

**HUNTERS POINT SHIPYARD**  
**A COMMUNITY HISTORY**

**FEBRUARY 1996**

## *Purpose and Scope of Community History*

This study chronicles the social and cultural development of the Bayview-Hunters Point District of the City of San Francisco from the 1940s to the present. Situated on a series of hills in the southeastern corner of the city, Bayview-Hunters Point is one of the most scenic sections of the San Francisco peninsula. This report explores the historical processes that have shaped this community, from turn-of-the-century fishing and maritime settlements, to the rise of the Naval Shipyard in the 1940s, through closure of the shipyard in 1974 and its aftermath.

Highlighted in this study is the reciprocal relationship between the district and the United States Naval Shipyard within its borders. The focus of this five and a half decades of history is on the enormous growth and change that occurred during the heyday of Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, from the 1940s through the 1970s, and on the linked destinies of the shipyard and the Hunters Point population. This study charts the rise and fall of the shipyard, consistently an essential fixture in the community's economy and development.

The story of Hunters Point is told through the voices -- the living memory -- of its residents, those who lived in the community during the critical period and whose lives were closely tied to the historical development of the district. Interviewees are referenced by name in the text and are fully identified in the appendix. These primary sources, oral interviews conducted in 1995, are complemented by background archival, documentary, demographic, and historical research, which puts the accounts of individual men and women in the social and political context of the times they witnessed.

The report is organized chronologically. The first section provides a broad historical context, from the earliest European and Chinese settlements through the pre-1941 prelude to development. Next, the study closely examines Hunters Point's critical wartime expansion and dramatic demographic shifts. Several periods of postwar transformation are then explored, including an investigation of the shipyard's decline and the accompanying decline in the quality of economic life for the Hunters Point community. The concluding sections detail the community's emerging responses to these issues. The study concludes with an examination of the current status of the district as a community without a shipyard, with high unemployment and multifaceted community efforts designed to cure its social and economic problems.

One purpose of this document is the preservation of a cultural record which may survive time and change. In examining the history of the

Hunters Point region, it is important to keep in mind the diversity and resilience of the community. To survive the past half-century, the residents of Hunters Point have had to face many challenges.

For simplicity, the region being discussed is referred to herein as Hunters Point. This name refers to the entire Bayview-Hunters Point District denoted by census tracts 230, 231, 232, 233, 234, 606, 608, and 609, or simply zip code 94124.

## **The Early Years**

Until the rise of its maritime trade, the sparsely populated area of Hunters Point attracted scattered settlements of Europeans, mostly Maltese and Italian, who gathered along the bay in fishing communities in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Chinese shrimp camps began to form as early as 1871. By the 1930s twelve shrimp camps dotted the bay. It was then common to see along what is now Hunters Point boats, junks, nets, large kettles for boiling shrimp, baskets for hauling, and the catch drying on sloping piers.

The Chinese shrimping industry continued until the end of the 1940s, when a combination of discriminatory legislation, bay fill, diversion of water to Los Angeles, real estate speculation, and pollution led to the decline of many Chinese-owned fishing businesses in South Bayshore. The latest known Chinese shrimp industry is the Hunters Point Shrimp Company, which opened in 1946, closed in 1960, and was located in the South Bayshore area outside the project site.

The golden age of the American merchant marine in the 1850s witnessed the maritime development of the long Hunters Point promontory extending 6,000 feet into the deep waters of the south San Francisco Bay. This serpentine point, 2,000 feet wide and 290 feet high, soon became the site for a thriving shipbuilding trade at the graved dry dock of the California Dry Dock Company. A new dry dock, completed in 1903, was the largest then in existence on the West Coast. Boasting shipwrights and boatwrights of outstanding skill, the Hunters Point maritime industry flourished.

Early residences developed slowly as the local economies emerged. By the 1930s, Hunters Point had more than a hundred homes, along with restaurants, saloons, lodging houses, and farms -- to accommodate as many as a few thousand residents. Bethlehem Steel's development of the shipyard added economic opportunity to the scenic attraction of the area. With this improved economic base, a steady supply of residents began to call the district home.

## Prelude to Development

By the 1930s, San Francisco recognized Hunters Point as a separate district, yet in many regards overlooked it. It was geographically separated from the rest of the peninsula by its hills and extreme exposure to the San Francisco Bay. The Hunters Point community lacked public transportation to downtown San Francisco. In the late 1930s, the tightly knit group of citizens began to band together in the hope of improving transportation and other neighborhood conditions.

The sense of isolation created by geography and relative underdevelopment gave rise to the Hunters Point Improvement Association. Formed in 1939, the association sought to develop the district and to connect it to greater San Francisco, while offering access to the benefits of community living. Primary among the association's goals were improved transportation lines (specifically the completion and paving of Innes Avenue), the grading of streets, and the installation of underground sanitation systems in several sections of the district (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 15 Apr. 1939). Led by its president, local resident Lynn P. Hockensmith, the association tried to secure funds and attention from City government. Despite the success of organizing more than 50 residents, the group's pleas precipitated little action from Depression-beleaguered civic leaders. Funds for improvement had to wait until the realities of war demanded improvements in the infrastructure, but the association did effectively make its needs known to many. The organization lasted well into the 1940s as the district and the shipyard began to assume pivotal roles in the war effort.

By 1940, the Hunters Point community had become just that. Herman Lehrbach boasted in the *Chronicle* on December 19, 1940:

Now at this date we can boast of a community: We have industries, we have small business firms, we have potential sites for many more, to say nothing of the unlimited home sites available....To date the district can boast of a large dry dock...several taverns, two stores, two boulevard cafes, a riding academy and several shrimp markets.

A well-publicized and successful venture undertaken by the prewar community had been the establishment in 1939 of a cooperative grocery store. Local resident Chester Winnigsted served as spokesperson for this business venture. It symbolized the community spirit and collective self-reliance of Hunters Point residents in solving their own problems — qualities in which Hunters Point residents took pride. In this case, the two-mile walk to the nearest store prompted Winnigsted and his friends to form their own grocery store within the district. With five families as original members, the Hunters Point Cooperative Society developed. The

cooperative operated a community-owned store from a member's home (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 18 Nov. 1939). By late 1939, the store was open to everyone in the community, and more than 30 families were members.

These efforts among members of the community to guide the development of their own small district generated only nominal improvement but demonstrate an important fact of Hunters Point life. From early on, the community faced extraordinary battles to gain simple improvements that came easily to other sectors of San Francisco. The 1940 U.S. Census attests that there were then more than 8,000 residents in Hunters Point, 98 percent of whom were White (a population that would diversify dramatically and burgeon to 38,025 by 1950). Despite their observable numbers, for Hunters Point residents, many essential needs were continually ignored.

At the heart of this problem was the outsider's impression of the district. The area tended in those days to be characterized in terms such as: "isolated district," "undeveloped view spots," and "badly in need" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 15 Apr. 1939). While partially true, this stark depiction represented to many of the residents a distorted view of their district. A resident named Olga Giampaoli, writing as president of the Hunters Point Improvement Association for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, paints a more accurate portrait of her community. She marvels at its scenic beauty and the spirit of cooperation and dedication among its people: "Yet in spite of all this beauty and kindly people, there is one thing that I have never been able to understand, and that is why has a district such as ours been so utterly overlooked by our city fathers?" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 5 Aug. 1941).

Black migrants to the area did not perceive it as an undeveloped wasteland but as a healthy and successful community:

In the early '40s, here in Bay View-Hunters Point...even prior to the shipyard coming... this was an Italian community. They had two movie houses... a five and dime...streetcars coming up and down Third Street (Jackson, 1995).

A small, comfortable African American community had emerged in and near Hunters Point. Many had called the larger region home, at least temporarily, to work at the depot of the Southern Pacific Railroad located on Third Street and Townsend:

The SP had two overnight trains, all Pullman...between here and Los Angeles. Then there were a lot of commuter trains going out of here...and they had porters on those trains. And they were all Black. Blacks were either porters, cooks, or waiters. And of course the Pullman Company employed a lot of [porters] for the sleeping cars and so a lot of those people

lived over here on our side; they hung out generally around Third and Townsend (Fleming, 1995).

With Hunters Point at one end of their route, some Southern Pacific porters naturally settled permanently near the district. The African American population of San Francisco grew by 131 percent from 1910 to 1930, and an additional 26 percent between 1930 and 1940. (The Black population of Hunters Point continued to grow well after the war, as available housing beckoned newcomers restricted from most other sections of town.) Those who lived in Hunters Point were proud of their lifestyle and self-reliance -- a spirit that fostered community organizing and activism. While attempts made among locals in the late '30s and early '40s to develop and earn respect for the district did not result in significant improvement, they served to mobilize a community spirit.

Prior to the mass migrations of 1941-1945, a transformation was already taking place:

I think there was a Black operated restaurant down there. There was a pool room in that part of town operated by Blacks and you'd see Blacks...on the sidewalk talking to one another...There were a few, not many, but a few (Fleming, 1995).

Events far beyond local control, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, would bring change to the community literally overnight. It grew from 8,000 Italians, Maltese, and Chinese residents in 1940 to a vastly more ethnically mixed community of more than 20,000 by 1945.

