

THE WORKING LONGSHOREMAN

RONALD E. MAGDEN

Cover Statue by Larry Anderson

R-4 Typographers, Inc.
Tacoma, Washington

CONTENTS

Forward	III
1. The First Tacoma Longshoremen	1
2. Boom and Bust	18
3. A New Beginning	34
4. The Time of Troubles	52
5. Fight to the Finish	70
6. The Scab Hall	85
7. Postwar Turmoil	99
8. Tacoma Reorganizes the Northwest	116
9. The 1934 Maritime Strike	137
10. Into the Lion's Mouth	156
11. Technology and Change on the Tacoma Waterfront	176
Sources	199
Labor and Waterfront Terms	207

With the deepest respect, we dedicate The Working Longshoremen to the men who have lost their lives working on the Tacoma waterfront.

James Kelly	1889	Melville E. Anderson	1936
William Grady	1893	Frank Higgins	1936
Griffith Williams	1900	Helmer Kleiberg	1939
Alexander Laidlaw	1916	Ivar Danielson	1940
James McGinn	1919	Axel L. Johnson	1941
E. F. McMahan	1919	Lester Lund	1941
Alex St. Germain	1920	Carl Stavang	1946
John A. Swanson	1922	William Flannery	1949
Sam Knudson	1923	Culbert A. Lura	1949
Herbert S. Blowers	1924	Al Nyssen	1949
Jack Carr	1924	Joe Olsen	1949
H. P. Johnson	1924	D. J. Thiel, Sr.	1949
Frank Tatman	1924	Wesley E. Peterson	1950
Charles Wickstrom	1924	Ted Carter	1954
John Nordiu	1925	Christie Acheson	1958
John Reichman	1926	Moton W. Austin	1958
Dan Barker	1928	Gordon Cole	1958
Ed Newmark	1928	Eric A. Enstrom	1963
Trelby B. Hewitt	1930	Richard L. Kaeser	1964
Charles Haywood	1932	Frank Reed	1967
Anton Christianson	1933	William Stull	1969
Frank Tisdale	1933	Robert D. Cox	1970
Ralph H. Linney	1934	Frank Susan	1979
Joseph Merkt	1934	Dale L. Gaines	1982
William Wakefield	1934	Robert Lizotte	1987
Joseph Berger	1935	Ross E. Lelli	1989

FOREWARD

The Working Longshoreman is not just a history of the Tacoma waterfront. Our book tries to give insight into what made events happen; the personal commitment of workers as they toiled and as they formed the philosophy of their union. History alone cannot tell the whole story. It takes all of the facets of the union's birth and development, including the human trials and tribulations, to discover why we are what we are.

The Working Longshoreman was a group effort. Several hundred members of Tacoma Longshore Local 23 and Port of Tacoma staff aided in the gathering of materials necessary to tell the whole story. Six individuals worked for seven years to bring the history in to print. There were years of committee meetings, telephone calls, disagreements, and finally agreement. Our story is as human as the committee feels it could be.

The committee was composed of six members.

OTTILIE MARKHOLT

A woman who at an early age developed a love for all phases of the waterfront. Without doubt, she is the sole living person who has the most recorded and personal knowledge of the history that led us to this day. Her files and personal knowledge are an act of love for the waterfront. None of Otilie Markholt's efforts are for money or personal gain.

Tacoma longshoremen cannot come up with a fitting sign of appreciation. So, we humbly say, "Thank you, Otilie," with all of our hearts.

DR. RONALD MAGDEN

He was a doctor of history at Tacoma Community College and co-author of our first book, *The Working Waterfront*. He is the sole author or recorder of *The Working Longshoreman*. Everyone he works with enjoys him. Most people he meets and interviews find it hard to believe he is not a retired longshoreman. We believe he would have loved to work his life on the waterfront. We affectionately call him our absent-minded professor.

The best sign of our appreciation of Ron is to say he is one of us and we love him.

TRUMAN ALDEN THRONSON

He's 6'4" tall so the men on the waterfront in 1929 dubbed him "Tiny." To all of us he's Tiny. He was a down-in-the-hole longshoreman, and in 1934 the public spokesman for the '34 strike. Three years after the strike, he became the district secretary for the ILA. In 1942, he joined the service and was in World War II. Tiny returned to the waterfront in 1946. In the late forties he became a superintendent for Rothschild Stevedoring. Tiny retired in 1970 as Tacoma area manager. Tiny is a walking history book of the Tacoma waterfront. A man respected by longshoremen and employers alike. A proud day for "Tiny" was his invitation by the longshoremen to join their Local 23 Retirement Club.

