

# Labor Landmark on the Move as Copra Crane Finds New Home

■ *When Coconut Was a Hot Import, Longshoremen Handled it at Pier 84*

By Paul Burton  
Contributing Writer

**B**uilding Trades members are involved with an effort to preserve a piece of San Francisco labor history. A crew of workers, including members of Ironworkers 377, Operating Engineers 3, Carpenters 22 and Laborers 261 began the restoration process in September, moving the Islais Creek

Copra Crane from the Port of San Francisco's Pier 84 at the Islais Creek Channel at the foot of Indiana Street south of Cesar Chavez Street to nearby Tennessee Street.

Sheedy Crane & Rigging Co. was the lifting contractor, with two cranes operating to move sections of the Copra Crane that were cut by the crew of Ironworkers. S. J. Amoroso Construction was the general contractor for the project, which is near the new bus maintenance facility it is building for the SF Municipal Transportation Agency at Cesar Chavez and Indiana streets. That project will have a shoreline promenade area where the historic crane sat for decades on pilings, which are now in disrepair. The crane has been out of use since the mid-1970s.

Retired IBEW Local 6 business representative Derek Green said that historic preservation groups have been working to preserve the Copra Crane for about 16 years, including the nonprofit Fund for Labor Culture & History started by Derek's father, the noted labor historian Archie Green.

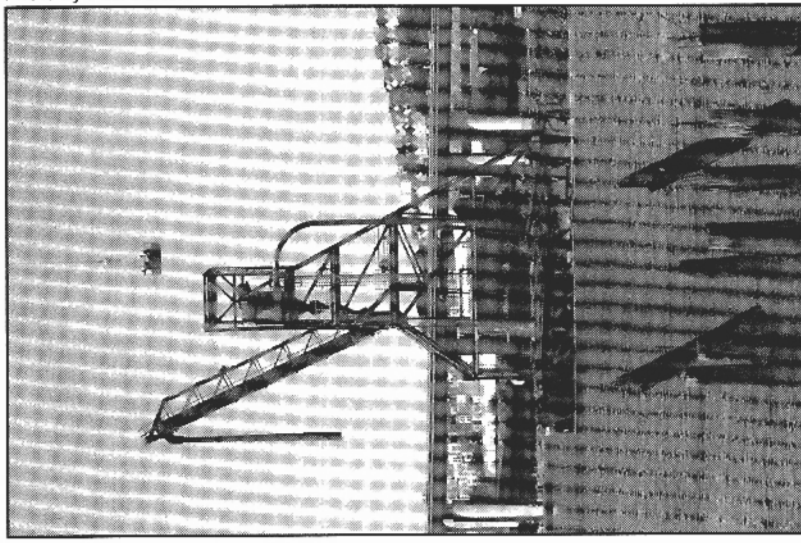
"The Copra Crane is a historic landmark that is part of San Francisco's maritime history and the history of the building trades," Derek Green said.

An article on the *Found SF* website explains the crane's history: "It dates back to a time when coconut meat, also known as copra, was imported from the Philippines and pressed into coconut oil at the nearby Cargill Mill. ILWU Local 10 longshoremen worked the pier, using picks and shovels to break up the large pieces of copra in the ships' hulls. A large suction pump known as a blower then moved the copra pieces to the mill where ILWU Local 6 members processed it into oil. The remaining 'copra meal' was pressed into pellets, put into 100-pound sacks and the warehousemen prepared it to be shipped across the bay to warehouses at Colgate-Palmolive-Peet and McKesson-Robbins. The crane was used to load the copra meal onto outbound ships."

Green said the Fund for Labor Culture & History and others like the Friends of Islais Creek and the Copra Crane Labor Landmark Association plan to raise funds to refurbish the monument. The restoration will include fabricating new brackets to hold the crane sections together, sandblasting and repainting the structure, and installing new piles to serve as a foundation for the crane in the original location.

ILWU pensioner Bill Ward, who

serves as the president of the Copra Crane Labor Landmark Association, ILWU pensioner and CCLA secretary-treasurer Don Watson, and labor historian Harvey Schwartz have been sharing the history of the pier and San Francisco's working class with the skateboarders who are the new users of the area.



The crane loaded copra meal onto ships.

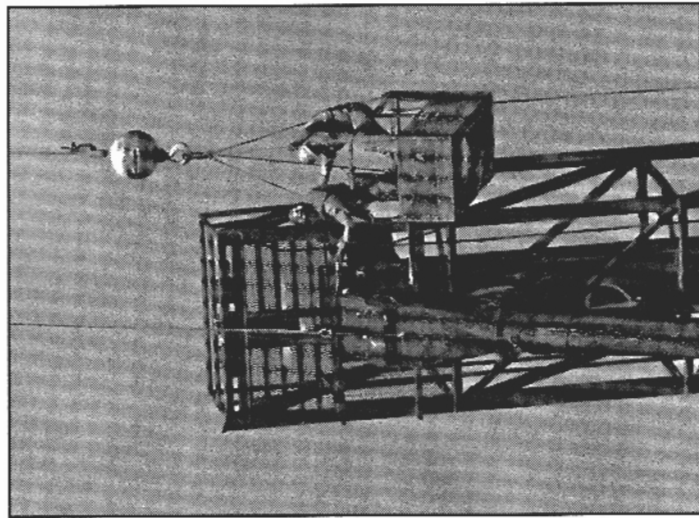


Photo by Derek Green

Removing copra pipe from the boom conveyor.

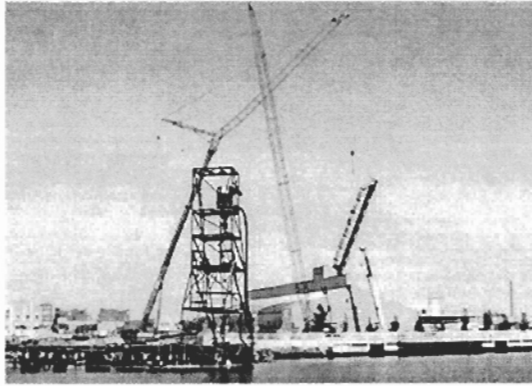
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