

: HISTORY OF BA HUNTERS POINT

by DAVID JAFFE

When the Naval shipyard at Hunters Point closed in 1973 an era came to an end. The shipyards had long been a center to economic, political and social life in the constantly changing area. Over the previous century, Bayview Hunters Point went from a rural town of several wealthy families, to an ethnically diverse center for meat production, to a focal point of civil rights activity. The growth of the shipyards, the inconsistent relations with the city of San Francisco and the response of local organizations to community problems were mainly responsible for the tremendous ethnic, economic, political and social development of Bayview Hunters Point over the past 100 years.

The population of Bayview
Hunters Point has changed many



William "Bill" Manning in business before 1873.

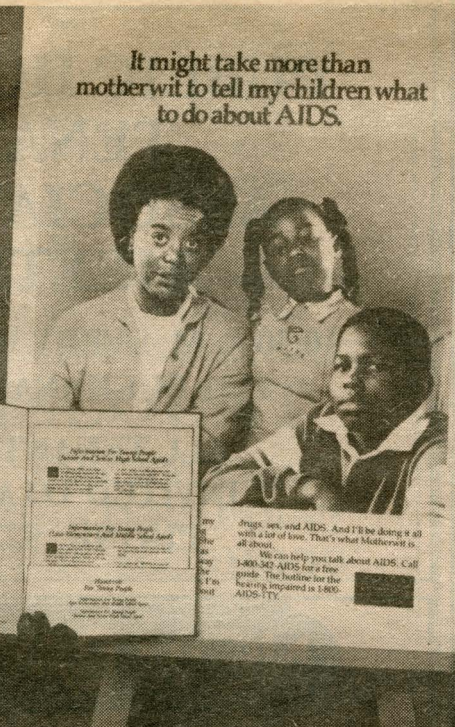
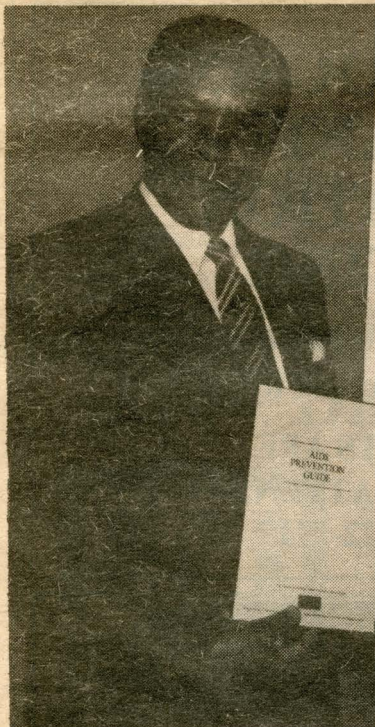


Kate Manning and niece Irene.

times since the Native Americans inhabited the area in the 1700's. During the 1700's the Spanish Missionaries claimed the land south of 16th street to an area known as Visitacion Valley as pasture for their cattle and home to the religious exercises. The Spanish fathers held the

land in trust for the Native Americans until they would adopt European farming techniques and Christianity. In 1834, before the Fathers could succeed at their task the Mexican government invaded and secularized the land and sold it to

SEE PAGE 8



By calling the National AIDS Hotline (1.800.342.AIDS), parents and other interested adults can receive free the "AIDS Prevention Guide" displayed by Department of Health & Human Services Secretary Louis W. Sullivan, M.D. left and Assistant Secretary for Health James O. Mason, M.D.

PART 1: HISTORY OF BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT

FROM PAGE 1

wealthy investors. By the late 1840's, when the rapidly expanding United States won possession of California from Mexico, San Francisco was only inhab-

then took out advertisements in many newspapers, telling the country that "South San Francisco" had abundant fresh water and docks that could accommodate boats right up to the land. These were both important points considering that San

turn of the century, "water came right up to Third Street." These mud flats were eventually filled with landfill during construction of the Bayshore Highway in the 1920s. But during the 1800s the creek made it difficult to travel between the city and the



Hunters Point Shipyard at it's peak.

ited by a few hundred farmers and landowners. The year 1848-1849 saw the first of several population explosions that made San Francisco and Bayview Hunters Point into what they are today. With the discovery of gold at Sutters mill, the population of San Francisco went from 812 to over 40,000 in one year.

