



Historic Pier 70

For over 150 years, Pier 70 has served as a major hub for shipbuilding, repair and other heavy industrial uses dating back to the Gold Rush. Inexpensive land, deep-water access and seclusion from the hustle and bustle of downtown San Francisco is what attracted early industrial entrepreneurs to Pier 0 and the City's Central Waterfront.

Pier 70's shipyards were used for more than just maritime activities. The work yards produced a significant amount of mining machinery, locomotive equipment, iron and steel, as well as ship building and repair. Two important companies, Union Iron Works and Bethlehem Steel Company operated much of Pier 70's iron casting and ship building/repair activities well into the 20th century. Due to the depth of industrial work that was one at Pier 70, the area is home to over 40 historic buildings, which have been recommended to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Union Iron Works

Union Iron Works was founded by Peter Donahue and his two brothers. Donahue is also known for founding San Francisco's first gas company (PG&E), which he started with the profits he made selling Union Iron Works. Union Iron Works was the West Coast's first major Naval ship yard. Many of the ships used in the Spanish-American War were built t Pier 70, including the U.S.S. Olympia, which is the oldest steel ship in the world.

The Union Iron Works Machine Shop Building, built in 1885, was used to house the machines needed to make virtually all the necessary parts for steel ship building. Until 2004, this building was used for ship repair machining, but was closed due to seismic concerns.

Bethlehem Steel Corporation

Bethlehem Steel Corporation purchased in 1905 Union Iron Works and developed Pier 70 into one of the largest ship yards during both World Wars. While both Bethlehem Steel and Union Iron Works tried hard to keep organized labor out of the shipyards, in 1941, during World War II, the machinist union staged an important strike, lasting over a month and half. President Roosevelt was forced to intervene to end the strike, which lead to Bethlehem Steel becoming a closed union shop at Pier 70.

The Bethlehem Administration Building completed construction in 1918 and served as the company's local headquarters. It is a stunning example of San Francisco's empire architecture period, unusual to find outside of San Francisco's downtown.

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