Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, built by the Port of Oakland, comprises 38 acres and more than two miles of pathways encircling Middle Harbor Basin. It is a place for learning about local history, the natural environment, maritime activities, and environmental stewardship. In addition, the park provides shoreline access, with views of the bay, natural habitats, and maritime activity. This self-contained “city” included a chapel, bowling alley, movie theater, barracks, and coffee.</p> <p><strong>HISTORY</strong> The park is built on the site of the former Oakland Naval Supply Depot, an important supply center for the Navy’s Pacific Fleet from World War II. Civilian and military workers shipped a wide variety of cargo to support the war effort, until 1998, when the depot was closed and transferred to the Port of Oakland. This 541-acre facility was equipped with warehouses and a combined floor area of over 7 million square feet.</p> <p>Building 122, which has its “footprint” at Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, was a 190,000-square-foot warehouse (4.3 acres) built as one of two primary storage and supply facilities for the Navy’s Pacific Fleet. Its irregular shape allowed for rail service on all sides. You can find the footprint of Building 122 by finding the clues in the park’s landscape: look for a “ghost” structure marked by wall markers, zig-zag walls, and changes in pavement (even in the parking lot).</p> <p>Most of the other buildings on the Supply Depot were warehouses and offices, although the Depot had its own fire and police stations, library, post office, bank, chapel, bowling alley, movie theater, barracks, and coffee-roasting plant, which at its peak supplied all of the armed forces in the Pacific. This self-contained “city” included 42 miles of train tracks and 26 miles of paved roadway.</p> <p>Middle Harbor itself was dredged to create a 40-foot-deep berthing area for naval ships, and fill was placed to create the land for the depot. Oakland was chosen as the site of this important supply center because of the city’s extensive rail and highway connections leading almost directly to the bay and its shipping lanes. The Oakland Naval Supply Depot even had its own internal railroad transportation system with a roundhouse and rail car repair shops.</p> <p><strong>ENVIRONMENTAL RESTORATION</strong> In its natural state, Oakland’s waterfront was covered by hundreds of acres of salt marshes and shallow tidelands that provided food, shelter, and other benefits to a variety of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, insects, and mammals. Dredging and fill for military, Port, and commercial uses have greatly reduced the habitat in size and quality. Middle Harbor is located on some of these former tidel wetlands, most of which were under water at high tide. The Port of Oakland and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are working to restore shallow wildlife habitats to Middle Harbor.</p> <p>The 180-acre Middle Harbor Enhancement Area, adjacent to Middle Harbor Shoreline Park, will restore shallow water habitats and provide habitat enhancement and an opportunity for the study of marine biology and habitat restoration efforts. During your visit, you may see some of this work underway. Dredged sediments have been used in the Middle Harbor Enhancement project, and a jetty has been constructed near the mouth of the harbor to reduce tidal energy and promote revegetation.</p> <p>The park’s shoreline pathways allow for wildlife observation year-round. Numerous shorebirds, diving ducks, and sea birds can be seen just off shore. Year-round residents include the Western gull, double-crested cormorant, and brown pelican. Summer visitors include the Caspian tern, least tern, California gull, Canada goose, and snowy egret. Winter visitors include the common goldeneye, ruddy duck, bufflehead, Clark’s grebe, and eared grebe. During your visit here, you can see the direct loading and unloading of a ship, and observe the different pieces of equipment it takes to move cargo. For nearly a century, the Port of Oakland has managed the efficient movement of goods and people in and out of the region. The surrounding 665-acre seaport is the fourth busiest container port in the U.S. and one of the largest in the world. It includes 35 active deepwater berths and 33 gantry container cranes. This adjacent seaport handles 98 percent of all the containerized cargo that passes through California ports. The Port of Oakland is primarily an export port; Containers arrive and depart on ships that circumnavigate the globe.