Two speculators, Dr. John Townsend and Cornelle de Boom thought they saw a good deal, and plotted to form a city at Hunters Point called South San Francisco. They hired a surveyor to divide the land into plots selling for \$100.00 a piece. They

Francisco had little fresh water and most people traveled by boat.

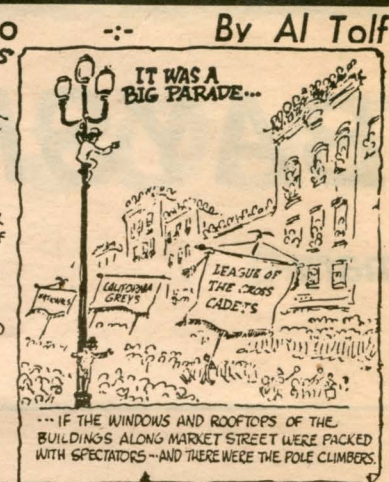
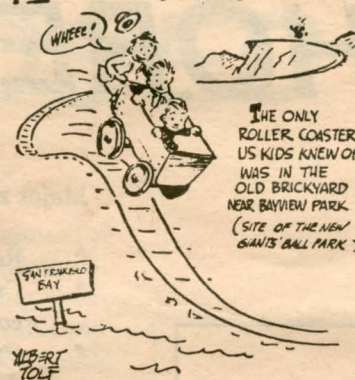
Within a year Townsend and de Boom realized that their project was a failure. People did not flock to "South San Francisco" as they had hoped. The area was simply too hard to reach from San Francisco. Islais Creek, located north of Army Street, was once a much larger body of water that separated South San Francisco from the main city with mud and saltwater. The high water created mud flats all around what is now Third Street south to Oakdale Avenue. According to a resident from the

area that became Bayview Hunters Point.

However, the land did provide homes to a wide variety of speculators and adventurers. The Hunter Brothers, Robert and Peter, came to California to find gold and settled on a tract of land that is now the area between Thomas, Hawes, Oakdale and Fitch streets. They built

In Old San Francisco

AGES From the "BOOK OF MEMORIES" ... OF C.N. "CY" DOWNIE



The above pictorial recollections conclude Artist Al Tolf's memorable series on life in old San Francisco. The first sketch two years ago was intended to be a solo, but it proved so popular that Mr. Tolf agreed to extend it into a series. Today's panel is the 105th. The San Francisco News wants to thank Mr. Tolf—and we are sure our readers will concur—for bringing to life so much that is past in his pleasantly conducted tours down Memory Lane.

their house near a fresh water spring and made a fortune over the next decade selling water to thirsty San Franciscans. The 1858 city directory records the first mention of the area by the name "Hunters Point."

The natural qualities of the area that made the Hunter's rich, also played a prominent role in the fortunes of the Bayview Hunters Point community. Over the next several decades the growth of the shipyards and the manipulation of local land by the city and by businessmen brought great changes in the ethnic, economic and social life of Bayview Hunters Point.

The deep water that came right up to the land made the area attractive to shipbuilders and ship owners. This natural gift made Bayview Hunters Point the home of the San Francisco Dry Dock Company in 1868. At these drydocks ships would come in to shore, water would be pumped out of the dock area and workers could do maintenance on the ship. Bethlehem Steel Company operated the shipyards through their subsidiary, Bethlehem shipbuilding, Ltd. These shipyards had a transformative effect on the neighborhood; as the shipyards grew, the nature of the community

SEE PAGE 9



ALMA RIBBS, B.A., M.A., J.D.
Secretary-Treasurer



LORENZO LEWIS
President

Lewis & Ribbs Mortuary Garden Chapel

-All Types of Funeral Services
Rendered -

6424 THIRD STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CA. 94124

When you find your home...



we'll have the money

You finally found the home you've been looking for. It wasn't an easy decision. The next step—a Citizens Federal Mortgage. We know it's an exciting time and we'll work with you every step of the way. You'll get our best rates and, with our speedy processing, you'll be at home in no time.

You can count on it with Citizens Federal.