## *The War Years*

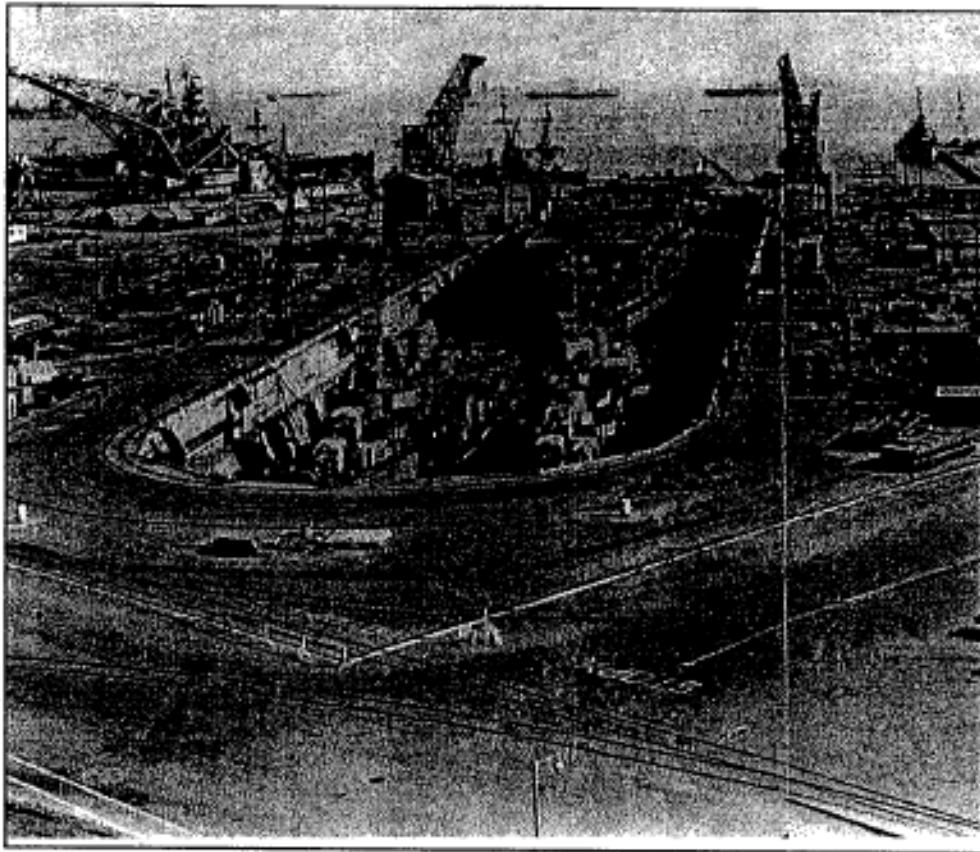
### **A Community Transformed**

The Hunters Point community, which boasted three dry docks, small shipbuilding firms, taverns, stores, boulevard cafes, and shrimp markets in 1940, was transformed into a vital contributor to the war industry in the years following Pearl Harbor. The U.S. Navy's acquisition in 1940 of the Bethlehem Steel Dry Docks, which became Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, necessitated development of the district's infrastructure and the base itself.

Photograph 1 shows Dry Dock No. 4, an impressive ship repair facility and magnet of much media attention. The maritime traffic caused by the war can be seen in the background.

The paving of roads and the completion of sewer lines for which the community had fought fiercely in the prior decade were completed in the spring of 1941 (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 Mar. 1941). In addition, a bus line and cable car began service closer to the hills. Between 1939 and 1946, the Navy invested \$87 million at the Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, including the completion of vast public works and ship building. Sixty buildings were constructed, 199 ships repaired, and over 12,000 units of housing built. Heavy construction to support six dry docks also occurred at Hunters Point. The most profound transformations, however, took the form of demographic changes brought on by the war's labor demands.

Faced with nationwide wartime labor shortages, the fully operating shipyard offered many opportunities for skilled and semi-skilled craftsmen, manual laborers, and apprentice blacksmiths, joiners, painters, coppersmiths, electricians, machinists, pipefitters, shipfitters, boilermakers, welders, and sheetmetal workers. In the early 1940s, California's booming war industries acted as a beacon for workers from all over the nation. Active recruitment was conducted to meet the demand. Federally funded relocation programs, under such auspices as the War Manpower Commission, recruited 15,000 to 16,000 Black workers to the Bay Area shipyards by 1943. In a mere three years, the number of Black families in San Francisco swelled from 2,000 to 12,000. The Hunters Point Naval Shipyard labor force swelled from 8,024 in 1943 to 18,235 in August 1945.



*Wartime censorship lifted, the Navy today revealed the secrets of one of its largest installations, the HP repair yard which has been constantly enlarged since Pearl Harbor. The picture above shows Drydock No. 4, the world's largest and capable of handling any ship afloat including our new 45,000 ton super battleships.*

Courtesy of the San Francisco History Room, San Francisco Main Library.



News spread by word of mouth across the Depression-strapped country. It became known that California and the Bay Area offered consistent work that could be easily secured. And the workers came:

They were brought from the South and the Midwest; from all the gas stations that had mechanics to the machinists who were making farm implements...[they] were brought into the war effort by train into San Francisco. They were promised at the time jobs for any family members that qualified, and the family [was] moved by rail into the area and a house was supplied for them....So the Navy built many homes on top of the hill out here at Hunters Point (Brown, 1995).

Black migrants were influenced by letters and stories of family members, relatives, and friends -- the grapevine that had endured since the antebellum period. They came for jobs and found 4,000 family apartments and 7,500 dormitory units that were supplied by the National Housing Authority. The wartime migration of labor resulted in a major escalation of California's African American population. Because the typical standard of living in the South in the '30s was measurably lower for Blacks than for Whites, the jobs and promising conditions of California provided a strong migratory pull. One resident-businessman who came to San Francisco from Dallas in the '40s recalls that rampant discrimination motivated his westward migration:

I was trying to get away from discrimination....It was just very common for people to treat you like you were dirt, so I wanted to get away... I heard so many wonderful things about California and the East Coast...[So I came to San Francisco.] I thought I'd wait until summer then go to New York, but it took me until summer to get a job. After I...saved up enough money to go to New York, I had fallen in love with San Francisco, so I said to heck with New York (Jordon, 1995).

Tom Fleming, editor of the *Sun Reporter*, the oldest African American newspaper in San Francisco, recalls: "All the war workers were from the South" (Fleming, 1995). And many of those war workers who migrated from the South brought family with them. One African American man from Tennessee followed his brother:

I came to San Francisco....My brother lived over here [in Hunters Point] and he was in the army too...so finally I moved over here to the Hunters Point area. And I've been at Hunters Point ever since (Branner, 1995).

Many of these new Black residents settled close to the jobs, particularly near shipping industry jobs. In the East Bay, they settled in Richmond and Oakland, and in San Francisco at Hunters Point. Like other occupations

requiring both manual and semi-skilled labor, the shipping industry had historically provided African Americans access to financial improvement and skill development. Hunters Point, possessing during World War II one of the three vital shipyards on the West Coast -- and the largest dry docks of the three -- greeted a new community of migrants. The existence of an already settled population of Blacks enhanced the attraction of the district for the wartime newcomers. Furthermore, the presence of the railroad depot meant that migrants from other parts of the country would frequently enter the city through Hunters Point.

The influx of new war workers further transformed fledgling Black communities in Hunters Point and San Francisco:

We could roughly say from about 1942...it really started expanding and it continued expanding until the end of the war (Fleming, 1995).

Lacking entertainment resources in their own neighborhood, Mr. Fleming recalls, Blacks from the community of Hunters Point began to frequent the Western Addition area of San Francisco. By 1945, emblematic of the demographical shift within the community, the first Black entertainment establishment appeared in Hunters Point.

Fleming recalls how Hunters Point grew: "There were only isolated residences out there [before the war], but most of it was commercial" (Fleming, 1995). The war changed the landscape permanently. The most profound physical example of the community's growth came in the form of housing for these new San Franciscans. Karl Kimbrough came to San Francisco in 1943 for both a home and a job at the Naval Shipyard in Hunters Point. He describes the development of housing for war workers in Hunters Point as follows:

They built housing for people to come to work in the shipyard for the Navy. So the Navy rented a space to the Housing Authority to build housing and HUD [U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development] built housing for the people because there was no place for them to live. The demands of the shipyard at that time, in 1943 to the 1960s, was to bring a lot of people [into] the State of California, to Mare Island and Hunters Point, and they had to have a place for them to live (Kimbrough, 1995).

When the workers came, "they were promised, at the time, the job...and homes were supplied for them" (Brown, 1995). Accordingly, the area was developed with housing complexes built by the Navy and managed by the San Francisco Housing Authority, a 5-member commission formed in 1938 by Mayor Rossi, headed during WWII by executive director, John W.

Beard. (The Authority permanently acquired this housing from the Navy for the city in 1953.) These barrack-style units, built quickly and cheaply, were designed to meet the extraordinary housing demands of those years. They were simple, standardized, and quickly filled. Although built as temporary shelter, most became permanent housing. One later occupant describes the utility of these units:

I hate to use the word typical, but it's a project -- two bedrooms, and when you entered the front door of the house, you stepped into the kitchen, and about ten paces after you stepped out of the kitchen, you are into the family room (Perkins, 1995).

The media took interest in the opening of the new housing projects in 1943: "San Francisco's \$10,000,000 war housing project at Hunters Point was dedicated yesterday...for the use of the community's war-swollen population" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 25 Oct. 1943). It was the first of many housing projects erected in the ensuing years. By 1945, the Housing Authority, landlord to all the new tenants, oversaw 12,233 home units for the civilian workers flooding into the shipyard. By the end of the war, 300 additional units previously occupied by Navy personnel were also transferred to civilian use (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1 Nov. 1945). Affordable and well-located, priority for this housing was given to the dry dock workers.

The development in these years was wholly determined by wartime necessity. As new workers flooded into Hunters Point, the area developed to meet the needs of the new population. It was a booming shipyard town. Residents recall that one of the effects of this quick development was a close-knit town: "Everybody knew everybody that worked on the yard; that lived in the area" (Kimbrough, 1995). While some of the 18,000 plus workers lived in other parts of the city, most people employed by the shipyard resided in Hunters Point. This functional relationship meant that citizens would not only work together, but also live together. Echoing Kimbrough's sentiments, resident and activist Espanola Jackson observes, simply, "The community was a family. Everybody knew everybody" (Jackson, 1995).

## The Union Struggle

While nearly one-third of the new shipyard workers were African American, and the total African American Bay Area shipyard workforce had grown from 56 in 1940 to 16,000 in 1943, segregation persisted in employment for Hunters Point minorities. Of the 100 leading San Francisco industries, half employed no Black workers in 1944; 90 percent of Black workers were employed by 10 percent of the industries (Broussard, 150). These familiar economic realities were reflected in the composition of Bay Area shipyard unions, too.

