

# Bigge Crane and Rigging Co.

In 1916, Henry W. Bigge and his father, Henry C. Bigge, started the Bigge Drayage Company in Oakland, CA. In the early years, the company kept three trucks busy transporting cargo to and from the docks and railroad depots in San Francisco's East Bay Area. After his father passed away in 1925, Henry was determined to expand the business by adding heavy-hauling and machinery moving projects that became more prevalent as the West launched into a growth period.



The Bigge Drayage Co. was founded in Oakland, CA in 1916. In the above photo Henry W. Bigge stands alongside one of the company's early trucks in 1925.

## MILESTONES

- 1916** Henry W. Bigge and his father, Henry C. Bigge, started the Bigge Drayage Company in Oakland, CA.
- 1952** Member of 
- 1980** Henry Bigge retired and sold the company to his daughter, Marlene Bigge Settlemier, and her husband Brock, who was named CEO
- 2004** Brock Settlemier stepped down as CEO and sold the business equally to sons Reid and Weston Settlemier

For over 50 years, Henry would expand the company's horizons and move steadily into new fields. Foremost of these opportunities was a diversification into the mobile crane and heavy rigging industry. Bigge developed and built the prototype of the first modern truck crane in its shop in Oakland, CA in 1925. Bigge personnel designed and built the innovative equipment that they needed to successfully perform their projects.

Bigge obtained its General Engineering and Contractor's License in 1931, which remains one of the oldest licenses still active in California. Since then, the company has been deeply involved in many of the state's

major historical developments. Bigge hauled 15,000 tons of structural steel to two of the world's most famous bridges – the Golden Gate Bridge (completed in 1937) and the Oakland Bay Bridge (completed in 1936).

## WAR EFFORT

During World War II, Bigge played a major role in the production of warships at East-Bay shipyards. The company provided cranes, labor, supervision and specialized trucking equipment to transport and install massive ship substructures.

After a Japanese submarine was captured off the California coast, Bigge transported the enemy ship on a 48-state





**The first crane built by Bigge was used to lay the main water and sewer pipelines in the City of Oakland during the 1930s.**

tour to promote the sale of War Bonds. For these and other war-related efforts, Henry Bigge was later named Man of the Year by the National Defense Transportation

Administration in 1969.

In the 1950s, Bigge moved into specialized barge services, erected and relocated dock-mounted container cranes and engineered heavy lift rigging systems for the refinery and petrochemical industries. A development that would have major management implications that continue to shape the company occurred in 1958, when Brock Settlemier began working for the company.

**ADVANCED INDUSTRY**

The company has advanced the entire specialized carrier and rigging industry by introducing many significant developments in mobile engineering and methodology. In the process, Bigge has secured 32 patents.

In the 1960s, a joint venture with a major Maritime Corporation sent Bigge equipment and personnel to Saudi Arabia to handle hoisting and transportation of the Kingdom's refinery and infrastructure construction. The success of that work encouraged Bigge to continue its international expansion in the early 1970s, performing

award-winning jobs in Viet Nam, Guam, Japan, Venezuela, Scotland and Saudi Arabia.

In 1980, Bigge established Bigge Metropolitan, headquartered in London, England, to handle transportation and installation of heavy structural components in the North Sea oil industry, including transportation projects in fabrication plants in Spain, France, the United Kingdom, and North Africa.

**IN CONFIDENT HANDS**

Confident that he was leaving the company in good hands, Henry Bigge retired in 1980. The company was sold to his daughter, Marlene Bigge Settlemier, and her husband Brock, who was named CEO.

Settlemier added new life to a strong, vibrant company through his unyielding commitment to innovation and safety. "When we purchased the company, it already had a great reputation for leadership," said Settlemier. "But we knew we had to keep moving forward to tackle new and unique challenges in the field of heavy hoisting and rigging. To survive, we need to grow. To grow nationally we need to dedicate ourselves to the ever increasing need for safety, quality assurance and total quality management."

Settlemier established an Emergency Response and Recovery Division. Over the years, this division has responded successfully and profitably to numerous emergencies in the Western United States



**Bigge uses a strand jacking systems to lift a 2,000 ton section on the new San Francisco/Oakland Bay Bridge.**

**Pictured in 1942 the captured submarine that Bigge hauled as a contribution to the War Bond Campaign.**



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## THE SPECIALISTS

such as floods, fires, railroad derailments and rescue work on seismic disasters. Settlemier served as the Disaster Relief Coordinator on the Loma Prieta Earthquake Repair and other construction-related disaster relief efforts.

Bigge also played a major role in refinery installation and maintenance. Bigge has worked in every refinery in Northern California. The company pioneered technologies and methods for the installation of nuclear components; such as Reactor Vessels, Steam Generators and Pressurizers. Settlemier capitalized on Bigge's experience and expertise and led Bigge and its affiliates in transporting and installing components for approximately 50 nuclear power plants throughout the United States.