For your lifetime efforts, Local 23 says, "Thank you, 'Tiny.'"

FRANK E. REICHL

Frank came on the waterfront in 1935 which was at the pit of the Great Depression. Frank worked as a salmon reconditioner, a position that handled canned salmon that came from Alaska. In the late thirties Frank became a regular longshoreman working on the ships. As the waterfront mechanized, so did Frank. He drove all of the new equipment as it was introduced, retiring as a strad truck operator when there were only four such machines on the waterfront. Today, Frank is vice president of the Pacific Coast Longshore Pensioners. On our committee Frank was the self-appointed overseer who kept everything on schedule. If your duty had a time to be completed, Frank kept a boot in your backside to remind you to get finished. All of us kidded with Frank and we all love him.

JOHN USORAC

John came on the Tacoma waterfront in the mid-sixties. From the start he has been involved in many union activities, including executive board, dispatcher, welfare officer, checker, and supervisor. Anytime you have John on a committee he get things done. He is an asset to *The Working Longshoreman*, providing input and willing to do whatever is necessary to keep our book on course and on time. Having worked with John on numerous committees, I found that he asks for no credit and always does as much or more than anyone else. The whole committee will miss working with John when the book is complete. He is one of us and our friend.

PHILIP M. LELLI

I was born in Tacoma in 1929 and raised in the Edgewood area. Both my grandparents moved into the Tacoma area before the turn of the century. From the time I was little, I have had a tremendous pride about Tacoma. This is a great place to live and work. I love the waterfront and the many diverse jobs that it brings to our longshoremen. In 1949, I had my first job on the waterfront carrying 180-pound sacks of wheat. I have had other types of employment but the waterfront is my home. During the seventeen years I was president of the Tacoma longshoremen, I developed a compelling interest in Tacoma waterfront history. The city grew because of our international trade. All I can say is thanks to the waterfront for a good life. I hope you enjoy our book as much as I enjoyed working with these committee members who are my friends. I love them.

Philip M. Lelli

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST TACOMA LONGSHOREMEN

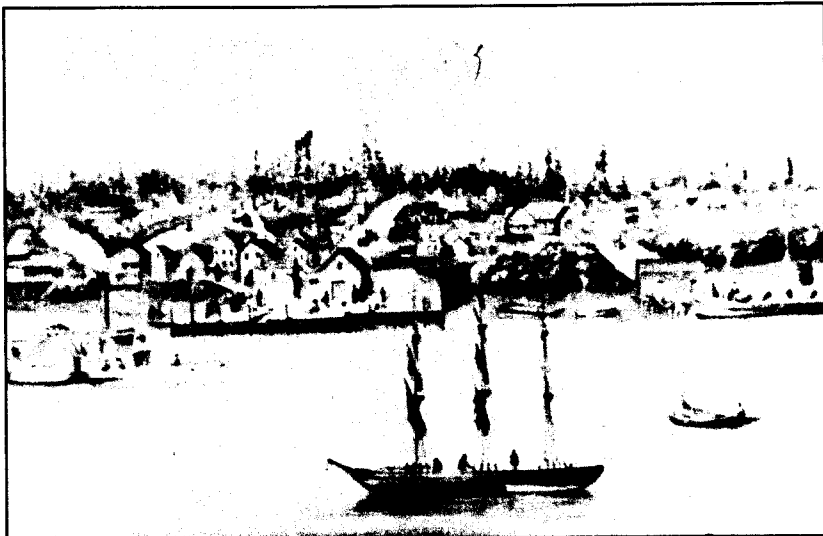
After roaming the seas for eighteen years, Charles Trench swallowed the anchor in 1880. Trench built a shanty perched near the top of the McCarver Street gulch to observe the coming of sailing ships and steamers into Commencement Bay. When he saw a vessel he wanted to work, Trench trudged down the hillside to the wharf to ask the stevedore boss or ship's captain for a job. He preferred working deep-water ships to coasters. Loading lumber on vessels bound for Asia, South America, or the Sandwich Islands usually lasted a month while working vessels shuttling between Tacoma and San Francisco took only two weeks. Despite the unpredictability of waterfront work, Trench preferred the beach to life at sea. If he felt like fishing or hunting, he took the day off. He was his own boss.¹

The colony of dock workers who built shacks and lean-tos near Trench included fellow German Charles Martin, Chileans Benjamin Cantus and Celequon, the Spaniard Honore Katran, and Englishman James Barry. No one could pronounce the names of two Sandwich Islanders who responded to the nicknames "Joe Oregon" and "San Diego Sam." The six men called themselves stevedores, workers who stowed and broke out ship's cargo in the hold.² They plied their trade twelve months out of the year, but cargo-handling turned slack from November through February. During the dull winter months, the stevedores gathered in one of the shanties in the gulch to talk about prominent events and people, smoke strong tobacco, and play cards. Sometimes they walked down the muddy path to Old Town to visit with mariners at the seamen's bethel or carouse in the saloons and dance halls.³