The leading union representing a majority of California's shipyard employees at this time was the International Brotherhood of Boilermakers, Iron Shipbuilders and Helpers of America. Commonly known as the Boilermakers, this union represented 65 to 70 percent of West Coast shipyard workers, and its national membership grew from 28,609 in 1938 to 352,000 in 1943. It also rose to prominence within the Hunters Point Shipyard. Notorious for their power and influence by the 1940s, the Boilermakers refused to allow Black membership.

Tom Fleming and others tried their best to bring the employment monopoly to light:

Old Jim Crow was present all the time. You had to investigate that all the time. I was working very closely with the NAACP investigating those things because we were trying to break the stranglehold that the Boilermakers had on jobs in war industries. The Boilermakers looked like they controlled most of the jobs pertaining to shipbuilding (Fleming, 1995).

Without union membership, many positions beyond manual labor became difficult for African Americans to secure. While President Roosevelt's 1941 Executive Order creating the Fair Employment Practices Commission sought to undo these restrictions, the unions found ways to circumvent fair practices. The jobs were advertised as open to all, but, as one Hunters Point local recalls, "when you went to the union [to get a membership card], you found out, no dice" (Fleming, 1995). The situation limited Black employment across the board: "[Blacks] couldn't get in the unions and San Francisco is a union town. That speaks for itself" (Kimbrough, 1995).

Hunters Point workers found a somewhat successful way around union exclusion. They organized themselves into in-yard unions, with the expressed support of the Navy. Karl Kimbrough was a Black member of the local electricians union, the IBEW Local 6 in San Francisco. He and other workers from within and without the other 11 unions represented in the shipyard formed the first Metal Trades Council:

We were very successful in coming up with our unions inside the yard. This is one of the things that the Navy was not opposed to. When we reported to the shipyard commander [then Capt. W. L. Rawlings] what our intentions were they said, "Go for it." We had 48 percent Afro-Americans and we had Asians...Between all of them we had quite a few minorities. This way, they could become members of the union--legitimate members of the union (Kimbrough, 1995).

By organizing workers on site, Black Hunters Point workers bypassed outside union resistance and assured appropriate minority representation throughout the shipyard. Espanola Jackson describes the strong heritage of unionism in Hunters Point:

This was a union town....I've never been in the union, but my mother was in the union, my father was in the union, all the people that came here...[were] union people, and they stuck together and made sure that they would work for the labor that they sweat for and be paid for it (Jackson, 1995).

Many historical analysts express a less sanguine view of the effect of the auxiliary shipyard unions. Generally relegated to inferior status, these so-called Jim Crow or auxiliary unions which evolved because of de jure segregation, carried numerous disadvantages. Not only were they denied voting privileges and many other benefits of normal union membership, but they could also be dissolved by the parent local at any time. Desegregated only months before the end of the war, the Boilermakers were powerless to prevent postwar layoffs that contributed to 15 percent unemployment among Blacks by 1948 (Broussard, p. 165).

## Conclusion

Nonetheless, the employment created by World War II, which drew workers to the shipyard, and the affordable housing created to shelter those workers, combined to foster conditions that elevated the status of Hunters Point to a full-fledged community within San Francisco. The availability of shipyard employment for many thousands of Southern Blacks also created the first sizeable African American community within San Francisco's borders.

From 1940 to 1945, the African American population of San Francisco increased by 665.8 percent; from 1940 to 1950 by 904 percent, with a total in 1950 of 43,460 Black residents. According to the U. S. Census, the African American population of Hunters Point alone grew to 25 percent of the total Hunters Point population in 1950, to over 52 percent in 1960, and to over 79 percent in 1970.

Fleeing the racial and economic segregation of the South, many Blacks saw California and the war labor market as a chance for personal improvement. The movement of African Americans from the South to San Francisco continued long after the war ended:

Although some discrimination continued in employment, housing, and public accommodations, the Black migrants' wartime status in San Francisco was a marked improvement over that of Blacks who had remained in the South. Small wonder that the majority of Black migrants remained in the San Francisco Bay Area after the war. For the first time in the city's

history, white San Franciscans would have to adjust to a large Black community (Broussard, 142).

One woman recounts the slow but steady migration of her family from Alabama to San Francisco:

My father's first cousin came out in the '40s, then my dad came out in the early '50s.... Then in 1955, my brother, my sister and I came. Then a couple years later my other brother and sister came [with] my mother" (Tatum, 1995).

Problems arose, however, and persisted for decades. These difficulties were in some ways a continuation of the isolation and limited transportation that marred life in earlier decades in Hunters Point. But these problems were exacerbated when African Americans became a majority among the Hunters Point residents. The community that was quickly molded during the war years and dependent on a war economy, was constrained by the end of the war. These problems are examined in the following section of this report.

## *The Postwar Period*

### **The Shipyard During the Cold War**

The end of the war in 1945 did not signal the end of the shipyard. Although the employment level dropped from its peak of 18,235 to 6,000 by 1949, employment levels remained relatively high as the Cold War transformed the yard for a peace-time military. With the Korean and Vietnam Wars and peak periods of peace-time development, work occasionally grew heavy.

Daily operations of the yard offered economic opportunities for nearly everyone who had received training:

That's why the shipyard was so valuable...You had shipfitters, you needed welders, you needed sheetmetal workers, you needed boilermakers, you needed painters, pipefitters, electrical and electronics, and you needed quite a few machinists (Kimbrough, 1995).

With employment opportunities for temporary and more permanent craftsmen, the community continued to grow.

By news accounts of the day, by 1945, Hunters Point had a residential population of 20,000, of which a third were Black, although the U.S. Census give a 1950 population of 38,035, of which Blacks measure 25 percent.

During these postwar years, the shipyard also expanded its range of services from ship salvage to other kinds of ship repair. In 1948, the shipyard performed \$31 million in ship repair. Since the size and capacity of the dry docks at Hunters Point were the largest on the West Coast, the shipyard was given responsibility for most of the work on ships and non-nuclear submarines. While the Mare Island facilities, handling most of the nuclear capable fleet, likewise achieved prominence, a strong "radioactive tradition" at the Hunters Point Shipyard dates to as early as 1945. Just prior to the end of the war in the Pacific, in July 1945, the first atomic bomb to be used in war -- called the "Fat Man" -- came through the shipyard to meet its transportation to the bomber Enola Gay, then stationed near Japan (Brown, 1995). Hunters Point nuclear readiness was supported by a separately functioning radioactive research lab located on the shipyard's grounds. Commonly known as the "Rad Lab," the U.S. Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory signaled the postwar advancement of the shipyard.

This was no assurance that the shipyard would remain functional. With 6,000 families occupying Hunters Point housing in 1948, and even with \$31 million in ship repair, the first base closure scare came in 1949 when the federal government recommended the closing of the Hunters Point shipyard. At that time, the shipyard employed 6,000 civilian workers in addition to 4,000 to 6,500 Navy personnel. All tolled, the yard payroll in that year was estimated at \$22,500,000 (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 Dec. 1949). Karl Kimbrough remembers the 1949 alarm:

That was a fight between shipyards. That was between Hunters Point Naval Shipyard and Mare Island Naval Shipyard. Mare Island says that if Hunters Point continued on they would be taking over, but then [Mare Island] became nuclear and that's what saved them.

The City of San Francisco and the press joined the locals in the battle to keep Hunters Point open. As Kimbrough recalls, "As long as Hunters Point stayed open, the community was totally involved." The employment benefits to the city as a whole, represented by the permanent fixtures of the yard and the journeymen craftsmen who found temporary employment there, catalyzed all City leaders into protesting the closing. After City delegations were sent to Washington, rallies were held by the workers on the yard, union outcries of patriotism were voiced (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 13 Dec. 1949) and support was given from the entire Board of Supervisors, the government finally agreed to maintain the shipyard. The shipyard -- a vital component of the City's industrial base -- was of vital interest beyond the borders of the Hunters Point community.



## The New Postwar Community

The presence of Black workers in the shipping and rail industry made Hunters Point an amenable home for many Black newcomers. As Blacks ventured into other parts of the city, however, they found the city was very segregated and met with resistance and restrictive housing codes and deeds. The Housing Authority therefore made an effort to offer much of the available project housing in the hills to Blacks.

Jessie Banks came from Louisiana to San Francisco as a result of the war and to Hunters Point because of the housing:

Black people were having a hard time trying to get somewhere to stay, so the City decided to open [the projects] up and let the Black people come in there and live. So they sent word around where you were living that you can come to Hunters Point and that's where you can have plenty of room and opportunities (Banks, 1995).

As the wartime workers migrated out of Hunters Point or permanently settled in its single-family homes, new Black migrants kept the Hunters Point projects filled. In a city where many structures dated to the turn of the century, this new and affordable housing was a welcomed addition. When new, the project housing facilities on the scenic Hunters Point hillsides were regarded as attractive to many residents. Carol Tatum remembers the projects she occupied:

Most people had a view, particularly up on that hill. There is almost a view from every angle....Everything was clean. It was well-tended by the San Francisco Housing Authority at that time. They had yard people that went around and cleaned up. There was no garbage outside...There was no graffiti. That was just unheard of. So it was a well-tended place (Tatum, 1995).

Not all newcomers to the area, however, were living in such well-tended housing. Carol Tatum also remembers the projects built to meet the initial war boom. While still standing, they were no longer occupied by Navy families. This "Army...barrack-type housing...had been evacuated by...[Navy] people and that was used for mainly African Americans who migrated from the South to work" (Tatum, 1995).

Espanola Jackson describes the housing into which she and her family moved in the late 1940s:

During that time we did have electric lights, but we didn't have ice boxes, so the iceman came....And a lot of people had to make boxes and put them in their windows at night so the food wouldn't spoil....I don't believe that full electricity came in



where you could have a washer or dryer until the '50s and '60s, but [in] the '40s you just did not have that (Jackson, 1995).

