

Welcome to the Waterfront Warehouse District

For most of the 20th century Oakland's Waterfront Warehouse District was a center for the collection and distribution of food products, capitalizing on Oakland's strategic position as a center of rail, truck, and port traffic.

Around 1900, this waterfront area east of Broadway was still largely residential, with single-family homes, a school, a large park, a synagogue, and churches. Southern Pacific trains ran along 7th Street and along the waterfront at 1st Street. In 1909, the Western Pacific Railroad laid tracks along 3rd Street and built a freight depot at Harrison. Gradually warehouses and industrial buildings began to replace the houses between 1st and 7th Streets, and the area became an industrial district. Now rehabilitation and new construction have brought residential and mixed-use buildings back to this unique area.

The Waterfront Warehouse District of 33 buildings was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. The listed District is bordered by Nimitz Freeway and Chinatown to the north, both sides of 3rd Street on the south, Webster Street on the west, and Jackson Street on the east.

WATERFRONT WAREHOUSE DISTRICT

A National Register Historic District



#26

George A. Posey Tube Oakland Portal

Designer: Henry H. Meyers

Construction Date: 1925-28

Architectural Style: Beaux Arts derivative/Art Deco



The Oakland Portal's elaborate Beaux Arts façade conceals eight massive fans that draw in fresh air to the Posey Tube, an underwater automobile tunnel.

At the time of its construction, the tube was the largest underground tunnel in the world and the first constructed entirely of reinforced concrete. Its forms were towed to the District by tugs from Hunters Point in San Francisco. The powerful architectural presence includes a three-story central section on each portal flanked by hip roof towers that are connected by a huge arched industrial sash window. The construction of this tube tore through blocks of tenements, a nickelodeon, gambling establishments, and a scrap iron yard, as shown on early Sanborn maps.

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#5

American Bag Co.

Designer: Leonard H. Thomas

Construction Date: 1917, remodeled 1994-95

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian



The American Bag Company pioneered the process of vacuum cleaning and machine mending of used burlap bags, which they resold with an unconditional guarantee.

Completed in 1917, the American Bag Building is the most decorative of the warehouses in the District and is an excellent example of early twentieth century utilitarian warehouse construction. The building is distinguished by the rich textures and patterns of its brickwork and the rhythm of its arched windows. After careful renovation in 1994, the original “American Bag Co.” signage, windows, freight elevator, first-floor loading bay, and rooftop vacuum system of flumes and bins remain intact.

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#24

Poultry Producers of Central California Distribution Center

Designer: H.C. Baumann

Construction Date: 1929

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian with Art Deco elements



1926 was a profitable year for the Poultry Producers. Pooled resources created “orderly marketing” to distribute central California’s large egg surplus throughout the United States without depressing prices.

This two-story reinforced concrete and stucco warehouse was the Oakland distribution center for the Poultry Producers of Central California, a major wholesale food business with several million dollars in annual revenue at the time. Just as the roaring ‘20s were transitioning into the Great Depression in 1929, the prolific San Francisco architect H.C. Baumann designed the building with traditional 20th century utilitarian elements and fluted stepped corner parapets, which give it an Art Deco feel. The warehouse was renamed “The Egghouse” by its owners in 1985 and has contained artist studios since the mid-1980s.

