

Background

The Whirley Crane and Shipyard Number 3

The “Whirley Crane,” so-called because its turret is capable of rotating 360 degrees, was built by Clyde Iron Works of Duluth, Minnesota in 1935. It was first used to build Grand Coulee Dam in Washington state, the second phase of which was done by a consortium of companies led by industrialist Henry J. Kaiser. In 1941, the crane was shipped by barge down the Columbia River and down the coast to Todd California Shipbuilding in Richmond, which later became Shipyard No 1 of Kaiser’s Richmond shipbuilding enterprise. In this location, it and dozens of others like it dominated the skyline of Richmond’s southern waterfront.

Crane Facts:

Weight: 229,000 pounds

Boom length: 110 feet

Diameter of turntable assembly: 28 feet

Lifting capacity: 166,000

Original cost: \$32,000

The use of Whirley Cranes was a major innovation in the mass production of ships. The cranes made it possible to turn huge ship structural pieces around and over during the pre-assembly process so that novice welders could complete relatively simple welding seams parallel to the ground. The cranes were also used in groups – as many as four cranes working together -- to move large pre-assembled parts of a ship into place in the basins so the ship could be fitted together, generally by welding. The result was a previously unimagined rate of production. A total of 747 ships were produced in the Kaiser shipyards in Richmond from 1942-1945.

After the war, this crane was acquired by Parr-Richmond Terminal, which later became Levin-Richmond Terminal Corporation. The crane remained in use until 1998.

A companion Whirley Crane was moved to Parr-Richmond Terminal in 1963, and is still used by Levin-Richmond Terminal Corporation.

A Victory Ship, the *Red Oak Victory*, built using Whirley Cranes in Kaiser Shipyard Number 1, is berthed at Shipyard Number 3 and open to the public.

The Whirley Crane and Kaiser Shipyard Number 3 in Richmond are particularly important components of Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park. The Kaiser operations in Richmond from 1941-1945 were emblematic of the extraordinary industrial production brought about by World War II.

By the time World War II ended, Richmond had grown from a small town of 23,000 at the end of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe rail line into an industrial city of nearly 100,000. As many as 25% of the Kaiser Shipyard workers were women. Many of these women were entering the workforce for the first time. Married women with children were well represented in the shipyards and other war industries. African-Americans and Latinos from the south and southwest and other minority populations moved in large numbers to cities in the north and west that were centers of wartime production.

Many of the social changes brought about by the demographic shifts of the Home Front period remain in place today. Among these changes are modern production technologies, women and people of color in the work force in large numbers, employer-sponsored pre-paid health care, child care outside the home, and the demographic transformation of urban America.

Key information for this background piece was provided by historian Steve Gilford, (707) 763-3468

Background:

Details on the Move of the Crane

The move of the historic Whirley Crane on November 4 will be an impressive feat. First, at approximately 8:00 AM, cables will be attached to the crane. Then it will be lifted by an even larger crane sitting on a barge in the channel alongside, and carefully lowered onto the barge. After it is transported approximately one mile to Shipyard Number 3, the larger crane will lift the Whirley Crane from the barge and position it on newly installed rails. This will take place around 10:30 AM. Finally, the Whirley Crane will be secured to the rails by custom made tie-down brackets. The entire operation is expected to be completed around 12:00 noon.

Media representatives are invited to view any or all aspects of the move, and to interview those involved in the move. To view the initial pick-up of the crane, representatives are invited to convene at 7:30 AM at Richmond City Hall, 1401 Marina Way South, in Richmond. Access to the pick-up site will be very limited; call Elizabeth Tucker at (510) 232-1542 to reserve a space.

The crane will be lifted into place at Shipyard Number 3 beginning as early as 10:30 AM and concluding within approximately 90 minutes. Tidal conditions and unforeseen circumstances may affect the timing of the positioning of the crane. Directions to Shipyard Number 3 are attached. RSVPs for this component of the move are not required, but would be appreciated. Call Elizabeth Tucker at (510) 232-1542.