Another Hunters Point resident, Steve Arcelona, distinguishes between the condition of the new project housing and the old. "These were the older projects, the ones that were used during the war. I mean they were really the cracker box things" (Arcelona, 1995).

The disparity among the different projects encouraged many to move from project to project. Ira Crooney came to the projects in the early postwar period. While he and his family moved, he recalls, they never moved far:

We moved from one [project] to another. Whenever we'd find something better, we'd move to that one. But we still stayed around here on the Hunters Point hill (Crooney, 1995).

Most of the people coming to Hunters Point were both from the South and Black. Then a child, Lavone King recalls: "I thought everybody came from Alabama and Texas...and Tennessee" (King, 1995). This rise in the Southern Black population created a community much like the close-knit one that had preceded it.

Espanola Jackson and her family came in the 1940s from Texas to what seemed to her a transplanted Southern commune:

During this particular time, everybody helped each other. It was like a village, like in Texas and the South, when if you run out of something you could always go next door and get a cup of sugar, go to another door, get a cup of flour. You didn't want to get everything from one neighbor. So you'd just go all around and you could have a meal (Jackson, 1995).

Lavone King remembers learning to cook at the home of a neighbor, a mother of eight who dressed her hair for her graduation: "It was a very homey feeling. I felt very wonderful in that community" (King, 1995). This may reflect not only the form of community closeness that had prevailed in the prewar years, but a very persistent Southern quality as well.

The strong sense of community in postwar Hunters Point was reflected in its public celebrations as well. June 19, known as "Juneteenth Day," commemorates emancipation in Texas. Due to the distance between Washington D.C. and Texas, word of emancipation did not reach Texan Blacks until June 19, much later than other slaves. To the many new Black arrivals from Texas, "Juneteenth" became a time for celebration at Hunters Point as well:

[It] was celebrated by everyone; cooking, barbecuing, and just coming together and talking about the old times and doing little play things with the children. We would watch the old folks pick the guitar, and they would just enjoy themselves. It was just a day of being together and being a family with everyone" (Jackson, 1995).

Despite the growing African American population in Hunters Point, this was a diverse community. In the housing project Jessie Banks occupied, "there [were] soldiers, civilians, Navy personnel, a whole mix. 'Cause see--the Whites and the Blacks...their job was to work at this shipyard and that's why they had them there" (Banks, 1995).

In Photograph 2, a diverse group of men enjoy free time on the shipyard. Work brought all of Hunters Point's people together.

## **Housing Highs and Woes**

One of the persistent problems plaguing the community in the postwar period was the battle between the residents and the San Francisco Housing Authority, landlord to more than 12,000 residents. While the newer projects were well maintained, older buildings, originally built only to survive the war, were not. By the mid-1950s, the community believed that it needed more than these aged, shabby barracks. The first challenge to the Housing Authority came in 1954.

That year Gene K. Walker and other community project dwellers organized the Hunters Point Project Committee to try to achieve improvements in their neighborhood (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 20 May 1954). Developed quickly and unconventionally, Hunters Point lacked many of the standard amenities of community living that were funded elsewhere. It was an area of dense housing without adequate transportation, recreation, or aesthetic appeal.

The Hunters Point Project Committee felt that the City, profiting from project rents, owed the community the same sorts of resources enjoyed in other segments of town. The Project Committee's goal was to obtain \$12,000 from the City to redevelop the community's theater as a recreation department.

In response to the demands of the Project Committee, the Housing Authority announced plans to release a former Army gymnasium for use by the community. A place to play basketball during the afternoon was far less than the community needed. Project Committee President Walker responded: "[We] favor a neighborhood community center for the entire family, not just a tennis-shoe gymnasium for part-time play" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 28 May 1954).

The conflict revolved around more than the quest for recreation. At stake was community respect. The Project Committee believed that the Housing Authority lacked the right to dictate which social services the district would enjoy and appealed to the Mayor's office. The Committee obtained the services of a nationally known social worker, Margaret Berry, to determine their needs and sought the respect other districts in town were paid. By the end of the year, however, the former military gymnasium remained the sole public amenity in the area. City government, unwilling to compel the Authority to act, denied the request for funds.

This effort among the populace of the hills of Hunters Point coincided with increasing residential development of the lower (Bayview) area -- the community around Third Street. Although single-family residences were not uncommon in this section before the war, the wartime housing boom prompted further development along Third Street. Karl Kimbrough moved into a home in this developing section in 1943. After the war, primarily in the 1950s, noticeable growth in the housing stock occurred.

Steve Arcelona, current president of the Private Industry Council and an early Hunters Point resident, moved with his family in 1953 to a house that had been moved from another area of the city to the lower Hunters Point area. They found themselves in an area slated for serious change: "There were a lot of empty lots. The projects were right above us," Arcelona remembers. "Then there were the slaughterhouses and the auto wreckers and there was also a lot of fishing going on there" (Arcelona, 1995). It was an area commonly known as Butcher Town, with light industry and five slaughterhouses. Arcelona recalls that on hot days "the stench from the slaughterhouses was something that was part of living in the Hunters Point-Bayview area" (Arcelona, 1995).

The character of Butcher Town, however, was quickly changing with the addition of the Arcelona home and other private homes. In time, only the name and faint smells remained as evidence that slaughterhouses once dominated the area. Sam Jordon, a local businessman and resident, remembers that by the early '60s "community pressure" had forced the slaughterhouses to leave (Jordon, 1995). The district was becoming increasingly residential. "It was exciting...to watch all the empty lots get developed. All of a sudden, it was like the area started getting developed" (Arcelona, 1995).

Both Tom Fleming and Espanola Jackson observe that Butcher Town, as it had originally been, started to fade in the '40s. Tom Fleming states:

[After the war], Butcher Town was just about gone then because they had all those emergency housing [units] they put up for the war workers....Some of the people were very progressive.



*After lunch — It's either volleyball, softball or baseball for many of their workmen after they finish eating lunch and before the whistle blows that sends them back to their jobs aboard ship or in one of the many shops. In background is the dominating world's largest crane, big enough to lift battleship turrets.*

Courtesy of the San Francisco History Room, San Francisco Main Library.

They bought... private homes over there in Butcher Town (Fleming, 1995).

Jackson states that the influx of Black war workers forced the departure of the Italian community that had populated Butcher Town:

[T]hen in the '40s Black people started buying homes in this area. As Blacks would buy homes, they would call it 'blockbusting' in the '40s and '50s -- to get the Italians out of the community....The house that I owned [had been occupied by] an old Italian couple that had retired. They moved out, so this area became mostly Black people (Jackson, 1995).

The development of this second area offered many in the projects and elsewhere in the city chances for residential mobility. Jessie Banks explains:

They said we could move out here and they was going to build schools out here, they was going to build swimming pools, they was going to do all this. I said, "Hell, that's the place for me." And we were going to be able to get brand new homes, get them cheap and everything. I said, "I'm going out there to Hunters Point..."(Banks, 1995).

Even today, many in Hunters Point regard the level of home ownership as one of the district's primary distinctions. Ownership helped create a diversified and settled population in the community, in contrast to the more transitory nature of project residence:

[T]his community has 52 percent homeowners and most of those are Black people. We don't buy, speculate, and move and rent. We are stationary. So this community is built on mostly people from Texas and Louisiana (Jackson, 1995).

## **Postwar Businesses Come to Hunters Point**

Accompanying this residential upsurge and the flow of workers into the shipyard via Third Street was the development of small businesses. Steve Arcelona, whose family moved to the area in the early 1950s, describes the Third Street corridor:

....[V]ery alive. There were a couple of grocery stores -- all of them seemingly doing well. There were a couple of drug stores. There were, I think, a couple of high-end liquor stores, a dry cleaners. All of it in that corridor (Arcelona, 1995).

Sam Jordon opened his own business in the Third Street corridor in 1958. Although he was "never...a drinker," he opened a bar to better serve the Black community of the area. "[There were] so few places people could go to get a drink," he recalls. "The few bars out here weren't for Black folk" (Jordon, 1995). Jordon's bar, which later expanded into a catering service, epitomized the ideal of successful local business ownership.

There was also a growing recognition, however, that Blacks in the community were not adequately engaged by local business institutions. Omer Mixon came to the area in the 1940s and remembers racial prejudice; instead of walking into a bar with his Mexican friend, Mixon recalls:

My buddy went on over there and was there waiting for me. Now I done been in there before. But we went in together. But this time I'm coming in after him. I sit down and order a beer and [they tell me] they don't serve Blacks in here (Mixon, 1995).

Only businesses like Sam Jordon's bar provided local social opportunities for the Black community within Hunters Point. Growing up in the community during this period, Espanola Jackson and her friends frequently had to leave Hunters Point for recreation: "You had to go all the way over to Fillmore, what we call now Western Addition." This movement between the Fillmore and Hunters Point was common in those days among the Black community. Jackson continues, "[B]ecause most Blacks that left the Fillmore moved here to Hunters Point, so then we always went back to Fillmore" (Jackson, 1995).

As the slaughterhouses left Hunters Point, other small businesses began coming into the area. Sam Jordon recalls a furniture store, shoe store, and jewelry store in the vicinity of his bar. Al Perkins remembers that there were also social groups that ran clubs. Steve Arcelona frequented a theater popular with kids and a very successful auto wrecking shop. Third Street was the ideal location for most of these small ventures because it also acted as the main thoroughfare for shipyard workers entering and leaving the area.

Very little useful commerce was developing on the hill, however, nor were the basic commercial needs of the community being met by Third Street businesses. Business development in Hunters Point at that time tended to cater more to the worker who traveled through the area than to the permanent resident. "Everything was on Third Street -- what little they had" (Womack, 1995). That little did not include affordable food shopping. Small grocery stores with exorbitant prices were the norm. Lavone King recalls a friend alerting her and her neighbors:

We'd go to the same grocery store that was overpriced. We had no knowledge of that. She made us aware and stirred up our

pure minds. We were just kind of buying diapers and getting formula and cooking dinner for our husbands... (King, 1995).