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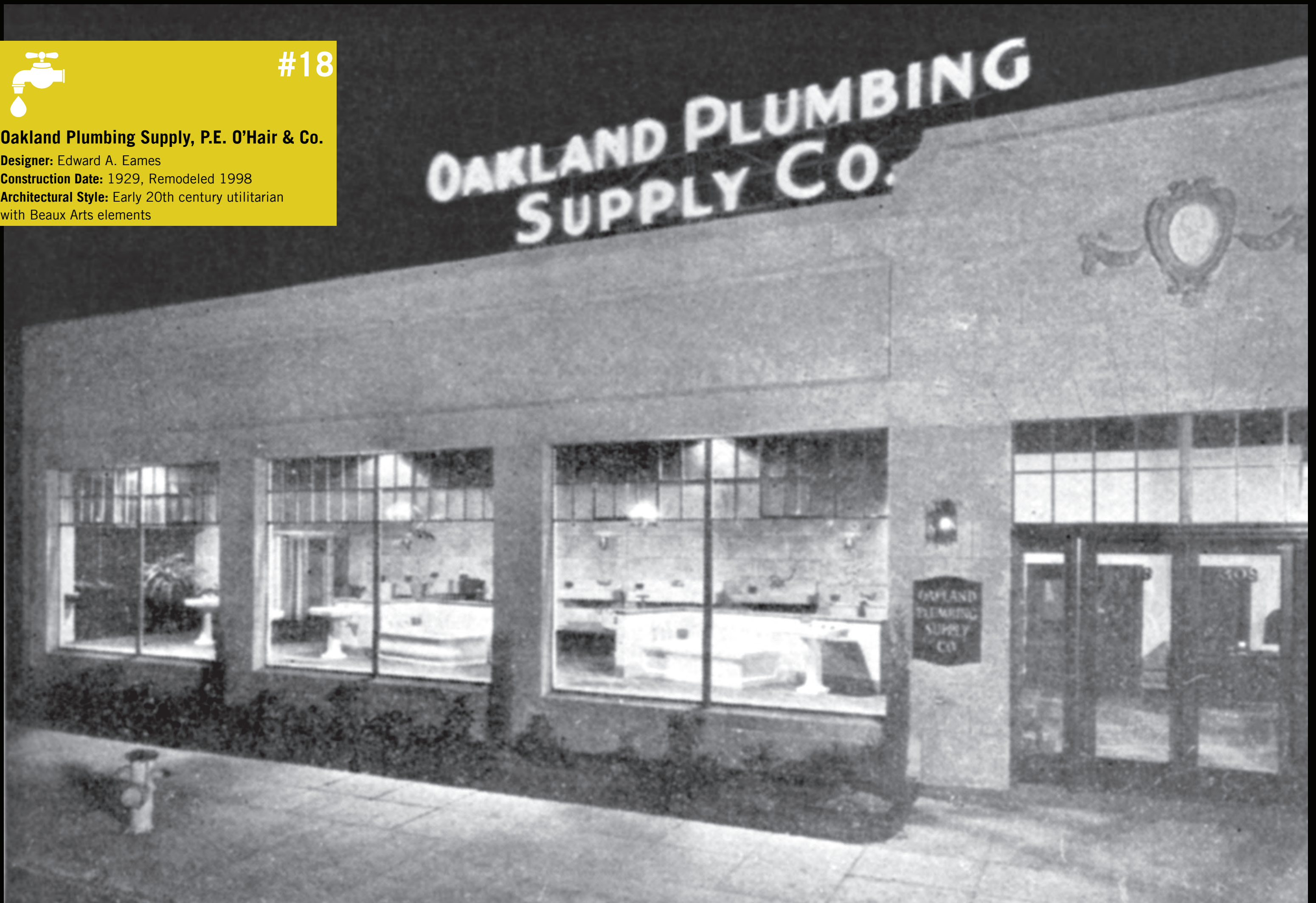
#18

Oakland Plumbing Supply, P.E. O'Hair & Co.

Designer: Edward A. Eames

Construction Date: 1929, Remodeled 1998

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian with Beaux Arts elements



This building was one of the few built in the District during the 1920s that did **not serve a wholesale grocery purpose, and was used as a plumbing supply warehouse and showroom from 1929 to 1998.**

Twenty years after it was founded in 1909, the Oakland Plumbing Supply Company built this 30,000 square foot warehouse for its operations. As one of the largest distributors of plumbing, heating, and engineering supplies on the Pacific Coast, its owner, Edward A. Eames, designed and built the building for his growing business. The showroom had a red herringbone-patterned tile floor and an open gable-beamed ceiling. There is still a garland shield with the company's initials visible over the doorway.

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#25

Saroni Wholesale Sugar & Rice

Designer: R. Vane Woods

Construction Date: 1922, remodeled 1992

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian



The Saroni family were San Francisco candy makers and sugar wholesalers who lost their home and business in the 1906 earthquake. **After moving their operations to Oakland, they established this warehouse in 1922.**

This was the first of seven warehouses built in the District for wholesale grocery businesses in the 1920s. Unlike other grocers, Saroni steadfastly stuck to just two main commodities: sugar and rice. The Saroni company occupied the premises until the 1950s. Renovations in 1992 removed the original truck bays and metal canopy and added the postmodern stucco band, but the building's red brickwork and windows remain intact.

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#9

Western States Grocery

Designer: Couchot, Rosenwald & Roeth

Construction Date: 1926, remodeled 1991

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian



Western States Grocery Company roasted over 250,000 pounds of coffee a year in the basement of this warehouse.