The six stevedores were among 1,098 people who lived in Old Town and New Tacoma during 1880. In both sections people contended with streets filled with stumps, logs, roots, and brush. Slashed timber remains lay in tangles on the hillsides overlooking the two townsites. New Tacoma was dominated by the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, owner of practically all of the waterfront and most of the downtown business area.⁴ Eighty men worked for the NP as expressmen or in the car shops. Lister's foundry, which employed thirty-five men, depended heavily upon the NP for its business. The only employer not beholden to the railroad was Hatch's sawmill with its dozen mill hands. Ninth Street and Pacific Avenue emerged as the business and social center of the town. Stores, banks, chop houses, Whiskey Row, and a vaudeville house radiated from Seventh to Ninth street on the east and west sides of Pacific Avenue.⁵

Early Tacoma Wharves

In 1880 stevedores worked at three wharves on Commencement Bay. Constructed in 1869, the Starr Street wharf adjoined Hanson & Ackerson's sawmill and general store. Before the arrival of stevedores, townsmen and itinerant laborers worked with ship crews in loading lumber on ships. By 1880 Mill Superintendent George Atkinson had twenty-five steady stevedores working with seamen to discharge merchandise for the mill's general store and to stow lumber in the holds of the company's four ships. Andrew Anderson, Charles Johnson, James Kelly, George Pedergast, and Peter Peterson were among the early mill stevedores.⁶ Vessels anchored with sterns abutting the wharf.



Old Town waterfront, 1873, Tacoma Mill and Starr Street Wharf on the left.
(Magden Collection)

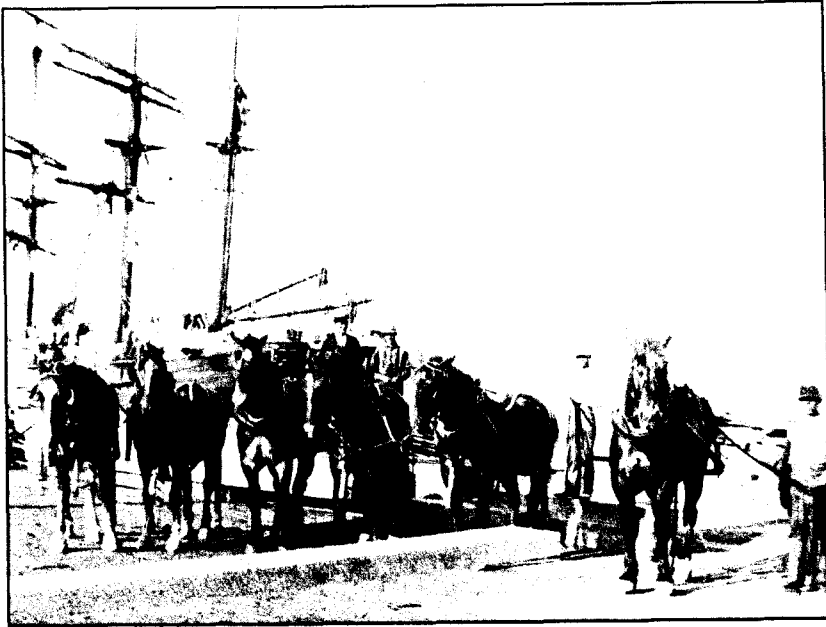
Seamen and stevedores erected scaffolding, opened two three-foot-by-four-foot hatches in the ship's transom, and waited for the captain's command to unload. General merchandise came out first, followed by ballast. Truckers pushed two-wheeled carts loaded with goods to the company's store. After the ship was discharged, truckers carted special dimension lumber from the mill to the wharf. Alongside, teamsters drove horses pulling big timbers to shipside. Using block and tackle, "dock wollopers" raised each timber to men standing on the scaffolding. Alternately singing out "starboard" or "port," lumber handlers shoved heavy green timbers through the hatches. Inside, seamen used iron hooks to pull pilings and squared timbers to places where the sticks fit snugly. Exceptionally long spars and poles were lashed down on deck. Lumber handlers received \$1.50 a day and board for working a ten-hour shift.⁷

