

# An Era of Dramatic Change

Historically Alameda was a peninsula, rich in natural resources. Native peoples gathered food and materials from bay salt marshes, abundant oak forests, and nearby shorelines. From the early 1800's the western tip of the peninsula now known as Alameda Point became farmland before becoming an industrial center and ferry/rail transit hub.

Alameda was not always an island. Construction of a tidal canal was proposed to improve tidal flow through the Estuary from San Leandro Bay, and to deepen the channel for large vessel traffic. Alameda became an island in 1902 when the project was completed.

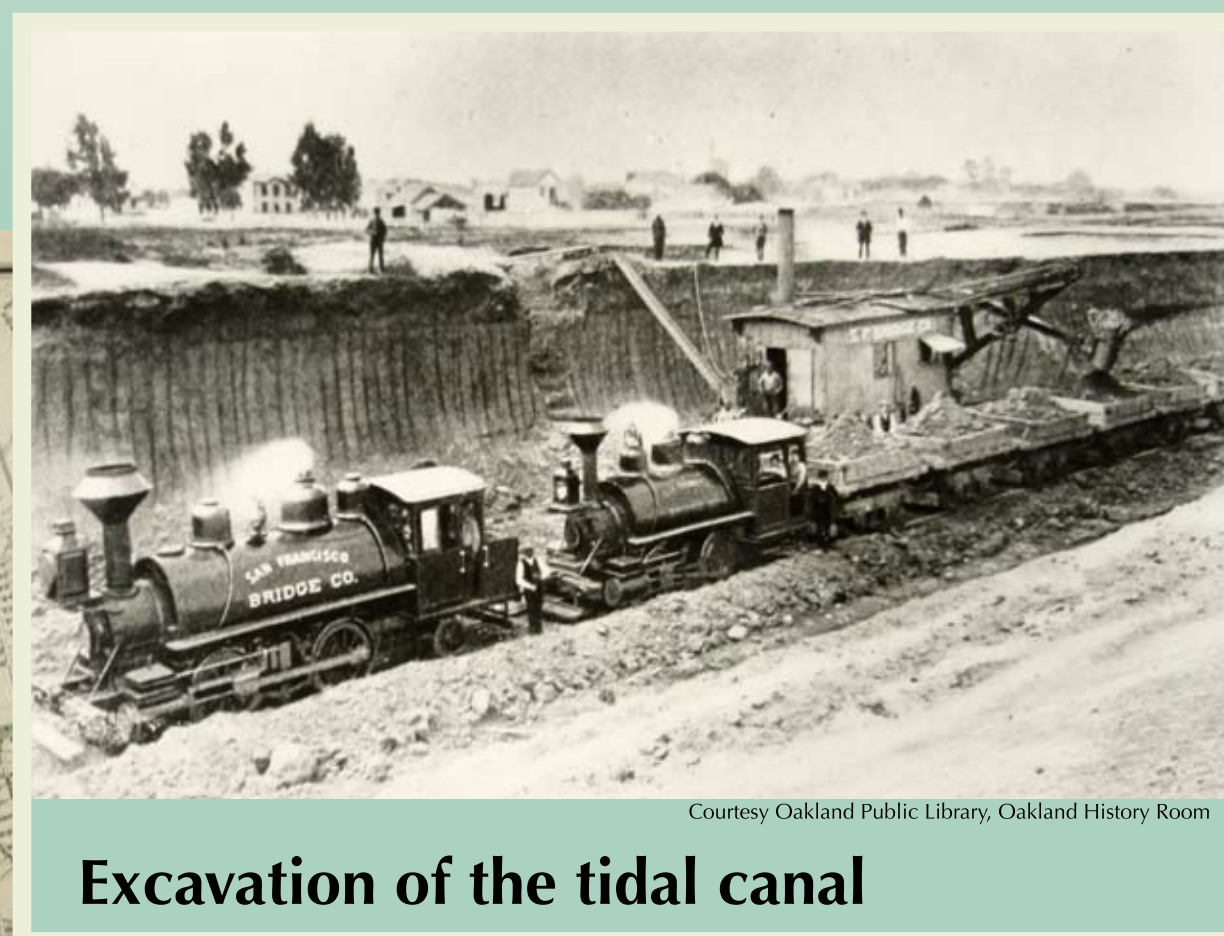


Joseph Lee, 1828-1880, Alameda Shore, ca. 1868, oil on canvas, 26 5/8 x 47 3/4 (67.6 x 121.3 cm) Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco, Museum purchase, M.H. de Young Endowment Fund, 45.20.3

Lee's painting *Alameda Shore* provides a glimpse of this pastoral landscape in transition. For a brief two months in autumn of 1869, Alameda Point was the final terminus of the historic transcontinental railroad. The buildings to the right were workshops of Alfred A. Cohen's San Francisco and Alameda Railroad. Here, rail passengers from across the country boarded the ferry *Alameda* for the final leg of their journey to San Francisco.