Being situated along 4th Street's Western Pacific Railroad line allowed Western States to buy goods in huge quantities and reach grocery stores across the American West. The warehouse had 12 rail-height loading bays on the first floor to support its volume of shipping. Safeway and Western States shared this warehouse until Safeway built its headquarters next door in 1929 and eventually acquired Western States as a subsidiary. Both buildings represent the high point of the District's grocery warehouse function.

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#22

Autocar Sales & Service Co.

Designer: A.W. Smith

Construction Date: 1920, Remodeled 2019

Architectural Style: Early 20th century commercial

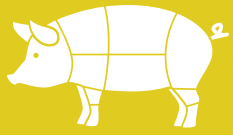


The Autocar Sales & Service Co. showroom with a service garage was built here in 1920. Autocar's central location signaled the growing importance of truck transportation to the District.

The renovation which begun in 2019 for retail and commercial use aims to restore filled-in windows and the original brick exterior to bring back the warehouse's aesthetic as an early 20th century commercial building. Its acclaimed architect, A. W. Smith, also designed two other District warehouses: 267 Fourth Street in 1920 and 300 Webster in 1923. Subsequent occupants included a produce warehouse in the late 1930s, wholesale liquors in the 1950s, and a food distribution business in the 2000s.

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#21

Prime Smoked Meats

Designer: Donald K. Olsen Builder: Edward Smith

Construction Date: 1953, addition 1967

Architectural Style: Mid 20th century utilitarian



Built in 1953 as a restaurant and warehouse for Davidson Port Products, this warehouse was still processing meat until 2016 for Prime Smoked Meats.

Along with the familiar Prime Smoked Meats logo, this concrete warehouse has vestiges of 1950s styling - a flat roof, a recessed entrance, and an angled cantilevered canopy over the 3rd Street loading door. The original frontage windows have since been filled in. It is notable that the building held the same use for over 60 years.

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#3

S&W Fine Foods Warehouse

Designer: Hugh C. White

Construction Date: 1926-27, remodeled 1994

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian with Gothic and Art Deco elements



The 1927 S&W Fine Foods warehouse was renamed Tower Lofts in 1994 as a reference to its prominent **50,000-gallon rooftop water tank once used for fire suppression.**

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One of the most enduring food brands in the U.S., S&W Fine Foods was only a tiny wholesale grocery firm when it first occupied this warehouse from 1927-37. The three-story building is defined by its smooth linear Art Deco façade and many ground-floor truck bays, which have since been converted from loading docks to large industrial windows. After 1937, the building was occupied by several wholesale grocers, retailer Montgomery Ward, a felt hat warehouse, the Salvation Army, and a candle maker.



#23

United Grocers Ltd. Warehouse

Designer: Unknown; Builder: Nick Wierh

Construction Date: 1926, replaced 2004

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian



Before condominiums were built on this corner, a large one-story warehouse housed many wholesale grocers like United Grocers Ltd., a cooperative of retail grocers from 1932-47.

The metal sidewalk canopy, triangular roof pediments, and metal sash windows seen in the photograph are common features of existing historic warehouses around the District, as well as the adjacent Wholesale Produce Market. One of the last grocery wholesalers in the District, Mutual Grocery vacated the building in 1987. An eight-story steel, glass, and concrete building, 428 Alice, replaced the warehouse in 2004. It was the first new development in the Waterfront Warehouse District.

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#10

C.L. Greeno Pacific Coast Headquarters

Designer: W.K. Owen

Construction Date: 1923

Architectural Style: Early 20th century with Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts elements



The C. L. Greeno Company built this elaborate Pacific Coast Headquarters to receive upholstery and bedding supplies from its Ohio factory via rail for distribution west of Denver.

The brick and concrete building is one of Oakland's most elaborate examples of an early 20th century warehouse. Architect W.K. Owen added Beaux Arts and Arts and Crafts embellishments like raised-end parapets with brick medallions, pier buttresses, and a 4th Street entrance marked by a stone pediment with the company's name. Today, the huge industrial windows create light and airy working conditions for the building's artist studios.

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#30

**New California Poultry Co. Building/
Amaro Poultry Market**

Designer: Stolte Inc.

Construction Date: 1946

Architectural Style: Mid-20th century utilitarian



Part of the postwar building boom in the District, this one-story, flat-roofed concrete warehouse was built in 1946 as a poultry market for the New California Poultry Co. for \$30,000.

