

Ferries & Freight on San Francisco Bay

Before bridges spanned the Bay, ferries and trains once linked San Francisco with the rest of the nation. At that time, the Bay Area boasted the world's largest ferry system.

Here, at Ferry Point ship and rail met in 1900 when Santa Fe tunneled through the hills to open the western terminus of its transcontinental line. Train passengers disembarked for the first time to board a ferry for San Francisco. One traveler described the trip:

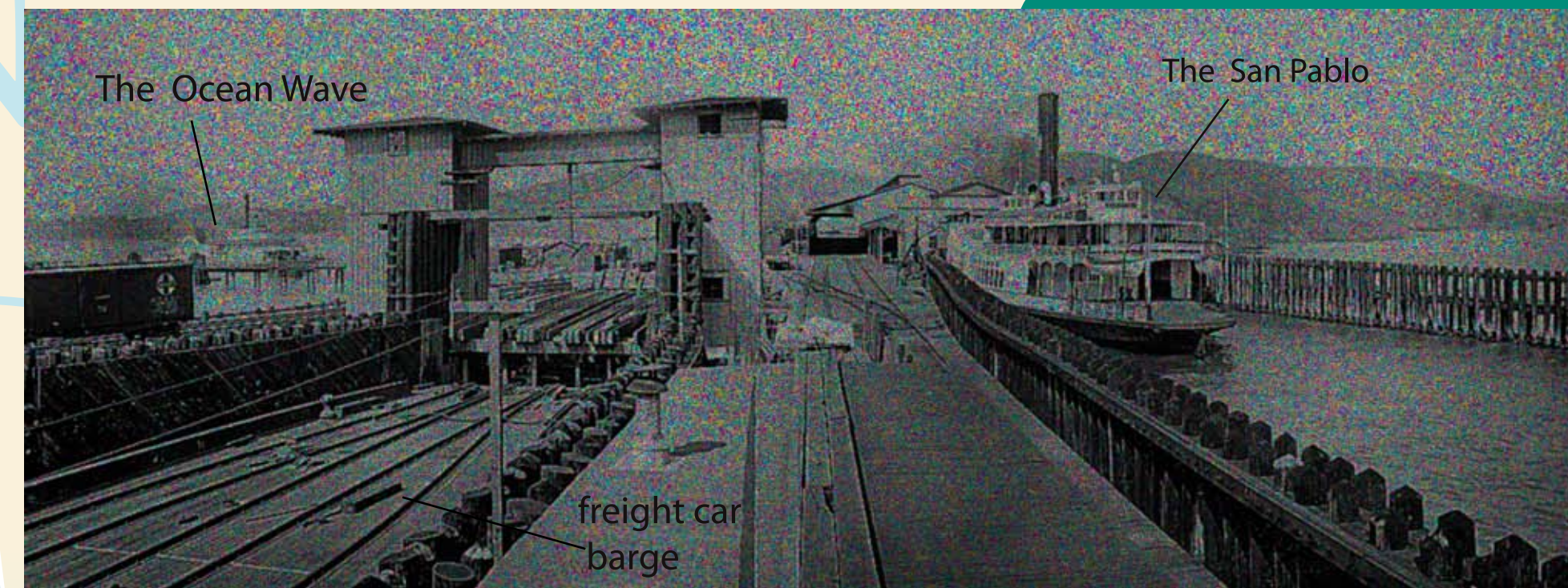
“On the [ferry’s] upper deck is . . . a cozy dining room where one can be served . . . while enjoying the beauties of this seven mile trip — the harbor, the shipping, the Berkeley hills upon the left, Mount Tamalpais on the right. It takes about thirty minutes . . .”

Freight trains, too, pulled in to the Ferry Point yards. The boxcars were loaded onto barges and hauled by tugboat across the Bay.

Richmond, a new bayshore community, sprang up following Santa Fe’s move to the area. Today, the old pier, pump house, and pieces of track still remain from the days when Ferry Point was the gateway to San Francisco and the world beyond.



By 1915, Santa Fe’s operation at Ferry Point included a 620-foot long terminal shed with a passenger waiting room at the West end, mooring docks, wharves, and a large fleet of maritime vessels. (Courtesy, the Richmond Museum Collection)



The Santa Fe ferry-steamer San Pablo waits in the passenger slip at right, while part of a 260-foot long freight car barge is visible at the lower left, moored by the apron and gallows structure. At the upper left, the steamer Ocean Wave can be seen approaching. (Courtesy, the Richmond Museum Collection)



Ferry and Inland Steamship Routes
1915

Richmond
Ferry Point
Oakland
San Francisco