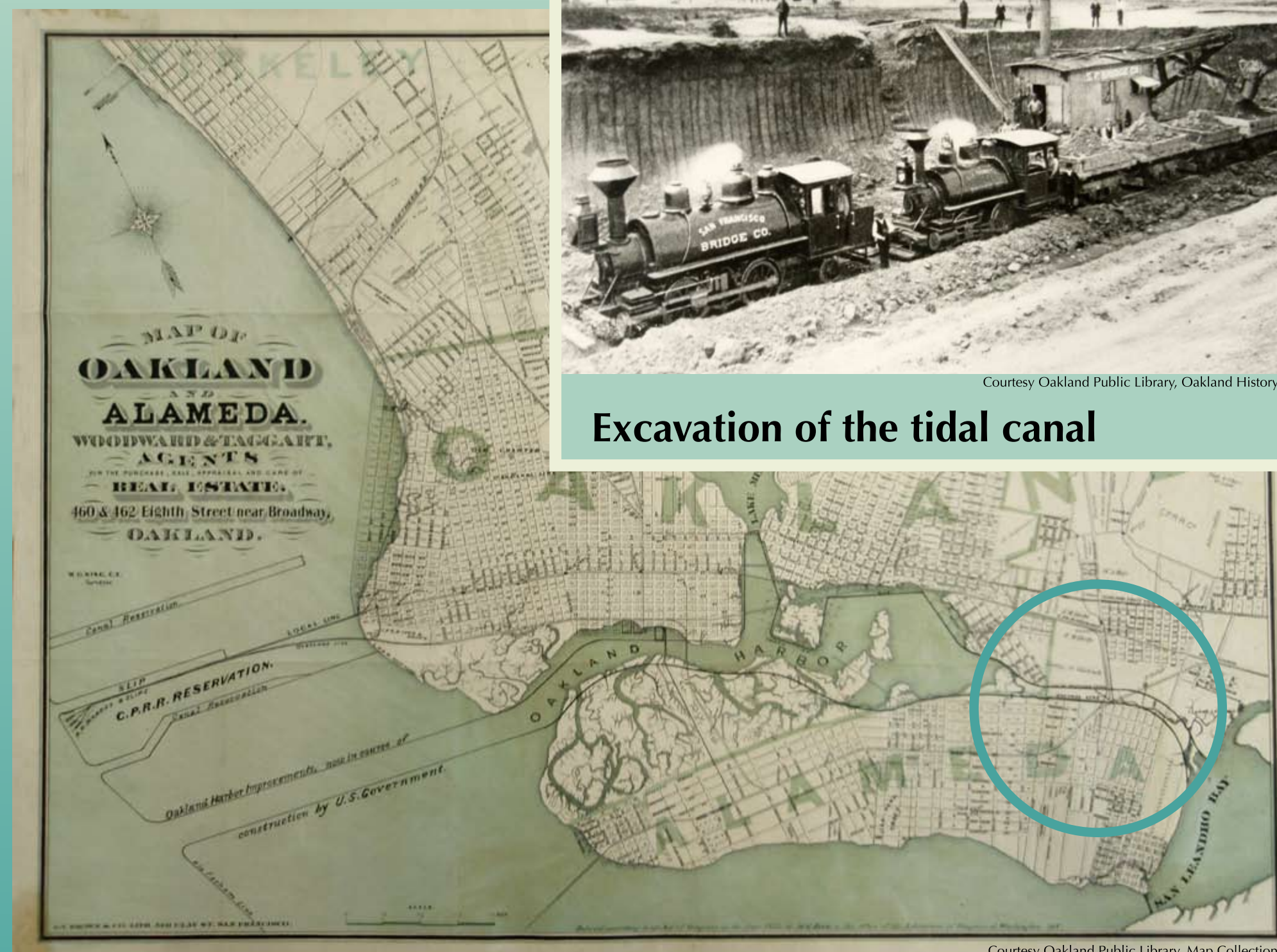
In 1936, the City of Alameda sold the western portion of the island and adjacent submerged lands to construct the Naval Air Station (NAS). It was the largest naval air station in the nation at that time.

In 1997, the government decommissioned the NAS. Since then, the land and facilities have become a mixture of civilian uses including new parklands and trails such as this section of the San Francisco Bay Trail.



Courtesy Oakland Public Library, Oakland History Room

Excavation of the tidal canal



Courtesy Oakland Public Library, Map Collection

1877 map by G.T. Brown & Co. showing Oakland and Alameda before Alameda became an island.