





MARITIME AND MILITARY



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KEY

-  OAKLAND BAY TRAIL
-  YOU ARE HERE
-  LOCATIONS OF HISTORICAL MARKERS
-  WAYFINDING SIGN
-  AREAS OF INTEREST



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For more information on the history of Oakland's waterfront, visit the Oakland Main Library History Room and the Oakland Museum of California.

The Oakland Mole



Oakland Mole by sea, 1890.

The busy intersection of Seventh and Maritime Streets, a crossroads for container trucks serving the Port of Oakland, is a site rich with history. For thousands of years, the marshland habitat provided food and materials for Native Americans. In the 19th century, the site became part of the Oakland Mole, a causeway for trains at the transcontinental terminus of the Central Pacific and Southern Pacific Railroads. Opened in 1869, the railhead included a large maintenance yard with roundhouse and other shop buildings to handle a diverse rolling stock of engines and cars. Due in part to changes in railway technology and part to the rise of trucking, the West Oakland Yard declined in importance after World War II, and little remains today of the once-bustling facility.



Oakland Mole by land, 1890.

Oakland Army Base

During World War II, Oakland's waterfront was transformed by sprawling military bases. Largely built on filled tidelands, the Naval Supply Center Oakland (1940) and Oakland Army Base (1941) stretched across the city's western shoreline, on either side of Seventh Street and the Southern Pacific Mole. The Navy Base extended south into the estuary, across from the Naval Air Station in Alameda; the Army facility spread north to the Bay Bridge. Rapidly built during wartime, these port complexes were similar in design and mission: supply and embarkation depots for military operations in the Pacific.



Oakland Army Base, Vietnam troops, 1972.

Commissioned on December 8, 1941 (the day after Pearl Harbor) and largely completed by the summer of 1942, the Oakland Army Base was one of the nation's most fully developed military ports, combining rails, roads, and berths in a unified system. Trains and trucks brought in material to seven enormous warehouses, each enclosing over five acres of floor space; goods were transferred to dockside sheds for shipping out on ocean-going vessels. Ship repair shops adjoined the docks and a rail yard ran along the warehouses. Thousands of military personnel and civilian workers maintained round-the-clock operations.

After World War II, Oakland's Army and Navy bases continued to serve as supply depots in times of war and peace. Both were closed in the late 1990s. The Port of Oakland rebuilt the Navy site with new terminals and Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, accessible from Seventh Street. The City and Port together are redeveloping the Army site.