Pat Womack, an early resident in the projects, remembers, "We had to go to Mission and shop. We had to go downtown or crosstown because there weren't shopping centers down there" (Womack, 1995). In addition to inadequate local commerce, the problem of poor transportation continued to frustrate the Hunters Point community. Many residents at that time recall how difficult it was for them to get around the area to conduct business. Pat Womack states, "When I first came [to Hunters Point] I liked the area [but] I didn't like the inconvenience" (Womack, 1995). Steve Arcelona explains, "You probably had to take three buses to get from [Hunters Point] to San Francisco" (Arcelona, 1995).

Lavone King describes how much walking one had to do to get to the stores in the area:

In the area where we were...we had to walk to the store. There was nothing immediate except farther down the hill, on what was called Hilltop, there was a supermarket, and then that closed down....And then we had to walk down the hill toward the shipyard to get to the stores that were in that area (King, 1995).

Poor transportation services affected not only shopping and daily business activities in Hunters Point, but also children who went to school. Carol Tatum describes how her only mode of transportation was the public bus: "You had bus fare. I mean, you had to have it because you had to go to school on the bus. And they didn't have bus tickets....The schools were too far to walk" (Tatum, 1995). Other school children could only reach their schools by taxicab.

Photograph 3 shows a cab the Board of Education rented to transport children. Inadequate transportation was a problem for both young and old in Hunters Point.

By the late 1950s, the community's past successes began to fade. Such achievements as the creation of a local affordable grocery co-op had been the means by which the community fended for themselves, but they eventually failed: "Oh, yes, there was a supermarket on Third and Powell called Co-Op...but eventually that type of store closed down, no money" (Perkins, 1995).

## Conclusion

Two elements characterized Hunters Point in the years following the war: One was the continued importance of the shipyard in employing Hunters Point residents, which generated a continuous flow of new residents.

Affordable housing and established community further enhanced the attraction of the district for newcomers to the city. The second element, rooted in the past, was the transportation and commerce shortfall. In the next decade, those problems dominated the landscape of Hunters Point.





*Youngsters who live on Hunters Point are taken to and from Irving M. Scott School by taxis hired by Board of Education. Mr. Fixit thinks a bus line, to serve youngsters and adults, might be a better idea. He hopes readers will write in their opinions.*

Courtesy of the San Francisco History Room, San Francisco Main Library.

## *The Sixties*

### **Many Separate Communities**

As the Hunters Point community entered the '60s, disparities among groups living in the district grew. The perception of many in the area was marked by a disparity between Navy personnel and the community at large -- a once symbiotic relationship now described by one outside observer as "antagonistic" (Elton, 1995). For many in the community, despite the employment opportunities the shipyard provided, it was simply a separate place. Lavone King observes, "[F]or me going to the shipyard was like going downtown, like exciting -- oh, I get to go to the shipyard" (King, 1995). Albert Perkins, who moved with his family in 1956 to a housing project built during the war, found that Navy personnel never tried to fit into the community:

Remember, I said I lived in project housing, and there was also project housing for the Navy. There was a fence between the public housing where I lived and the Navy personnel that actually lived on the base, worked for the Navy....A big fence (Perkins, 1995).

Lavone King echoes this sentiment: "They had their own little city within the city" (King, 1995).

Sam Jordon also perceived a distance between the Hunters Point civilian community and the Navy personnel. In his business, he encountered "very few [Navy personnel]. I met a lot of them and they'd been warned about coming out on Third Street. [They] told them, 'Don't go to Hunters Point'" (Jordon, 1995).

Hunters Point was gaining a reputation as a primarily Black and unsafe part of town. As Jordon observes, the crime rate may have been the same as other parts of the city, but, "when a Black person commits a crime it's thought of a little differently than someone else" (Jordon, 1995).

Espanola Jackson notes that the district was supported solely by the community, not by the Navy.

They had jitneys at that time and the sailors would get in on the base and they would go downtown. They did not make a left turn to come into where our area is; they would make a right turn to go downtown. So the Navy was not contributing to the neighborhood. It was the residents that actually lived in this area that was doing the shopping and the buying, and then in the '40s Black people started buying homes in this area (Jackson, 1995).

Carol Tatum recounts, "I never even saw any personnel in uniform on Third Street" (Tatum, 1995).

For others who lived in single-family dwellings off the hill, however, seeing and playing with Navy families was a daily occurrence. Steve Arcelona remembers:

I also recollect some of the kids who went to elementary school with me...were from the Naval Shipyard. These were like kids and families who were from the Naval personnel (Arcelona, 1995).

Omer Mixon lived near some servicemen: "A couple of my neighbors was service guys and they raised up their families next to me" (Mixon, 1995). Omer Mixon also played baseball with both civilians and Naval personnel. For a time in the '50s the Navy actually sponsored his team, but "they didn't fraternize[e] with civilians as much in the '60s....They didn't sponsor anymore. They figured you should be off on your own" (Mixon, 1995).

The amount of contact local civilians had with the Navy undoubtedly varied among individual residents, yet the overwhelming consensus of long-time residents of Hunters Point is that Navy personnel rarely became a visible part of the community after WWII.

Another division within the community, slower in emerging yet present by the end of the 1960s, was between those living on the hill in the projects and those living in the single-family residences. Albert Perkins hints at the separation: "Away from this area [on the hill that was called 'Hunters Point'], three or four blocks away from this area, you get into another area which was predominantly called Bayview." Carol Tatum echoes the distinction: "There's Bayview-Hunters Point. The Bayview part is the part where the people owned the houses. The Hunters Point part is the hill that used to be all public housing" (Tatum, 1995).

Those who lived in the projects on the hill, or Hunters Point, found themselves at a disadvantage because of the inaccessibility of transportation and shopping. Lacking business, single-family homes, and transportation lines, and at a distance from the Third Street corridor, life on the hill developed a sense of separation from the rest of the district. Lavone King comments:

They felt like it was isolated. Like I said, there were no stores around, everything was at a distance. ...[I]f you were in the Western Addition you could walk down the street to the barbershop, you could go to the store; there were things all around you. But it wasn't true in the case of the Hunters Point area (King, 1995).

Sometimes living in the projects could be socially difficult for school children.

Nobody said anything in elementary [school] because we all lived in the projects; we were right there at the school. But when I got in junior high there were children from private housing, and one day somebody said, "Oh, you guys live in the projects." And...the teacher said, "Well, no." He stopped everyone in the class and got everyone's attention and he said, "If you live in a tree that's your home....So don't ever talk about where someone lives" (King, 1995).

For those who lived in the Bayview area down from the hill, the separation was not apparent in the early part of the decade. "A lot of my friends that I went to school with lived in the projects, and it was very mixed" (Arcelona, 1995). As a child, Arcelona, from Bayview, remembered playing on the hills, at friends homes, or in empty parcels of land. Still, the hilltop acquired a different image in the minds of many: "I remember at that time people [there] being poor. As I look back now, I guess I could be considered poor [too]" (Arcelona, 1995).

## **A Community of Diversity**

In the 1950s and 1960s, the community living in single-family dwellings was still very ethnically mixed. Steve Arcelona recalls the diversity of his neighborhood in Bayview: "I do remember the area again being very mixed, especially the owners of the houses -- Mexicans, Filipinos, Chinese, African American, very mixed" (Arcelona, 1995). The community was also very close:

There were always a lot of kids in the neighborhood...It would be something where you would be over at somebody's house and the mother or father would just call out into the street....We'd go over to people's houses and we'd eat together (Arcelona, 1995).

In the Bayview-Hunters Point of the 1950s and 1960s, the youth were frequently engaged in many different activities. "We went to the gym and played basketball and we went to dances and we went to fashion shows. And there was a movie theater on Third Street, so we used to go to the movies. We went to the library a lot" (Tatum, 1995). As a parent, Ira Crooney knew his children could keep busy: "They had all these parks they could go to. They could play [sports], all that stuff. And they had the gymnasium here at the time" (Crooney, 1995). The community also had Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts. As the population of young people grew, common social institutions also grew.

Many after-school activities were provided by various community organizations, and these activities greatly affected the lives of young residents like Arcelona:

I remember the "Rec and Park" had a very big presence at my elementary school and the after-school activities were sponsored and run by the "Rec and Park". I was a member of the Cub Scouts....[W]hen I was a teenager [I remember] joining the Teen Club at All Hollows Church and doing activities with them. There was a time when I actually was a member of Cameron House [which] still exists here in Chinatown...Then when I was in junior high and high school I got a job at the grocery store and all of my spare time outside of school...I spent working for the grocery store (Arcelona, 1995).

The children on the streets had their own baseball teams. One street, such as Innes or Hudson, would play against another. A member of the Blue Diamonds of Innes, Arcelona remembers "These were very healthy activities" (Arcelona, 1995). He also remembers contests sponsored by the local five and dime. Al Perkins recalls many afternoon when he would go "up on the hill and play[ing] basketball" (Perkins, 1995). The youth of the community found themselves engaged in very typical activities.

In the 1950s and early 1960s, drugs did not play a large part in the lives of the young people of Hunters Point. As Espanola Jackson states, "[W]e didn't have the drugs then. We only got the drugs in Bayview-Hunters Point in the late '60s and early '70s. And they're coming in stronger" (Jackson, 1995). Another resident, Carol Tatum, corroborates that drugs did not become prevalent in Hunters Point until after the 1966 riots and the 1974 closure of the shipyard:

After the riots the influx of drugs [happened]....It was gradual. I would say over what felt like a ten-year period, from 1966 to 1976, there was a drastic change. By the time the shipyard got ready to close...some of the young people out here got involved in the sale and the use of drugs (Tatum, 1995).

Before the upheaval of the '60s and the unemployment caused by the shipyard's closure, Pat Womack recalls that the Hunters Point community was close-knit: "[P]eople in Hunters Point were large families, caring families, people who migrated with other people which brought other people into the community" (Womack, 1995). The common background and common economic status among local residents fostered a sense of community. Encountering common problems of urban life, the quality of cohesion deepened: "The community has always been close-knit in trying to do what they could for Hunters Point -- to save it, to make it better, to keep jobs in the area...and they're still trying" (Womack, 1995).

