for manufacturing.

The first industry south of Market was generally related to the manufacture of mining and foundry equipment and its industrial character developed early. By 1860, "Happy Valley," an early tent city, was renamed "Tar Flat" because of the gas works located on Howard between First and Beale. The dominant landmark soon became the 200-foot high Shelby Shot Tower constructed in 1864.

San Francisco experienced enormous industrial expansion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, creating heavy demand for industrial and warehouse space. Until World War I the basic building type varied little, consisting of brick walls twelve to twenty inches thick, segmentally arched windows, piers or buttresses marking the bays, a cornice, parapet or pilasters, and embossed ornamentation.

Change in material brought about changes in building design.

Fire insurance rates determined to a large extent the material, structure, size and internal arrangement of these buildings. Insurance companies were resistive to the introduction of new untested materials, such as reinforced concrete.

Although reinforced concrete was used as early as the 1880s, it was only during World War I that concrete replaced brick as the standard industrial building material. The war required thrift, efficiency and speed in construction, all of which could be more easily achieved through concrete buildings. The decade from the earthquake to World War I represented a transition period where both brick and concrete buildings were erected.

Please turn to page II
the 1920s, concrete was used almost exclusively.

Change in material brought about changes in industrial building design. Modular reinforced concrete panel construction, consisting of a simple pier and lintel system, allowed greater distances between support columns freeing interior space for machinery and storage. As a result, up to 80% of the wall surface could be filled with windows, allowing the maximum amount of light and ventilation. In spite of this utilitarian approach and the fact that industrial buildings were increasingly designed by engineers, traditional architectural elements continued to be incorporated into the design. These details were usually of face brick or cast cement and were often used around the entrance, belt courses, pier capitals and cornice. By the 1930s, this decoration was no longer exclusively classical, but relied on naturalistic, Art Deco and Moderne inspiration.

Following World War II, industrial buildings were not only stripped of their traditional decoration but, ironically, were considered by architects as the model for the commercial and public buildings they had previously imitated. Few good examples of such buildings can be found in the South of Market area, for by then heavy industry had generally moved elsewhere.

RINCON HILL

Rincon Hill, the most prominent topographical feature South of Market, was in the 1860s a prestigious residential area blessed with a sunny climate and sweeping views of downtown and the Bay. Over the next several decades the cove to the north of Rincon Point was filled, the hill itself providing some material, especially from the Second Street cut of 1869. Industrial and maritime uses soon came to predominate as exemplified in the surviving Hathaway’s Warehouse (c. 1856) at 400 Spear Street. Immediately to the northwest was a government reserve established in the early 1850s. By 1859 it was the size of the United States Marine Hospital (see photo and map); today it is occupied by the U.S. Navy Warehouse and Storehouse buildings.

The earthquake and fire of 1906 destroyed most of the buildings in the area as far east as Beale Street, but spared structures adjacent the waterfront. In the rebuilding that followed, large industrial buildings such as the Hills Brothers Coffee Plant supplanted small scale light industrial businesses.

Rincon Hill was radically transformed by the construction of the Bay Bridge and its approaches in the 1930s. During the same decade it was also the scene of conflicts between unemployed workers and police, culminating in the "Battle of Rincon Hill" in 1934. The maritime and working class nature of the area continued after World War II as exemplified by the Sailors Union of the Pacific building (1950) at 400 Harrison. Industry in general declined from the 1950s onward.

Current plans for the twelve-block Rincon Hill area include an innovative mix of preservation, housing and office space. Housing is proposed to be located in towers varying in height from 250 feet at the top of the hill to 100 feet at its base, thus recreating the visual prominence the hill once had. A new pedestrian street between Folsom and Harrison will link First Street to the Embarcadero. The residential towers will be surrounded by lower office buildings, parking structures adjacent the bridge anchorage, and renovated historic buildings.

1) 2-30 Harrison Street,
Hills Brothers Coffee Plant, 1924,
George W. Reifman.

Established in 1878, Hills Brothers Coffee is one of the last of San Francisco's great coffee firms still located in the city. It was founded by Austin H. and Reden W. Hills as a stall in the Bay City Market selling coffee, tea, extracts, spices and dairy products. The business expanded rapidly due to the brothers' business sense and ingenuity. They invented vacuum packing in 1898, and the development of the "continuous roasting" and "cup tasting" methods for assuring quality and consistency. The coffee industry peaked in the 1920s when Hills Brothers constructed this new plant.

