date of completion of construction. The years 1943 to 1945 mark the period of significance of the Powers Center. Unlike the federally-funded WPA day care facilities implemented during the New Deal, the World War II centers were not intended for use by the destitute, but for working mothers who were aiding the war effort through their work in the shipyards. At the end of the war, the shipyards were dismantled and by July 1945 approximately 50,000 workers had left their positions at the Richmond shipyards. By the end of the year shipyard employment dropped from a peak of 90,000 to approximately 8500 employees.²²

²² Barber cites Hendricks, 65.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the historic property encompasses the building footprint of the Ruth C. Powers Child Development Center.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary was selected in order to include the building.