With industrial sash windows, freight doors, and thinly stuccoed concrete surfaces, this warehouse embodies the Mid-20th Century utilitarian style. Original owner Edward Amaro held onto the property until 1983. Del Monte Meats moved their East Bay division here in 1997 and operated from this location until 2017. Like other buildings in the District, the historic warehouse started a new life as a brewery in 2019.

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#1

W.P. Fuller and Co. Warehouse

Designer: Walter D. Reed

Construction Date: 1914, additions 1937, 1945 & 1950

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian



W.P. Fuller paint company built and occupied the **District's first warehouse**, distributing paint and window glass throughout the western United States via the nearby **Western Pacific freight depot at 3rd and Harrison Street.**

The two-story warehouse was designed in the early 20th century utilitarian style by renowned architect Walter Reed with decorative brick surfaces, heavy pilasters (false columns), and metal windows. The first floor was built at rail-height so that goods could be loaded and offloaded from the trains coming through the 3rd Street. railroad track. The warehouse was later occupied by the East Bay Tire Company. Its renovation in 1997 to the "Brick House Lofts" added two floors with a zigzag roof and replaced the once-used train bays with metal windows.

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#7

Safeway Stores Corporate Headquarters

Designer: Couchot, Rosenwald & Roeth

Construction Date: 1929-30, remodeled 2000-01

Architectural Style: Early 20th century utilitarian with Beaux Arts elements



Sirloin steak sold for 20 cents a pound when **Safeway Stores established its first corporate headquarters here in 1929, during a time of rapid growth for the company.**

Safeway was an early adopter of the innovative self-serve format and the first to have parking lots at its stores, helping it become the largest grocery chain in the West. Headquartered here from 1929 to 1996, the nearby Western Pacific rail line and Port of Oakland allowed Safeway to receive and dispatch inventory to its stores. The first three floors of the building served as a warehouse, with two floors of offices above. In 2001, New Market Lofts converted the building to 46 loft-style condominiums.

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Window Panel "A"
Pacific Railroad Depot

The photo above overlays the 1909 Western Pacific Freight Depot in its original location, **arguably the catalyst for developing the Waterfront Warehouse District** as an intermodal Distribution hub.



Western Pacific Freight Depot

Designer: Unknown

Construction Date: 1909

Architectural Style: Late 19th century utilitarian

#33



After winning a legal challenge to Southern Pacific Railroad's 50-year stranglehold on the Oakland waterfront, Western Pacific Railroad Company inaugurated freight service in December 1909 and opened the Western Pacific Freight Office at Third and Harrison Streets. Hampered by the federal government's seizure of railroads in December 1917, Western Pacific's business grew very slowly. After the railroad was returned to private ownership in March 1920, Western Pacific's fortunes turned, aided greatly by the businesses that relocated to the District to take advantage of rail and port shipping facilities. The building was demolished in the 1970s.

Window Panel "B"
Infrastructure on 3rd Street

3rd Street Augmented



What Was This?

1. TRAIN HEIGHT LOADING DOCKS

A tiny wholesale grocery firm was the first occupant of this warehouse who grew to become S&W Fine Foods, Inc., one of the most enduring food brands in the United States. The warehouse was located next to a spur line of the Western Pacific Railroad, train height loading docks allowed the transfer of large quantities of goods.

2. FIRE SUPPRESSION

In 1994, the Davis-Parker warehouse was converted to 24 live-work lofts with street-level commercial space and renamed Tower Lofts after the warehouse's 50,000 gallon rooftop water tank that was originally used for fire prevention.

3. VACUUM FLUMES & BINS

American Bag and Union Hide Company pioneered the vacuum cleaning and machine mending of used burlap bags which it resold as "Guaranteed Amerbags" with an unconditional guarantee, an unusual practice at the time. The vacuum flumes and bins that filtered the waste out of the air can still be seen on the roof.

Window Panel "B"
Fourth Street



Fourth Street Circa 1962

The District's Fourth Street streetscape has changed very little since 1954, the beginning of period that qualifies the District for the National Register. The later warehouses beginning at the northeast corner of Fourth and Harrison Streets and wrapping around the Oakland Portal were constructed during the economic revival that followed the end of World War II. These Moderne warehouses have identical American common bond brickwork and form their own coherent subgroup. In their setting, size, style, uses, and materials, the later warehouses relate to the District's older warehouses and together they form a distinctive, cohesive, and recognizable 20th century industrial streetscape.