Near the Starr Street wharf in Old Tacoma, Dolph B. Hannah, John S. Hill, and M. M. McCarver built a dock and warehouse during September 1873 with the intention of selling to the Northern Pacific Railroad. But two months later NP constructed in New Tacoma a large wharf adjoining its rail yard. On the dock a freight warehouse occupied the ground floor and a hotel the second. Nearby, the railroad built a coaling station. As carpenters finished the NP wharves and rail line from Kalama, the Panic of 1873 struck the nation. Demand for Washington Territory lumber and coal dropped 25 percent in 1874 and stayed at a low level until 1883.⁸



Loading lumber, 1880.
(West Coast Trade,
Tacoma Public Library)

During April 1883, NP constructed a 528-foot trestle from its wharf to two huge coal bunkers. For the next five years, Tacoma exported 250,000 tons of coal annually.⁹ William Alexander, James Carmody, Andrew and Ed Hamilton, John McArthur, Alex McLeod, Thomas McVeigh, and Frank Miner comprised the coal gang. All had been born in the United States except McLeod.¹⁰ The coal passers lived in cabins extending from the edge of the rail yard to the top of Old Woman's Gulch. From their vantage points, the men could see ships approaching the coal bunkers. When a collier arrived, the men gathered with their shovels and steel plates at the gangway. Topping, four men guided the chute dumping coal from the bunker into the square of the hatch. As the dust settled, coal passers tied bandanas across their noses and descended into



Loading lumber at the Tacoma Mill wharf, 1880s.
(LaRoche & French photo, Washington State Historical Society)

the hold. To trim the load four men shovelled coal from the center pile onto the steel plates of four passers who filled the wings. Coal gangs earned 30 cents an hour and worked continuously until the ship was filled.¹¹

The Pacific Coast Steamship Company

Until 1880 most deep-water and coastwise ships arrived in Commencement Bay unscheduled. During August of that year, the newly incorporated Pacific Coast Steamship Company began regular freight, passenger, and mail service between San Francisco, Puget Sound, and Alaska ports. Every ten days the company's sidewheeler *Dakota* tied up at the Tacoma railroad wharf. Stevedores descended into the hold to break out cargo and load slings. Once cargo and ballast were discharged, gangs dropped coal, hops, or lumber into the hold. Within three years, Pacific Coast Steam had eight ships calling at all major West Coast ports. For the next thirty-three years, this corporate giant dominated the coastwise maritime trade. Pacific Coast Steam placed higher priority on distributing millions to stockholders than to paying wages. Periodic confrontations occurred between union waterfront workers and management over wages, hours, and working conditions.¹²

Pacific Coast Steam's first port of call north of the Columbia River was Victoria, the largest town inside the Straits of Juan de Fuca. In 1883, Victoria stevedore boss Thomas Owens contracted with Pacific Coast Steam to supply and supervise travel gangs to load and discharge cargo at Puget Sound ports. At a Victoria wharf, Owens picked "along the shore men" to work cargo from tackle to tackle.¹³ The stevedore boss paid traveling cargo handlers 30 cents an hour for time actually worked. The steamship company provided room and board at no cost. When longshoremen worked cargo in Victoria, Owens paid 50 cents an hour. If ships sailed direct from San Francisco to Port Townsend, Seattle, Tacoma, or Olympia, a local stevedore boss contracted to hire dock, deck, and hold men at the 30-cents-an-hour rate.¹⁴ On October 22, 1884, fifteen Seattle longshoremen demanded wage parity with Victoria men. They vowed not to set foot on Pacific Coast Steam's *Umatilla* until paid 50 cents an hour. Captain James Carroll and Stevedore Boss Lorenzo Garrino refused to bargain with strikers. After staying out three days, the longshoremen returned to work at the 30-cents-an-hour rate. The first recorded cargo worker strike on Puget Sound had failed.¹⁵

When the United States Congress passed the Alien Contract Labor Act on February 25, 1885, the transporting of Victoria longshoremen to work Washington Territory ports ended. Tacoma waterfront workers expected the traveling jobs because of the large amount of lumber and coal loaded at the City of Destiny on Pacific Coast Steam vessels. The company chose Seattle, home port of the Sound's mosquito fleet. Sixty-two small boats carried general merchandise and passengers from Seattle to villages in King, Pierce, San Juan, Skagit, and Snohomish counties. By the end of 1885, Seattle longshoremen controlled Pacific Coast Steam's traveling jobs as well as loading mosquito fleet freight.¹⁶

