SOUTHERN PIERS:
Pier C, Shipping & Longshoremen

Guide by Cell

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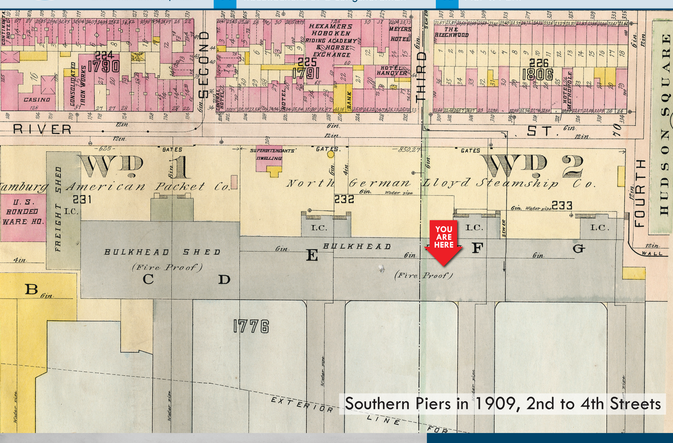
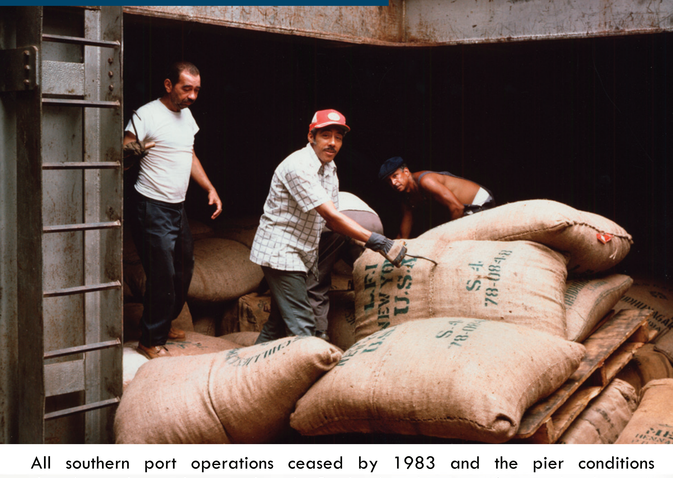


Southern Piers in 1909, 2nd to 4th Streets

American Export Lines used Piers A, B and C for both passengers and cargo from the 1950s to about 1970. It was the last major company to use the piers; Hoboken's era as a working seaport was ending due to a shift to containerized shipping, larger cargo ships and the rise of Port Newark.

Pier C

Union longshoremen were the people who did the work of loading and unloading ships. Hoboken's Donald "Red" Barrett worked as a longshoremen for American Export and shot typical scenes as an avid amateur photographer. He recalled it took 3 days with a gang of 150 men to unload a freighter carrying barrels of wine or bags of hot peppers (bottom photo)–which could make you sneeze! The 'shape-up' was a fact of dock life: If you were not hired by 8 a.m., you did not work that day. Working on the docks was said to be the second most dangerous job in the U.S. after coal mining.



All southern port operations ceased by 1983 and the pier conditions deteriorated over the next decade. By the time that waterfront redevelopment was considered, the piers were in major disrepair.

All the pier buildings were demolished. Pier C is now honored by an island park pier, creatively landscaped, and featuring a promenade, fishing hole and playgrounds.