The massive Romanesque Revival structure is an important visual landmark on San Francisco's waterfront. Its style was inspired by the muscular industrial work of H.H. Richardson, particularly his Marshall Field Warehouse in Chicago of four decades earlier. The building has extensive corbel work on the cornice and small arches, and decorative brickwork in the corner panels and over the fifth floor window.

2) 29-99 Harrison Street,
Spreckels Wholesale Warehouse, 1918,
George A. Applegarth.

The architect of this building did much significant work for the Spreckels family including a mansion on Washington Street and the Palace of the Legion of Honor. While all three of these buildings were designed at the same time, they varied widely in style; the mansion is French Baroque, the Palace is French Renaissance, and the warehouse is a modern industrial design of reinforced concrete construction with industrial sash windows. Bynur tracks entered the building on the Embarcadero and Spear Street, and the building contained all modern conveniences including fast-running elevators and dumb waiters.

3) 400 Spear Street,
Hathaway's Warehouse, c. 1856, 1890.

The historical evidence suggests that this two-story brick warehouse may have been constructed as early as 1836 as the Rincon Point Warehouse then located on filled land jutting into the bay. Both the building and the area have been considerably altered.
Although the basic industrial and warehousing functions of the district have changed little. When originally constructed the building was one story tall, and was owned by Edmund V. Hathaway, a commercial produce wholesaler, and George P. Baker, a banker. By the 1880s, it was known as Hathaway’s Free Warehouse, changing its name to Humboldt Free Warehouses in 1891 after the second story was added. By 1905 it was owned by the Atcheson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railway Company and used as their Freight House. Since then, it has been used for a variety of warehouse and industrial purposes.

Architecturally, the building is distinguished by a corbelled cornice and parapet above bays separated by brick pilasters. The large arched openings on the ground floor have projecting brick hood moldings with a belt course above and paired segmentally arched windows on the second floor.


Reinforced concrete, because of its versatility, fire- and earthquake-resistant qualities, and low cost was the almost universal building material for industrial structures by the 1930s. Even a classicist such as Meyer was using it almost exclusively in his work, as exemplified in this four-story building constructed for a pharmaceutical company. In this building, Meyer followed the traditional approach of a base supporting a stylized colonnade with recessed spandrels and minimal cornice.


Eugene and Lewis Gimbal were wholesale confectioners, a relatively important San Francisco industry during the early twentieth century. Their factory building solidly anchors an important corner with its classically treated brick facades consisting of polychrome elements at the ground floor level, piers between corner blocks and simple cornice.

7) 425 First Street, Union Oil Co. Building, 1940/1955, Lewis Hobart.

Towering 140 feet above what remains of Rincon Hill, the Union Oil Company Building is a local landmark and rare example of late modernistic design in San Francisco. When opened in 1940 it not only celebrated fifty years of Union Oil activity in the West but also the economic resurgence of the late 1930s after a decade of depression. Following the fashion of the time, Lewis Hobart designed a building with streamlined tower of orange and blue terra cotta (altered in 1955), glass block windows set in unbroken horizontal strips, and porcelain metal panels.

South Beach derives its name from what was originally a crescent-shaped beach backed by forty- to sixty-foot cliffs stretching from Rincon Point on the north to Steamboat Point on the south (see 1859 map). It was used by shipbuilders in the 1850s and 1860s, with shacks occupying the beach and slips and piers extending into the bay. In 1861, St Mary’s Hospital was constructed on the cliffs at the northeast corner of First and Bryant. Other important institutions included the Pacific Oil and Lead Company and the extant Oriental Warehouse from the 1860s; and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company and the surviving Hooper’s South End Grain Warehouse of the 1870s. Turn-of-the-century maritime activity is exemplified by the whaler “Lydia,” whose remains are believed to still exist at the corner of Townsend and the Embarcadero.