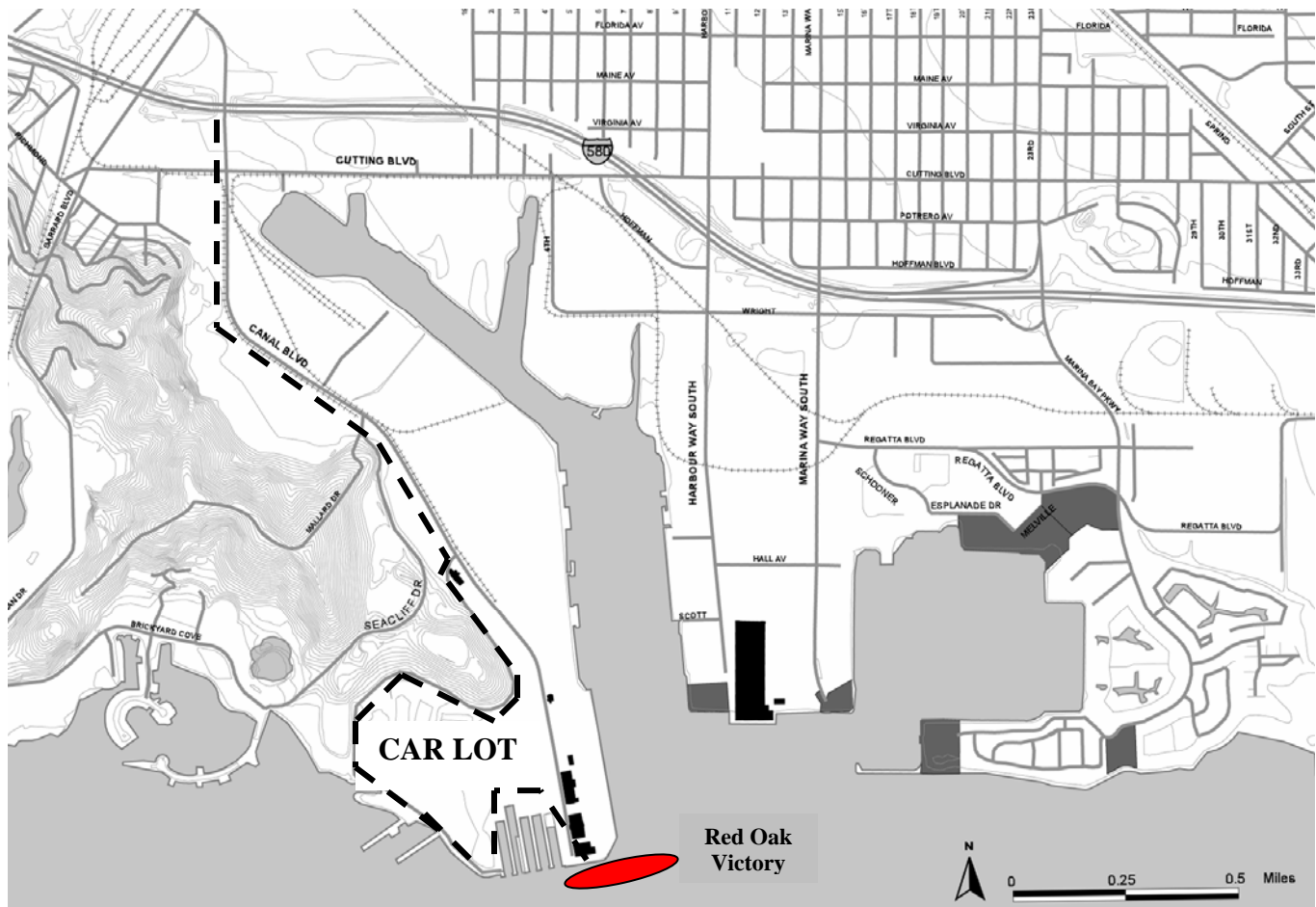
Directions to the Whirley Crane move at Shipyard No 3

From San Francisco or Oakland, take Interstate 80 East towards Sacramento. Merge onto Interstate 580 west towards the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

From Interstate 580, take the Canal Blvd/Gerrard Blvd. Exit.

Turn left onto Canal Blvd (heading towards the Bay) for 1.1 miles; continue through the Port of Richmond gates for .3 miles. Turn right and follow the signs to the Red Oak Victory that will direct you around the parking area for Kia/Hyundai Cars to the ship, 2.8 miles from the Freeway Exit.

When you arrive at Shipyard No 3, event staff will direct you to the parking area for the Whirley Crane move.



Background:

Businesses, Organizations, and Individuals Who Donated Funds and Services to the Move of the Whirley Crane

- Levin-Richmond Terminal Corporation (Gary Levin and Jim Cannon)
- Manson Construction (Charlie Gibson and Steve Gregory)
- MSH Construction (Mark Howe)
- Interactive Resources (Tom Butt, President and Al Whitecar, project structural engineer)
- Richmond Sanitary Service, Inc. (Bill Terry)
- Auto Warehousing Company (Stephen L. Seher)
- ChevronTexaco (Dean O’Hair)
- Saarman Construction (Steve Saarman)
- Performance Structures, Inc. (Ethan Silva)
- Sims Metal (Jerrold Hatchett)
- Tudor Saliba
- Hammond Construction
- Sugar City Concrete
- Plant Reclamation (Fred Gleuck)
- The Globe Newspapers (Eddie Orton)
- Eagle Rock Aggregates (David Singleton)
- Dale Roberts and Katherine Harps
- John Lawlis
- Rotary Club of Richmond
- Port of Richmond (Jim Matzorkis, Norm Chan, and Tom Wilson)
- City of Richmond (Willie Haywood, Rachel Dragolovich, Shari Deutsch, Morty Prisament)
- Rosie the Riveter Trust (Tom Butt, Diane Hedler, John Gioia, Rosemary Corbin, Mindell Penn)
- National Park Service

Background:

Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historic Park

Rosie the Riveter/World War II Home Front National Historical Park, a unit of the National Park System, was established through legislation authored by Congressman George Miller that was enacted in 2000. The park was established to work with the City of Richmond and other partners to preserve and tell the stories from around the country of what life was like on the Home Front during World War II, and to preserve examples of industrial production facilities and social institutions in Richmond, California, that arose during this significant chapter in our nation's history.

Key Home Front resources and park destinations in Richmond include:

- Rosie the Riveter Memorial in Richmond's Marina Bay
- *SS Red Oak Victory* Ship
- Historic Whirley Crane
- Kaiser Shipyard Number 3
- Ford Assembly Plant
- Kaiser Field Hospital, Ruth C Powers and Maritime Child Care Centers
- Richmond Fire Station 67
- SF Bay Trail Esplanade and exhibits
- Lucretia Edwards Park
- Barbara and Jay Vincent Park
- Shimada Peace Memorial Park
- Atchison Village
- Nystrom Housing Area

An important project of the park is the collection of stories from the women, men, and children of the Home Front generation. The Rosie Stories Project has documented the stories of thousands of people with memories of life on the Home Front, and has received the donation of hundreds of artifacts from the period.

The park visitor center is located in Richmond's temporary City Hall, at 1401 Marina Way South, and is open Monday-Friday, from 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM. Information and a self-guided automobile tour are available. The park's general phone number is (510) 232-5050. Superintendent Martha Lee may be reached at (510) 232-1545.