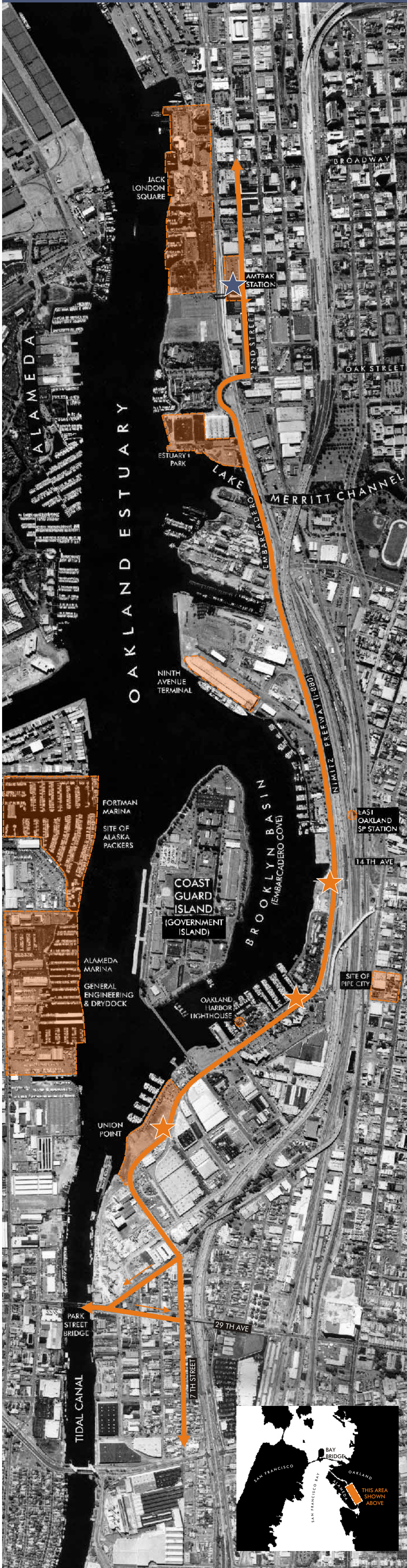
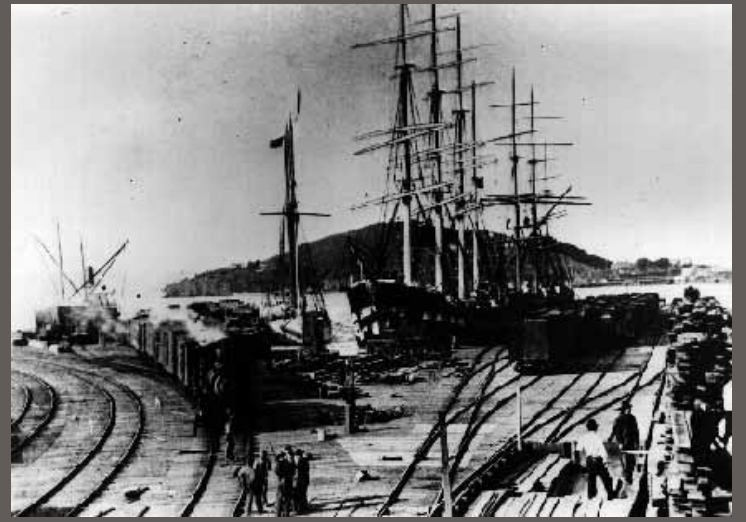


OAKLAND RAILS



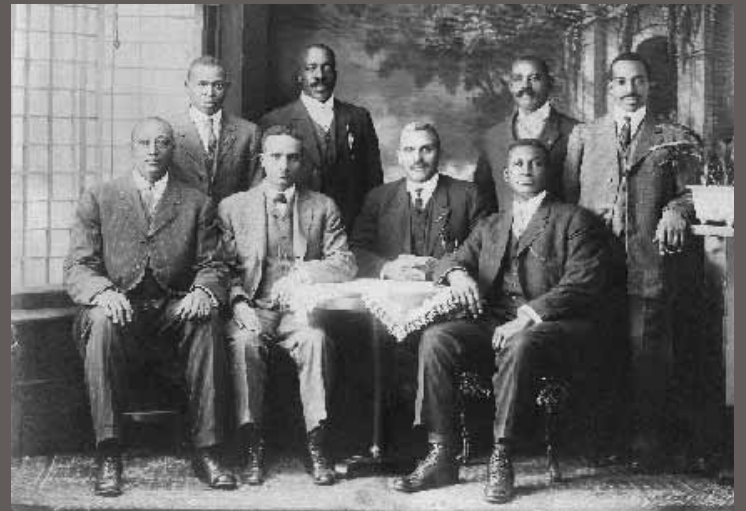
Railroad Heritage



Shipping on the Long Wharf, about 1900

The opening of the transcontinental railroad in 1869 reduced travel time between the East and West Coasts from as much as four months by sea to just six days. The Central Pacific made Oakland its western terminus. In 1871, the railroad completed the two-mile-long Long Wharf off the city's western shoreline, where the trains were met by passenger ferries and ocean-going cargo ships. The railroad stimulated Oakland's rapid growth as a shipping and population center, giving birth to the modern city.

Sleeping Car Porters



Off-duty porters, about 1915

Among the most respected members of Oakland's African American community were the Pullman Porters, uniformed attendants who staffed the railroad's luxurious Pullman Sleeping Cars. The Porters provided professional and courteous service on the overland routes. The work was hard, shifts were long, and the pay was low--but the employment was steady. Widely traveled, educated, and knowledgeable, the Porters were esteemed within the community.



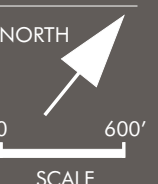
C. L. Dellums at age 75

In 1925, the Pullman Porters formed a union and began fighting for higher wages and shorter hours. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters--the first African American labor union in the United States--was in the vanguard of the national struggle for equality and civil rights. It also contributed to the rise of the black middle class. In 1937, the union was recognized by the Pullman Company.

Oakland resident Cottrell Laurence Dellums (1900-1989), a Pullman Porter, was a leader in organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Though he was fired for his union activities, he persisted and eventually served as the union's West Coast president. He also achieved prominence as an advocate of civil rights and fair employment practices at the federal, state, and local levels. In 1995, Oakland's new Amtrak station was named in his honor.

KEY

- BIKE ROUTE
- YOU ARE HERE
- LOCATIONS OF SIGNS



For more information on African Americans and the Railroads visit the African American Museum and Library, Oakland Library's History Room and the Oakland Museum of California.

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