Current plans call for the creation of a marina and public park, construction of 2,600 units of housing, and preservation of the highly significant Oriental Warehouse.
500-550 Beale Street represents the last stage of the development of industrial architecture in the south of Market area. Mid-nineteenth century buildings were brick and generally two- to three-stories tall. Turn-of-the-century structures were taller, but still of brick. Concrete was the predominate material in the 1920s. This allowed the ratio of glass to wall area to increase, although the buildings were similar in scale and massing to their early twentieth century predecessors. Industrial structures of the late 1930s and 1940s, such as the Matson Navigation Co. Building, combined the low profile of the earliest warehouses with modern materials—concrete construction and increased glass area. These and the sawtooth skylights were first used extensively by Albert Kahn in his Detroit factory buildings, which quickly became the prototypes nationwide for later engineer-designed industrial structures.

2] 620-650 First Street, Oriental Warehouse, 1867-68.

The Oriental Warehouse is a very rare survivor of post-Gold Rush San Francisco. By 1872, the company operated twenty-five steamships from its wharves at the foot of First Street, the principal debarkation point for thousands of Chinese immigrants. The warehouse was constructed to store bonded and free merchandise of the Orient trade, especially tea, coffee and silk. The warehouse was heavily used through the 1920s but was hard-hit by the Depression. The building is an excellent example of mid-to late-nineteenth century industrial construction. It is vaguely Italianate in style, low and broad with arched entrances and parapet. The walls, constructed of unreinforced brick, are believed to have suffered some damage from the 1867 earthquake, although they were apparently undamaged in 1906. The foundations are of stone and timber piles, the floors of wood and the roof consists of timber beams and trusses. Apparently original and highly significant is the sign on the Brannan Street side—"Oriental U.S. Bonded Warehouse, Howard & Pool"—which may be the oldest surviving outdoor sign in the city.

3] 64-72 Townsend Street, Hooper’s South End Grain Warehouse, 1874.

This building has served as a warehouse from its construction in the mid-1870s to the present day. Originally constructed by John Hooper as the South End Grain Warehouse, it was one of at least four warehouses in the immediate area specializing in the grain trade. Although the unimposing one-story building has been altered on the Townsend Street facade, it still features the standard nineteenth-century warehouse design of pediments covering the gable ends behind a cornice and parapet.

4] 99 Townsend Street, Du Pue Warehouse No. 1, c. 1892/ c. 1908

This decaying metal building is significant as a rare survivor of the early industrial history of the city. It is believed to have originally been a warehouse for the Du Pue Company. Ownership later passed to the Western Fuel Company and the building used as a lime and brick warehouse.

MISSION BAY

Mission Bay, as its name implies, was originally entirely under water except for a sliver of land south of Townsend near Third known as Steamboat Point (see 1859 map). The point was used for shipyards in the 1850s. By 1858 the area was largely filled except for China Basin Channel, which regularized the Mission Creek outlet and provided water access to this rapidly industrializing and entirely manmade district.

The Central Pacific Railroad (which later merged with the Southern Pacific) acquired much of the land in the area and constructed a three-story Italianate-style railroad station in 1873 (see photo) at Fourth and Townsend streets. The terminal’s location far from the
The 1915 Mission Revival Southern Pacific Depot at Third and Townsend replaced the earlier building. In turn, it was demolished for a recreational vehicle parking lot.

Southern Pacific Terminal Building (1921), now the China Basin Building, at 185 Berry Street.

In 1915, the 1873 railroad terminal was replaced by a Mission Revival building as part of the City Beautiful movement coinciding with the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. Mission Bay remained heavily industrial, and its character captured by the novelist Jack Kerouac, who worked as a brakeman for the S.P. in the early 1950s, and his friend Allen Ginsburg. In "Sunflower Sutra" Ginsberg wrote of the switchyards:

"I walked on the banks of the tincan banana deck and sat down under the huge shade of a Southern Pacific locomotive to look at the sunse over the box house hills and cry. "Jack Kerouac sat beside me on a busted rusty iron pole, companion, we thought the same thoughts of the soul, bleak and blue and sad-eyed, surrounded by the gnarled steel roots of cress of machinery."

(from Howl and Other Poems)

Current plans for the 195-acre Mission Bay area are considerably more grandiose. Southern Pacific has proposed an enormous 'city' within the City designed by I.M. Pei consisting of twenty million square feet of commercial space and seven thousand housing units having a daytime population of fifty thousand.


Constructed by the Haslett Warehouse Company for the Southern Pacific, this six-story brick building stretches through the block to King Street. The Haslett Company was the largest warehouse firm in the city with total storage capacity of over 150,000 tons. Architecturally, the building consists of 10-28 inch-thick brick walls with small segmentally arched windows, metal tie rods, and a curved parapet. Although the building was converted to loft office space in 1977, its original use is still suggested by the fading Haslett Warehouse sign on the side.