## Employment Expectations

During the '60s, many in the community still counted on the shipyard for employment. Arcelona remembers that "as I was growing up...my buddies would talk about getting a job in the Naval Shipyard. There was no question that the blue collar trades were still very healthy" (Arcelona, 1995). He recalls that two sons of a shipyard employee, who aspired to work there when they were youths, were hired according to plan straight after high school: "There was just no question that they could get a job there" (Arcelona, 1995).

The disparity of perceptions between residents of the single-family dwellings in Bayview and the projects on the hill is reflected in Al Perkins' view of the shipyard and its relationship to the community:

Truthfully speaking, from what I can see, there was no relationship. The only relationship that one could say was existing was the fact that some people who lived in those projects worked in the shipyard.

He believes the shipyard was primarily an employer for outsiders:

...[W]hen I lived there, there was a tremendous number of people driving from other neighborhoods to go into the shipyard, and very few people from Hunters Point worked on the shipyard (Perkins, 1995).

Pat Womack knew shipyard workers yet recalls that local work was not abundant: "There wasn't that much to do [for work] around Hunters Point" (Womack, 1995). Sam Jordon saw that "there were businesses coming in but they were not benefiting the average person here" (Jordon, 1995). Echoing the differing experiences of Bayview and Hunters Point residents, while Steve Arcelona found employment at the local La Salle grocery store, Al Perkins found his first job a bus-ride away in the Fillmore District. Light industries provided some employment for the Hunters Point area. Women could find employment making toothbrushes, packing seafood, or working in the canning industry (Arcelona, 1995). But work opportunities were declining.

The simple fact was that the number of permanent employees at the shipyard was gradually decreasing. Ira Crooney recounts how the decrease affected employment opportunities for many of the younger people:

Wasn't nobody getting a job but the old-timers. Weren't that many jobs. See, [with] the old-timers they didn't have to train nobody; they got somebody already experienced. And the

experienced workers had all the jobs at that time (Crooney, 1995).

Regardless of the slow downturn, those Hunters Point residents who were able to get on at the shipyard found great opportunity. Many progressed steadily:

It really paid off for the minority workers because they started out as helpers, a lot of them. And then the time went on, they went from helper to mechanics. And then, from mechanics they went on to leading men. That was a supervisor's position. And then from that, we even had a couple of shop heads (Kimbrough, 1995).

The shipyard remained the most visible employer in Hunters Point, but as the Cold War leveled off, even that began to turn. Karl Kimbrough, who was working at the shipyard in the later years, saw a decline in numbers in the workforce after the Korean war. The shipyard went from a Korean War peak of 10,000 to less than 7,500. There was a further decline in those numbers until its closing in 1974.

Photograph 4 shows the excitement present at Hunters Point when the shipyard workers learned the shipyard would remain open. Ten years later, however, the shipyard workers would be unemployed.

A tension developed in the community due to dwindling job opportunities and the hope of work that the shipyard provided. Arcelona describes the glimmer of hope: "To think back about getting a job, right there....To think you could have that light at the end of the tunnel" (Arcelona, 1995).

## **Churches of Hunters Point**

Throughout its history the church has played an undeniably important role in the community. One resident summarizes it, "Hunters Point is church" (Womack, 1995). The advent of church edifices was gradual, partly due to the lack of money and space in the early years. Some early ministers held church services in the storefronts on Third Street and in their homes. Tom Fleming recalls the growth of Black churches:

Some of the more enterprising ministers were probably holding them in their homes...Looked like Whites were moving out, too. Where there had been a White church, they'd buy that and hold their services in that (Fleming, 1995).

Another resident emphasizes the vital community role played by the church in the Hunters Point of the 1960s:



*Good News Gets a hats-in-the-air-reception here. Workers respond enthusiastically to word that Hunters Point Shipyard will stay open.*

Courtesy of the San Francisco History Room, San Francisco Main Library.



The community was pretty much determined by the leadership in the church....so therefore, there was no need for or no requirement for the Navy or anyone else to do anything. People went to church. [There was] no political process, no concern about political process (Perkins, 1995).

The churches of Hunters Point were viewed by many residents as the primary locus of leadership. Karl Kimbrough conducted community outreach efforts for the shipyard in its later years. To find out what was needed, he went directly to the church. He would gather the four or five ministers who were also employees of the yard and would ask, "Well, from your contacts and from your church...find out from them. What do they think would be the most help that the Navy could give?" (Kimbrough, 1995). That the shipyard chaplain led the outreach efforts prior to Kimbrough's community involvement presaged the long-term dedication of the church.

Despite the strong presence of the church in the Hunters Point community, there remain residents who questioned the church's efficacy in community improvement efforts. Some, like Sam Jordon, were disturbed by what they viewed as the hypocrisy of congregants: "[T]hat's where you'll find the biggest hypocrites, in the church....a lot of them drink more whiskey than I sell, that's what I'm saying about hypocrites" (Jordon, 1995).

While acknowledging that the churches had a strong presence, Tom Fleming doubts that they made substantive improvements. For him and others, the chasm between words and deeds fomented skepticism. "[The church leaders] take advantage of their power" (Jordon, 1995).

Ira Crooney suggests that "[The churches] should have done more for the community than they did. They had the power to cut a lot of the stuff that's going on right today. If they work together, they can do it" (Crooney, 1995). Omer Mixon saw cooperation as one key to better community action, but in his view the churches failed in that effort: "We figured at that time the most important part was to get the church[es] to work together, the others to follow. But that's where the breakdown was" (Mixon, 1995).

Ruby Payne has been a member of the Hunters Point Providence Baptist Church since 1969. In her view, shared by many involved in the churches, work was always being done, yet sometimes problems seemed insurmountable:

The Church always had what they call outreach where they would go out into the area and try to talk to the people, and they would go from one corner and try to talk with some of those and then go to another corner and try to talk. But I don't know if it did any good (Payne, 1995).

For the Arcelona family and others, the Catholic Church was the primary institution in their lives. He remembers the priests from St. Paul's of Shipwrecks and All Hallows running schools and youth groups. For him, they represented a "big presence" in the community (Arcelona, 1995). For those affiliated with it, the Catholic Church provided a strong influence. Youth could join church-based groups. Sponsored activities necessitated involvement by Church members. And adults, lacking many other types of institutions, could congregate through the Church.

Until the pivotal year of 1966, the church represented the only agent of substantial organizing and change in the community. This preeminence was not only a function of the community's religious heritage and commitment; it also derived from the crisis of secular community leadership.

### **The Crisis of Leadership**

Aside from the church, most agreed that community leadership -- that is, traditional leadership -- was lacking. Pat Womack identifies a "Big Five" group of "strong Black women who took a stand" (Womack, 1995). Espanola Jackson recognizes the same leadership:

Eloise Westbrook -- she was the big voice in Bayview-Hunters Point. You had Mrs. Julia Colmer, Rosalie Williams, Ms. Freeman, and Oceola Washington. They were the Big Five and I tell people that we was the little bitty ones because we were following them. But Mrs. Westbrook was the woman I admired so (Jackson, 1995).

Eunice Elton, who worked within the community for over 30 years, also recognized Westbrook as a force in the community. She notes, however, that the persistent problem of the community was a "lack of male leadership" (Elton, 1995). This lack was often a problem in itself. "What we're trying to do in this community," Espanola Jackson says, "is push our men out in front" (Jackson, 1995).

Al Perkins saw the same void in the community: "The church was the only place that you heard someone raise a voice....And even those guys were fundamentally weak" (Perkins, 1995). The biggest problem Perkins identifies was a "lack of identity, poor leadership. I'm going to say poor leadership on a political basis, by the church, and truly the inability to come to some type of conclusion to deal with whatever resources the community had" (Perkins, 1995).

Many regarded and still regard Sam Jordon as a leader. His nickname among the residents is "The Mayor of Butcher Town" -- a title with which

he takes issue: "What good is it to be called a leader if you can't get people to do for themselves?" (Jordon, 1995). For Jordon, the crisis was a lack of initiative to maintain and support Black-owned businesses. He tried to be vocal but feels as though "I'm left whistling in the wind." He laments, "To own businesses and support them, I never saw nobody work for that" (Jordon, 1995).

The lack of Black-owned businesses exacerbated the tension of locals at the seeming mercy of outside owners. Sam Jordon did not know the owners of the few businesses that surrounded him. Al Perkins remembers outsiders replacing outsiders: "There were a lot of little small stores run by Chinese or Arabs, who eventually bought out the White people who ran those pricey places" (Perkins, 1995). The void in leadership, especially leadership that encouraged business development and support, permitted economic development in Hunters Point to be led by business concerns beyond the local community.

In 1963, Sam Jordon did make an effort at improving community prospects. That year, he became the first African American to run for City Mayor. His progressive platform reflected the concerns of his community and most Black communities. He ran for a 30-hour work week to increase employment, better law enforcement, an end to police racism, equal representation in government, better schools, and, most importantly, better housing (Jordon, platform paper, 1963). Although he lost, he did bring many of the community's issues to the forefront.

The community's lack of effective leadership left it powerless to surmount the problems that surfaced in the community in the 1960s. Tom Fleming describes the biggest problems as "poor housing facilities and old Jim Crow was always present" (Fleming, 1995). According to Fleming, the housing projects were aged beyond endurance, yet the City had no problem renting them to a population of lower-income Blacks.

Hunters Point locals observed other problems. Al Perkins saw, "No desire. There was no nothing. I mean, the people worked everyday, came home, and that was it" (Perkins, 1995). As if to fill this emptiness, the mid-sixties also saw the birth of early gangs -- however benign by today's standards: "I mean the gangs at that time was at best a knife. Mostly fist fights and, you know, a lot of bluffing" (Perkins, 1955).