The company is one of a very few private companies pre-qualified by the Nuclear Regulation Commission (NRC) to handle, transport, and store radioactive nuclear fuel. As nuclear plants became obsolete or licenses expired, Bigge became the foremost choice of utility companies to dismantle and transport obsolete equipment, radioactive nuclear waste, and nuclear

exchange components. The company also was called on to perform Steam Generator Replacement Projects in over 30 plants nationwide. In cooperation with a major East-Coast utility, Bigge also was responsible for the installation, repair, or replacement of components in power plants in China and for a major electrical equipment manufacturer; Bigge installed power plants in the Philippines, Yugoslavia, Venezuela and Brazil.

In the 1990s, the company expanded its reach and strengths through acquisitions, including Shaughnessy Transportation in Auburn, WA in 1995, Concord Crane Rental in California in 1996 and Santa Fe Equipment Co. in Denver and Salt Lake City in 1999. In the year 1999 and again in 2001, Bigge was included in the Business Times list of the Bay Area's Top 150 Fastest Growing Private Companies.

### DIVERSIFICATION OF ASSETS

After working 46 years in the Crane and Rigging Industry, and expanding the company nation-wide and internationally,



Bigge has developed into one of the largest and most diversified heavy rigging, hoisting and hauling companies in the United States. In 2007 they were the only company ranked in both categories of *American Cranes & Transport Magazine's* Top 50 list: 6th largest crane company and 8th largest heavy transport company.



**“Brock Settlemier  
SC&RA Association  
Golden Achievement  
Award Winner 2003”  
was president and  
CEO of Bigge from  
1980 through 2004.**

**Bigge Crane and  
Rigging Co. ranks in  
the top 10 of North  
America’s largest  
crane and specialized  
transportation  
companies.**



Brock Settlemier stepped down after 24 years as CEO in 2004. The business was purchased equally by his two sons, Reid and Weston Settlemier. Hardly strangers to the industry, the brothers had already been with the company a total of nearly 30 years, holding several jobs with significant responsibility while learning the ropes from their father.

Under the new leadership, responsibilities were divided with Weston managing the operating businesses and Reid assuming responsibility for the Presidency of Bigge Development Company, which owns, develops and manages the company’s real estate holdings. The brothers agreed that “...diversification of assets was a top priority in our long-range business development plan. We have added a new corporate real estate office and hired experienced personnel to establish these objectives,” stated Reid Settlemier.

Weston Settlemier became President of Bigge in 2000 and CEO in 2004. Under Weston’s leadership Bigge has experienced significant growth while improving its safety program each year. “We have strengthened our core business and have diversified into synergistic new markets,” said Settlemier.

“We are extremely proud about our safety results during this high growth period. In fact, our safety indexes have improved each year for the last several years. Going forward we are committed to continuous improvement of our existing businesses and searching for new opportunities that leverage Bigge’s talents.”

The company recently expanded its focus to emerging markets such as wind turbine erection and solar power. Bigge’s crane sales division has expanded fourfold in the past few years. In addition to selling equipment the rental fleet has grown significantly during the same time period. The majority of the equipment purchased for the fleet and for resale by Bigge has been Liebherr, DeMag and Terex cranes. This equipment fit Bigge’s long-range business objectives. Bigge purchased several of the largest new Liebherr Nenzing crawler cranes to accomplish these objectives and erect the enormous wind turbines required to produce wind energy.

Bigge continued to expand and in 2005 purchased American Heavy Rigging in Richmond, Virginia to strengthen its East Coast presence. The company then

purchased Solveson Crane in Central California in 2006. In 2007, Bigge opened offices in Stockton, Sacramento and Southern California.

### INTERTWINED SUCCESS

Bigge’s success is intertwined with that of the Specialized Carriers & Rigging Association in its 60 years of growth. Brock Settlemier is one of only nine men ever selected for SC&RA’s Golden Achievement Award for Industry Contribution. In 1968, Bigge was the sole winner of SC&RA’s first Rigging and Hauling Job of the Year Award. The company has won a total of eight Rigging Job of the Year and two Hauling Job of the Year Awards. Additionally, Bigge’s Seattle branch, Shaughnessy and Co., has won four Rigging and three Hauling Job of the Year Awards. Bigge also annually earns the SC&RA’s Overall Group Safety and Fleet Safety awards.

Bigge celebrated its 90th birthday in 2006. The management team is up to the challenge of aggressive planned growth. Bigge has dedicated itself to implement the long-range business plan presently in effect that will maintain the company’s leadership position in the industry until its centennial celebration in 2016. ■