Citizens Federal Bank
A FEDERAL SAVINGS BANK • A CITIZENS SAVINGS FINANCIAL COMPANY

1-707-546-2050

Founded 1952 — Assets in excess of 4 billion dollars

PART 1. HISTORY OF BAYVIEW HUNTERS POINT

FROM PAGE 8

changed.

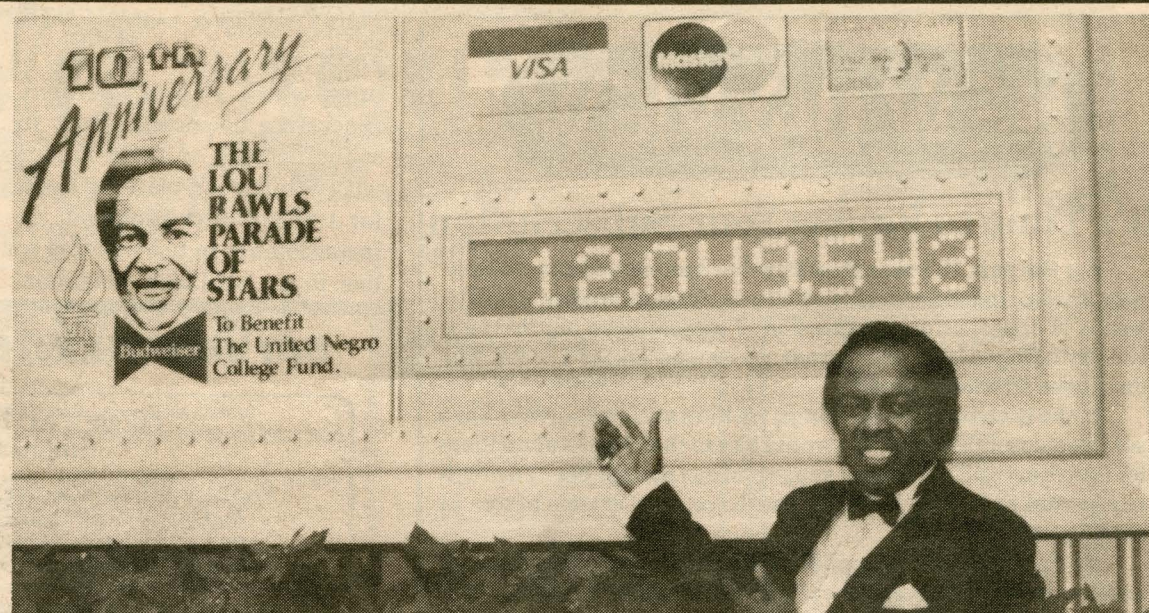
During the last decades of the Nineteenth century, politicians and businessman used Bayview Hunters Point to create a slaughter area and a racetrack for the benefit of the city. In 1868 the California Legislature took advantage of the open spaces in Hunters Point and authorized the land south of San Francisco to be used for the slaughter of animals. Before 1880, when A. Swift invented the refrigerated railroad car, most american cities had their own slaughterhouses. Butchertown soon spread south to become a prominent part of economic life in Hunters Point. Packing houses, butcheries and tallowworks proliferated in the area. According to Mrs. Ione Kelly, a resident of Hunters Point in the early 1900s, "You would see butcher's wagons going by with bones," on their way to Milley's Tallowworks. With the bones came the less pleasant aspects of slaughterhouses. The area became attractive for wrecking and dumping. Lacking any understanding of the environmental sensitivity, the slaughterhouses threw trash directly into the water. Open fires were also permitted until recently. All these activities gave Butchertown a distinctive odor. According to Kelly, while, "going through Butchertown on the street car people pulled out handkerchiefs and said where does that awful smell come from?"