As tension was mounting, Bayview resident Steve Arcelona observes,

[T]here came a point when you didn't hang out up on the hill unless you knew where you were going, unless you went up there during certain times of the day....[I remember] a gang of guys coming down from the hill and sort of meeting up with us and a lot of posturing going on and maybe a few punches getting thrown, but that was the extent of it...I never thought

about getting killed. I never thought about drugs (Arcelona, 1995).

Eventually, the situation worsened. By the late '60s, Arcelona remembers, "There came a point where you didn't hang out on the hill [anymore]" (Arcelona, 1995). The transformations within the neighborhood and the rising tensions came to a boiling point in 1966. That year began with increased community activism, saw a deadly community riot, and ended with a resurgence of hope.

## 1966 and Change

### A Community Awakens

In the late 1960s, the will of the Hunters Point community to alter its situation from within resurfaced. In the tide of ideological change sweeping the Bay Area and the African American community nationwide at the time, a renewed activism infected even the youngest members of the district. The most vocal of this activism took the form of the first mass movement against the Housing Authority since the creation of the Hunters Point Improvement Project over a decade earlier.

By the late 60s, the housing units built as temporary wartime shelter from 1943 to 1945 had seriously deteriorated. Roach- and rat-infested, the structures were nearly dilapidated. Tenants, still under the purview of the City's Housing Authority, believed that the situation was not being adequately addressed. The crisis of unemployment and the lack of community improvement increased local dissatisfaction.

The Housing Authority's abrupt eviction in 1966 of 22-year old Ollie Wallace, his 2-year-old daughter, and his wife, for delinquency in paying rent, mobilized the community. Ollie Wallace, an unemployed maintenance worker, became a rallying point for other dissatisfied project dwellers for whom Wallace's plight served as a focus for community problems. As the community rose to Wallace's defense, mass sit-ins and protests against the Housing Authority Board of Directors resulted in the Wallace family being readmitted to their apartment and their furniture returned (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 Mar. 1966).

The battle was waged over much more than one family's rights. It galvanized the growing community activism. As witnessed by Wallace himself, quoted by the local press, "I didn't think there was that much unity among the Black men and women at Hunters Point" (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 Mar. 1966). Assisted by new community organizations and leaders such as Harold Brooks and his anti-poverty group, the community rallied for better treatment by the Authority and improved housing standards on the hill.

Enthusiasm spread. A mass effort was planned in conjunction with a Housing Authority meeting, where over 30 community members and leaders, having alerted the media, led a demonstration. The crowd shouted at auditors and blocked exits from the building, demanding that a list of complaints be addressed (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 Mar. 1966). One Authority commissioner attributed the uproar to the general climate of "living in revolutionary times," but the incident publicized harsh economic realities as well as a general sixties civil rights ethos enveloping the country.

It should be noted that this "ethos" was expressed by the efforts of President Johnson's War on Poverty, which by 1972 had brought \$8.6 million into the Hunters Point community and had created block organizations for each neighborhood, local Economic Opportunity Councils (EOCs), Youth Opportunity Centers -- extensive new federal and local bureaucratic structures. This was accompanied in 1966 by what was measured by some accounts as a 15 to 25 percent unemployment rate among the 90 percent African American Hunters Point community. The Wallace demonstration was also accompanied that year by the NAACP's call for Black Monday in support of Black employment among construction unions. Local social awareness had already resulted in the City of San Francisco's enacting an ordinance prohibiting discrimination among companies and unions doing business with the City, but the restrictive housing covenants that more or less confined the transplanted African American population in WWII to the Hunters Point and Fillmore areas were slow to make way for integration.

The list of community demands was signed by representatives of new community groups. Among these groups were block clubs from each street on the hill, the Hunter's Point Parent Action Group, various ministries, and the regional Economic Opportunity Council. These groups combined to demand jobs, fair rent, improved infrastructure, and full economic and social enfranchisement.

Increasingly, the community was speaking up for itself and demanding to be heard. Most improvements were attributable to this effort. Lavone King recalls that new community leaders rose "from all of the disruptions and individuals raising hell saying, 'We're tired of living like this. You guys are giving all the other parts of the City money, and we get nothing and we want something'" (King, 1995).

Instead of waiting for help from the City, the community took action by using federal War on Poverty monies. A new chapter of the Economic Opportunities Council (EOC) was created under the leadership of Dr. Arthur Coleman, a local physician. "Some of the projects under the EOC included day care, head start, legal assistance, summer youth programs, and a community credit union; all aimed at giving the poor self-determination" (*New Bayview*, 15 Feb. 1990). The EOC and Dr. Coleman became key players in a community striving for change.

In an attempt to train Black youth for jobs, the Youth for Service organization was begun in the same period. As one resident puts it,

Youth for Service was one of those institutions that helped employ young people that otherwise would have been unemployable....They reached out for people who were willing

to come forward and try to make a change in their lives (King, 1995).

Groups like this and Black Men for Action sought to improve the lives of the young in the community while instilling pride in their common ethnic heritage. By 1967, an Afro Pride Festival was held in the community every year (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 Oct. 1967).

In yet another instance of self-reliance, the community began the second co-op for affordable grocery shopping in 1965. The Hunters Point Food Cooperative lasted only six years but demonstrated the creativity and dedication of the people in improving their community. The events of 1966 brought an assortment of funds and figures into the struggling community. How they would respond was yet another challenge.

## **The Riot of 1966**

The stage was set for a comprehensive movement by the community to take control of its district. No single event raised public awareness of the district among City and other government officials more than the disturbance that is now known as the "Riot of 1966."

The event began when a young man in the community was shot dead by police at a liquor store. A local recalls:

[A] young man got killed in the Spotlight Liquor Store. They called him 'Frog'....[People were] angry because they felt this young man was killed unjustly. You know, he was somebody that everybody liked, he was a fun kind of young kid that liked to joke around and...they said that he was shot in the back. [People] felt that there was an injustice done in our community (King, 1995).

Tom Fleming, a community member who tried to stop the young people from rioting, also describes what he saw that day:

We went out [on the streets] and the kids were excited as hell, and they were going to burn the damn town down....So we...called Jack Shelley, the mayor, and says, "We think that if you come out here and talk to these young kids this afternoon you might do some good." Well, Shelley refused to come out there....Then about three hours later we heard some kids were breaking out windows of stores down there, turning over cars and setting them on fire....So we went to the Potrero Hill Police Station. That was the command post. [There were] a couple of cars burning across the street from the police station even (Fleming, 1995).

Despite an abundance of detail, disagreement arose in the Hunters Point community about the magnitude of the event and whether it actually constituted a riot. The media made a major issue of the events of September 27, 1966, which many in the community considered overblown. Sam Jordon who was there during the disturbance, states adamantly, "I've never seen a riot" (Jordon, 1995). Tom Fleming attributes much of the sensation to police and media overreaction. There was very little damage around the Hunters Point area, yet the National Guard was called out in fear of a repeat of the events that had occurred in Watts the previous year:

What we did [to protect the kids], we started driving around...If we'd see kids out on the street we'd say, "Get off the streets cause the National Guard is coming!" They'd shoot to kill...No sooner had we said that then here came a jeep....with two guardsmen and a 30-caliber machine gun mounted...(Fleming, 1995).

Whatever did occur, most remember the fear and confusion. For Steve Arcelona, the event underscored the deep depression within the projects, the isolation of the community, and the disenfranchisement of its ethnic residents:

Whatever was happening there [in the projects] was not part of our world [down in Bayview]. The consciousness of what was happening there was not clear. Immediately afterward, "you could see the change...people moving out (Arcelona, 1995).

The community then found itself seemingly embraced by the sympathy of a liberal city: "People started to take notice" (Womack, 1995). What resulted was the most vibrant change and leadership in the community, even transcending the separation between the community and the shipyard. As a result of the riots, federal and City monies came flooding in for various aid programs. "That's where I first saw a lot of people trying to become leaders...who the spokespeople were and how they got to be the spokespeople, what their viewpoints were. You know, those were the things that kind of changed my opinion about the neighborhood" (Perkins, 1995).

After 1966, "Everybody was doing different things...trying to help other people get jobs....I got involved with the Bayview-Hunters Point Affirmative Action Program, the Bayview-Hunters Point Community Health Center, the Bayview Southeast Development Program" (Womack, 1995). Harold Brooks explained to a newspaper reporter that there was "no way to pinpoint any one responsible [for the activism]. What occurred out here are collective activities and concern a great number of people....At the time there was a lot of real community feeling about helping one another to make this work" (*New Bayview*, 22 Feb. 1990).



Amid the renewed drive from within and the influx of federal and local funds into the district, city organizations also began addressing the problems of unemployment in the community. One of these was the Private Industry Council (PIC) under the leadership of Eunice Elton. Elton came to San Francisco in the late '40s and became intensely involved in the Hunters Point community in the '60s. The PIC, funded by the Mayor's office as well as federal monies, began several training programs for youth and adults. While problems persisted, Elton observed that the community "learned how to be heard" (Elton, 1995).

Young and old became new members of diverse organizations. New leaders rose in the community -- Harold Brooks and his anti-poverty group, Adam Rogers and his various young men's employment associations, and Dr. Arthur Coleman. With these new leaders and many others, Hunters Point entered a new period in its history.

## **Dreams Deferred**

Despite all the new activity, results came slowly. The hopes of the community rested on achieving decent housing and jobs for the massively unemployed migrants to the Hunters Point Shipyards, residents from the Fillmore and others seeking refuge from segregation and discrimination. While those hopes translated into good intentions and organizing, fundamental problems continued to plague Hunters Point. The various agencies were unprepared for the task at hand:

It was very interesting. As a result of the riot, the Chamber of Commerce decided to get into the problem and help with the employment problem, and they were so naive. They went out on the radio and said to everybody, saying "Give us your job opening so the young people can be employed." Well, a job opening for a secretary has to be able to do this, this, this, this. The jobs that came in were jobs that nobody in the unemployment group was going to be able to qualify for (Elton, 1995).

Multi-agency programs did attempt to employ the population by offering job training opportunities. These programs often, however, assumed that the economy was open and businesses and government agencies would employ the trained workers. Fundamental issues of access needed to be addressed, "efforts to tackle the total problem rather than just the single problem of job skills" (Elton, 1995).