2] 135 Townsend Street, Haslett Warehouse, 1911, MacDonald and Applegarth.

This building, like 115-31 Townsend, was owned by the Haslett Warehouse Company. Unlike its neighbor, this warehouse was constructed of reinforced concrete scored to resemble
Southern Pacific Terminal Building (China Basin Building), 1921, Bliss and Faville.

Six-stories tall and 850-foot long, this enormous warehouse was constructed by the Board of State Harbor Commissioners and the Southern Pacific to house much of the state's wholesale fruit and produce trade. Also known as the Grocers Terminal Building it was of the most modern reinforced concrete design. The San Francisco Examiner wrote in August, 1920 that its facilities would be able to handle, at the waterside, "all cargoes of seasonal freight, grain, cotton and the tropical pineapple and sugar at a minimum of cost" for the domestic, export and transshipment trade. To accomplish this, the building was equipped with revolving cranes, whip hoists and railroad spars. Divided into four sections, it was originally occupied by the Haas Brothers, Dodge, Sanseny and Co., SM & Co., and J.H. Newbauer & Co. It was considered the most modern and efficient structure of its kind in the world at the time, but although its materials were new, the window pattern and general proportions give it an enduring, almost classical appearance. The building was converted to offices in 1973, reflecting San Francisco's decline as a port after World War II.

The Charles Harley Co. Building, he began his architectural career

SHOWPLACE SQUARE

Showplace Square was primarily marshland prior to 1860. Division Street follows the approximate course of Mission Creek, which once flowed into the Bay near the intersection of Division and Seventh. By 1899, Brannan Street, a plank road, bridged the creek and served the dozen or so small farms at its mouth. Industry moved to the area in the 1860s and 1870s, as exemplified by the large factory of the San Francisco Candle Company built in 1874 on Channel Street between Rhode Island and De Haro. By the turn-of-the-century, Fill was completed, and the area densely developed. Most notable was the Miller, Sloss and Scott Building (1904) designed by Albert Pissis.

Reconstruction after the earthquake was fairly rapid and culminated in the construction of the large National Carbon Company Building in 1917. Since World War II, warehousing uses have deserted the area. More recently, several of the older buildings have been rehabilitated and converted to new uses, most notably the Giftcenter and the Design Center.

With a very large warehouse building at North Point. The Charles Harley Co. Building, designed only three years before Pissis' death, illustrates his continuing adherence to classical architecture in its purest form. Decorative details such as the medallions, belt cornices, and pilasters are reduced to a minimum increasing the impression of strength and stability of the handsome brick walls. The original owner was Gora Flood, widow of James L. Flood. The Harley Co. was a wholesale dealer of scrap rubber, metal, wooden and cotton rags. The building has been recently renovated as the Showplace Contract Center.

When the National Carbon Co. Building was constructed by the prominent San Francisco Civil Engineer Maurice C. Couchot in 1917, it was considered the most advanced factory design in the West. Its style and material were the direct results of the World War, which required maximum industrial output and strictest economy. This combination of thrift and efficiency basically doomed the great brick and classical warehouses of the pre-war period. In their place cheaper modular reinforced concrete buildings long-championed by engineers such as Couchot and Ernest Ransome became the norm. Not only was con-
This five-story and basement warehouse is a very good example of brick industrial construction following the earthquake and fire. Unlike the later reinforced concrete structures, the emphasis in design was entirely on the wall surface with small and widely spaced windows. Lansburgh, an academic architect, best-known for his theater designs, alleviated the starkness of the elevations through contrasting brickwork, keystones, belt courses, and ornamental tie-rod plates. See also 1616 Sixteenth Street by the same architect and for the same owner.

6) 1616 Sixteenth Street, Schlesinger & Bender Bldg., 1911, G. Albert Lansburgh.

Lansburgh incorporated several decorative motifs on this warehouse building that he also used on 239 Fifteenth Street. These include the pointed arched windows on the third floor, contrasting keystones, belt courses and ornamental tie-rods. The dominating design feature is a corner tower with large arched entrance and vaguely Mission-style parapet with flagstaff. The brickwork is magnificent, in Flemish bond, with flat arches over the first and second story windows.