The combination of the docks and the slaughterhouses brought a variety of ethnic groups to Hunters Point: The French came and established a Tannery, where they dyed animal skins. The Polish and Italians came to work in the slaughterhouses and meat shops. August Schultz and other Germans ran the shipyards. The Chinese fisherman came and set up their shrimp stands at the end of Evans Avenue. People would come from the city to buy bags of shrimp to eat while sitting on the hill watching the

bay. Bill Manning was one of the first Irish to come to the area when he opened his 3 story hotel on Fairfax and Third Street. Manning was an adventurer from Rhode Island who had worked on the Railroad in Wisconsin, drove the lead team on a covered wagon and mined minerals in northern California before settling in Hunters Point. Manning took in refugees from the 1906 earthquake which devastated the city to the north, but had little effect on Hunters Point. In fact, Big George, a resident of Manning's hotel, woke up on the morning of the earthquake, looked out his window and said, "My God that's a big fire," and went back to bed. Despite some migration to Hunters Point after the earthquake, especially among the Irish from South of Market, the area remained mostly rural until WWII. The variety of ethnic groups, while leading separate social lives, formed a cohesive, interdependent community.

The diverse and semi-rural economy supported a variety of businesses outside of Butchertown around the turn of the century. A brewery sat on the hill now occupied by the park. A fireworks factory on Third Street provided summer entertainment to the neighborhood before ironically burning down. Fish Annie, a hard worker with a big apron, ran fish market, while her husband travelled around town on Fridays with a wagon full of fish. For a few cents he would cut the fish for you at your house. Cabou's dairy, by Candlestick Point, provided milk for Hunters Point.

Third Street, then called Rail-



"PARADE OF STARS" TELETHON RAISES RECORD TOTAL FOR UNCF

Lou Rawls, host of the "Lou Rawls Parade of Stars" telethon to benefit the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), is shown at the national tote board following the telethon's 10th anniversary program. More than 12 million was raised to help support educational opportunities at the 41 private, historically Black Colleges and universities represented by UNCF.

road Avenue, was the center of activity. Unlike today, people lived only in certain areas; the sandlots, near Oakdale and Third, Hunters Point, and the vegetable gardens near Yosemite and Third. Windmills were a common sight in this part of town, providing energy for individual houses. This part of town was difficult to get to because the streetcars only ran as far as Palou. A tired traveler on his way into San Francisco could stop for a rest at the Four Mile House, a tavern designating the distance to the city, built in 1924. If you were driving a motorcar up Third Street you often had to wait until the cattle went by into the slaughterhouses. According to Mrs. Kelly, intelligent pigs would crawl underneath cars refusing to continue on the way to the pork factory. Also coming

down Third Street were wagons carrying grapes to the many Italian families in the neighborhood. These families would use the fresh grapes to make their own wine. Like most rural areas, Hunters Point before WWII did not suffer from much crime. "We would never even lock a door. When tramps came through, they would stop by and you would give them a meal and maybe some work," said Kelly.

The beautiful views and open spaces of Hunters Point were used not only to satisfy San Francisco's craving for beef, but also to provide recreation to the wealthy. The wealthy railroad speculators Charles Crocker and Leland Stanford decided, in the late 1800s, that their city needed a horseracing track. Along with several other investors, they purchased the dairy lands at Candlestick Point, and hired Chinese workers to clear away the hills to make space for Bayview Park Racetrack. In order to connect the park with the downtown patrons, Stanford founded the Bayview-Portrero Railroad that ran from the corner of Montgomery and Post to Bayview park. When the Park closed in 1896, the Railroad became Railroad Avenue, which, in 1921 became the present day

Third Street.

Less wealthy residents of Hunters Point had other recreational distractions. The South San Francisco Opera House, on Newcomb and Third was built in 1888 by a local patron of the arts who wanted to bring culture to South San Francisco. Many vaudeville shows catering to the immigrant and working class of Butchertown performed there. During the first years of this century, when the railroad ran by the opera house, theatre companies would stop and do warm-up shows there before going on the large stages of San Francisco. The Opera house was also home to the cultural activities of the many ethnic groups in the area. According to Kelly, "...the Irish put on their St. Patrick's day festival there." The Maltese and the Germans also used the opera house for their national festivals.

Despite the influence of the drydock shipyards and Butchertown, Bayview Hunters Point remained a semi-rural, sparsely populated area through the 1920s and 1930s. It was not until the early 1940s that the area became of focus of national and city attention.

PART 1 OF A
3 PART SERIES

822 6979

822-5127

• WEDDINGS • ANNIVERSARIES •
BANQUETS • FUNERAL DESIGNS •
ACCESSORIES RENTED

Flowers by Carene

4919 THIRD STREET, BETWEEN PALOU & QUESADA
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94124