Pat Womack was active in various community organizations ranging from health care, with Dr. Coleman, to affirmative action concerns in the

workplace. She, too, recognized the limitations of the new federal and municipal assistance:

When you start requesting things that you need in your own area...then they do enough to pacify you....They do enough to quiet you down so you can stop ringing the phone (Womack, 1995).

Tom Fleming likewise observed little real progress: "They started spending money...[but] they didn't reach very many people in the spending program" (Fleming, 1995). From his viewpoint and that of many other residents, the major development was the creation of various administrative posts and the opportunity for community members to head up new organizations. In fact, some estimate that nearly \$6 million of the \$8.6 million spent in Hunters Point anti-poverty programs was devoted to program payroll.

Although neither new leaders, learning how to exert pressure on the City for funds or programs, nor outsiders had practical answers, some benefits were obtained:

The employment efforts have gotten some individual people into jobs, but not as a Hunters Point group, as individuals. We [PIC] have spent a lot of federal money working with funding community agencies to help with the employment problem, and they have had some successes (Elton, 1995).

One of the most vivid successes came in the temporary employment of youth. Yet because federal monies subsidized those work programs, the youth did not gain private sector experience.

The riot brought a new breed of community organizer to leadership in Hunters Point. While their successes were few, a renewed sense of appreciation for the needs of the community inspired them to persist. To prevail in the face of the events that were to follow, that persistence would be essential.

## *The End of an Era*

### **The Redevelopment Program**

Aided by the leaders who arose in the late 1960s, the community of Hunters Point gained prominence in the city's quest for urban renewal. From the late 1960s through the 1970s, efforts were made to rebuild what had become one of the most depressed areas in San Francisco.

One of the most visible symbols of the need for redevelopment was the Hunters Point hill, then covered with hastily constructed, 25-year old housing. The poor housing stock stood in an area lacking in parks and recreation. To remedy this dismal situation, large sums of federal money and new job opportunities came into the district in the form of the Urban Renewal Program.

New construction did present opportunities for minority local employment. One of Pat Womack's jobs was to assure adequate minority representation in some of these efforts. Yet some job discrimination persisted. In early 1970, excitement over development funds was tempered by a recurring problem: One large firm hired to do much of the redevelopment work, while sporting Black bosses and employees, was White-owned (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 Apr. 1970). Jessie Banks recalls, "They didn't hire the Black people. They brought in their own crew and started using them." The workers were from "everywhere but Hunters Point" (Banks, 1995).

While Urban Renewal brought cosmetic changes, the situation at its core was not renewed. "[They] put new faces on these barracks, these projects....They look like apartments. But the same people, they moved them over to one side and then they moved them back in. (Perkins, 1995). On the other hand, Tom Fleming believes the biggest change wrought by the renewal effort throughout the city was simply relocation:

We told them that we called it "urban removal" because none of those people came back here to live. They left from over here when they tore down old houses. None of them came back because they moved out of town, a lot of them moved out of San Francisco (Fleming, 1995).

### **The Navy Steps In**

The Navy and the local shipyard played a role in the betterment of the community. Through their outreach efforts in the early '70s, the Navy orchestrated one of the more successful job training efforts at the time. From 1970 until the shipyard's closing, Karl Kimbrough acted as the

community outreach organizer for the yard. One of his major goals was to find out "what the Navy could do for the kids in the summer when they were out of school" (Kimbrough, 1995). Toward that end, and in the hopes of training the youth for future positions in the industry, he helped to develop the Navy's Pre-Apprenticeship Program.

With the help of another employee named Frank Thompson, Kimbrough organized the recruited youth into various shipyard shops. They found summer employment for "girls who could work in the office [and] fellas who could work as assistants to the mechanics in the shops" (Kimbrough, 1995). By training them and offering valuable work experience, this program prepared youth for jobs in any shipyard. In their first year they "brought on about 75 youngsters from the community" (Kimbrough, 1995). At its apex in 1973, the program benefitted 119 young people. Don Brown praises Kimbrough's and the program's efforts: "The program turned out a tremendous number of very, very good employees who knew their trade well because they were trained by the old timers" (Brown, 1995).

The Pre-Apprenticeship Program was interracial and engaged youth from all over the city. An even more focused attempt to benefit the Hunters Point community specifically was accomplished by outreach. This came through Kimbrough's association with the Hunters Point Boys and Girls Club. The clubs were given a donated spot on the hill and a building from which to operate. Kimbrough, one of the Board of Directors of the Club, also saw that they received funding donations. For recreation, they took some of the children out on the Navy's tugboats for weekend rides on the Bay. A close relationship again had developed between the shipyard and the youth of the community.

The Hunters Point young people were not the only ones who benefitted from these efforts. Much was done for adult clubs as well. Kimbrough brought together a diverse collection of church and community social groups for a meeting at the shipyard to "talk about the things they'd like to do," to find out how the Navy could help fulfill their needs (Kimbrough, 1995). He discovered that their main problem was that "they couldn't get out of the community because they didn't have transportation" (Kimbrough, 1995). He arranged for the Navy to provide transportation to various recreational sites in the Bay Area.

In the early part of that decade, after the awareness that grew from the '60s, the shipyard began to exert as vital a role in the community as it had during the war years. "It turned out to be a very successful thing for the community and the shipyard" (Kimbrough, 1995). Unfortunately, the harsh realities of base closure in 1974 ended any hopes of an expanded effort.

## The Yard Closes

The closing of the yard meant a loss of employment for 5,060 workers. In an effort to counter this loss, the Navy coordinated a replacement program. The goal was either to find other government opportunities for the skilled craftsmen or to allow them the option of retirement. For those involved, it was primarily a success. "We found jobs for all the workers down to 136" (Kimbrough, 1995). Even if this meant relocating to one of the operating bases in Southern California or Washington State, for those workers it also meant a continuation of employment utilizing their skills.

Some of the local employees, however, chose not to relocate to other bases. They joined the growing ranks of the unemployed in Hunters Point (Brown, 1995). Many also chose to take early retirement, for which many were not financially prepared: "When they closed the shipyard down, a lot of them retired early. They didn't have no money. But if they could have worked on out and had something when they retired, then I think it would have made a difference" (Banks, 1995). The transition was most difficult among the African Americans in Hunters Point and throughout the San Francisco community, half of whom had been employed by the shipyards or government (Broussard, p. 150).

The closing of the shipyard had a much wider impact than the mere loss of a hundred or so jobs. With the closing came the closing of businesses all over the area: "When you start winding down a large facility like Hunters Point Naval Shipyard, it's definitely going to affect business....It's only natural for them to wind down too" (Kimbrough, 1995). Businesses began shutting down as the flow of consumers into already limited commercial zones dried up even further. Espanola Jackson states, "The community died when the shipyard left. There was nothing. Everything that was here disappeared." She describes going-out-of-business sales along the Third Street corridor where goods were being sold at ridiculously low prices. During one store's desperate attempt to close, she purchased a bedroom set for five dollars (Jackson, 1995).

The closure of the Naval Shipyard posed yet another economic hardship for the community. "There was nothing to support business in [Hunters Point, and now] there's not a lot of business to support the population" (Arcelona, 1995). Carol Tatum states that the effects of the closure went deep in the life of the entire Hunters Point community: "[I]t has left a void in my life. The absence of employment opportunity and the impact that that has on the community affects everybody in it and associated with it" (Tatum, 1995).

## *Depression at the Point*

### **The Yard Transforms Again**

The closing of the Naval Shipyard did not mean an end to operations altogether. A company called Triple A leased the property from the Navy between 1975 and 1985. Triple A's contribution to local employment and community activities was limited in comparison to what the Navy's had been: "There just was not the volume of jobs anymore" (Brown, 1995). Furthermore, the jobs that did exist on the yard were no longer filled by locals. "There was no concern at that time with the effort to hire locally" (Brown, 1995). The real opportunities for the community represented by the shipyard existed no longer.

Found guilty of "environmental infractions" and fined for their abuses, Triple A left the shipyard in 1985. The community was then even left out of the efforts to clean up its neighborhood. Jessie Banks recalls,

They say we're going to have jobs out there for years, work out there, cleaning it up. But when it came to hiring they said, "No, they can't work out here because they're not trained, it will kill them." So that meant Black people didn't have anything to do. It was all right for [local people] to stand and watch these big trucks haul this stuff out, but they couldn't use them. It was all right for people [to have] their windows open for it to blow into the house, but they couldn't work. So [the companies] brought in people from everywhere else but Hunters Point (Banks, 1995).

In the years following the Triple A operation, the yard did resume some of its activity on a temporary basis. In this period, both the USS Enterprise and the Carl Vincent were serviced in the dry docks. ~~Members of the~~ community benefitted from this. In a community well aware of the historical problems of shipyard employment, the Navy decided "that the effort will be made to hire locally" (Brown, 1995). In the last job the shipyard completed, more than 20 of the laborers were residents of the hill.

Eventually, the Navy leased out property to various tenants. Most notable is a collection of several hundred artists. They are, some claim, "the largest concentration of artists" in the country (Brown, 1995). Today, they and several other small firms represent the bulk of the yard's occupation.

In the continued effort among the locals to benefit from their local economy, the Aboriginal Black Man's Union, assisted by James Richards, has recently led the fight for fair representation. The successes of employing men from the hill have resulted in the coordination of an

what goes on out there [at the shipyard]. They want to be able to make decisions as to the use of the space" (Elton, 1995). Yet skepticism created by past disappointment endures: "If Blacks are going to be [allowed to] participate in that...I don't know" (Fleming, 1995).

In the last 50 years, Hunters Point has weathered many storms. The residents have continually struggled for ideals of community. At its heart, Hunters Point is that -- a strong community. Pat Womack, who now lives in Oakland but remains connected and dedicated to the Hunters Point community declares, "I've always been in Hunters Point. I came to Hunters Point, I'll always be Hunters Point. When I go there I'm at home" (Womack, 1995).

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