The warehouse was originally constructed as the wine cellars and cooperage for Schlesinger & Bender, important San Francisco wine merchants. The cellars had a capacity of 1,500,000 gallons and were serviced by a private rail spur leading into the building.

9) 1901-49 Seventeenth Street, Transportation Guarantee Co., 1925.

South of Market always possessed the best and most varied transportation network of any section in the city. In the mid-nineteenth century the system consisted primarily of China Basin and the piers; by 1900 an extensive railroad system was in place; and in the 1920s facilities to accommodate trucking were beginning to develop. This 80,000 square-foot reinforced concrete building was originally constructed to "handle all trucks for various firms, attending to the garaging, washing, oiling, greasing, painting, repairing, insurance and incidental matters" in one centralized facility. It was subsequently owned by Greyhound Corporation and presently houses an envelope store and the Ford dealership.

Architecturally, this is a little-altered and very good example of the industrial architecture of the 1920s. The reinforced concrete walls on a steel frame are reduced to simple piers and filled entirely with industrial sash. The decorative parapet with vertically projecting caps conceals four steel gable roofs with skylights. A pediment over the garage doors identifies the building's main entrance.


Originally constructed for Standard Brands of California and used as a plant by its Chase and Sanborn coffee brand, the building was acquired by Anchor Steam Beer in 1979. Beer and coffee industries have had a close association with the south of Market area and have constructed a number of the most monumental buildings there. This building is in the streamlined Moderne style with dominating corner tower. Typical of the style is the vertical emphasis, strip block windows and curved and hooded entrance.

THE PIERS

Early piers south of Market were generally hastily and unsatisfactorily, and were quickly engulfed by fill. The configuration of the coastline stabilized with the construction of a permanent seawall, begun soon after the State Board of Harbor Commissioners took over port operations in 1906. However, it was not completed until the early twentieth century. An integral part of the seawall project was the creation of a roadbed linking the piers and warehouses. The influence of the City Beautiful movement is reflected on the waterfront in the construction of monumental pier bulbhead buildings. These beautified the waterfront but also created a wall between the City and its Bay.

The waterfront here bustled with activity during World War I, in the 1920s, and again during World War II. After the war, port trade declined and the Belt Line railroad and piers were left to deteriorate. Current plans for the area include rehabilitation of some of the piers and bulbheads, a waterfront promenade and an historic trolley line along the Embarcadero.

Pier 16, 1913-1915, O.W. Jones.

The Mission Revival-style Pier 16 was originally one of three identical bulbhead build-

Walking Tours
Walking Tours of Rincon Hill, Showplace Square and the proposed South of Market Historic District. Free to Heritage members, led by Christopher H. Nelson. Architectural Historian, tour dates are available for weekends during November and December, 1985. For further information, phone 441-3000.

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This guide was researched and written by Christopher H. Nelson. Design and layout by Paula McKenzie.
ings stretching 773 feet from Pier 16 to Pier 20. Piers 16 and 18 were used by the Pacific Steamship Company. Interior spaces consisted of a narrow 11-foot gallery on the south wall, and a 90-foot open space surmounted by a wooden truss ceiling. In 1957, Piers 16, 18 and 20 were condemned; today only Pier 16 remains.

Pier 22½, Fire Boat House, 1915, A.A. Pyle.

Constructed in 1915, the Fire Boat House was designed to house a fire company capable of manning a fire trucks or fire boats. With the memory of the Earthquake and Fire still vivid, the fire boat was intended to pump sea water into the city's mains in an emergency. The structure was designed in a Spanish/Mission style with stucco walls, red tile roof and brackets.

Pier 26, 1912, Charles Newton Young.

Pier 26 is a simplified version of the slightly later Pier 24. It too is in a Mission Revival style with central arch and parapet. Because of its size and style, it is a visual anchor between two docking areas and an important link in the Mission-style wall of bulkhead facades.

Pier 28, 1912, Charles Newton Young.

This bulkhead building is very similar to Pier 26 except that it has large single openings flanking the arched entrance rather than double arched entrances.


Originally linked to an identical adjacent pier, Pier 38 is a 1930s manifestation of the earlier City Beautiful movement to embellish the city with grand classical architecture. This pier was used by the McCormick Steamship Company.