Although Tacoma longshoremen failed to acquire the Pacific Coast Steam travel jobs, they gained the work of unloading the Japanese tea fleet. The Northern Pacific had succeeded in contracting with Fraser & Company of Yokohama and New York to bring the tea to Tacoma. To the cheers of hundreds of Tacomans, on August 7, 1885, the bark *Isabel* anchored at the NP wharf with 22,475 tea chests. Stevedore Boss C. A. Enell hired thirty-five longshoremen at 50 cents an hour. For six days every man worked as many hours as he wanted. Each eighty-five-pound chest had to be handed up from man to man through a hatchway to truckers who carted the boxes into the freight house. When the destinations of 300 chests had been marked for an East Coast city, they were carted into a railcar. An express train departed by way of Portland for New York or Montreal every time twenty cars had been filled. Shipping the tea to New York, 3,378 miles, took 192 hours. In 1991, high priority transcontinental freight trains make the trip to New York in 100 hours.¹⁷

Origins of Tacoma Unions

There may have been attempts to organize longshore unions in Puget Sound towns in the early 1880s, but nothing materialized.¹⁸ Very few trades had

formed unions in Washington Territory. Seattle printers led the way in 1882. The next year marine engineers on the mosquito fleet organized Local 38, and City of Destiny printers started Local 170. During 1884, Tacoma locomotive engineers and firemen formed locals.¹⁹ Founded on March 6, 1885, in San Francisco, the Coast Seamen's Union organized branches that same year in Port Townsend, Eureka, and San Pedro. Within a year, 3,000 sailors belonged. The seamen attempted to establish union control of shipping in the branches to replace boardinghouse crimps and shipping agents who controlled the job market.²⁰ In June 1886, employers established the Pacific Ship Owners' Association to protect themselves "against the inroads existing and prospective from sailors' organizations."²¹

During the mid-1880s farmers, miners, longshoremen and other workers in King and Pierce counties organized nineteen assemblies affiliated with the national Noble and Holy Order of the Knights of Labor.²² Knights advocated the formation of one union to include all workers, the eight-hour day, the establishment of cooperatives, and reliance on negotiations rather than strikes.²³ During 1885, Rainier Assembly 4206 in Old Town and Assembly 4223 in New Tacoma received charters. Within six months, the two assemblies had a combined membership of 600.²⁴ The unions established a free reading room and library in a building at Railroad Avenue and Thirteenth Street. A majority of longshoremen joined the Rainier Assembly or stayed with the Coast Seamen's Union if they sailed intermittently.²⁵ Although pledged to racial tolerance, West Coast Knights strongly opposed the presence of Chinese laborers. Employers replaced white laborers with Chinese at wages too low for whites to live on. At the Hatch Mill in New Tacoma white laborers received \$1.75 a day while Chinese did the same work for \$1.00.²⁶

During the fall of 1885 Seattleites and Tacomans organized campaigns to oust the Chinese. Puget Sound longshoremen were not among the speakers at Tacoma's Alpha Opera House or Seattle's Yesler's Hall. Engineer Charles Seymour, who later played a prominent role in the development of Tacoma longshore unionism, spoke for Rainier Assembly 4206 at a September 28 anti-Chinese convention. Undoubtedly, Tacoma waterfront workers were among the hundreds of white men who evicted 200 Chinese from the city during the morning of November 3.²⁷

The expulsion of the Chinese in Tacoma occurred at a time of general unrest within the American labor movement. A two-year nationwide economic depression had ended in 1886 with expectation by labor that wages would rise. When business refused to accede to labor demands there were 1,572 strikes, twice as many as any previous year.²⁸ Across the nation 340,000 turned out on May 1 to strike for the eight-hour day. Two days later during an anarchist meeting in Chicago's Haymarket Square an unknown person threw a bomb, killing eight police officers. This tragedy set the national eight-hour campaign back four years.²⁹

The Victorious 1886 Strike

Monday, March 22, 1886, started out grey and overcast at the Tacoma Mill Company in Old Town. Three partially loaded lumber ships destined for South America and Australia lay at anchor. Usually, at 6:00 a.m. the port was alive with the noisy clatter of longshoremen starting donkey engines, loading chain slings, and stowing lumber into ships' holds. But on this March morning the waterfront was strangely quiet.³⁰ Shortly after 6:00 a.m. Maurice Dalton, Charles Trench, and John Watson walked halfway down the Tacoma Mill Company wharf to the shed where Mill Superintendent George Atkinson had his office. In forthright terms the three dock workers told Atkinson that forty-two men loading three foreign ships had organized a union. Originally, the men had assembled to discuss Stevedore Boss John B. Libby's ultimatum the previous Saturday to a lumber handler to quit smoking his pipe or leave the job. The longshoremen's conversation turned from the smoking issue to working conditions, hours, and wages. The men made up their minds to no longer load deep-water ships ten hours a day for 30 cents an hour. The dock workers elected Dalton, Trench, and Watson to demand from Atkinson 40 cents an hour.³¹

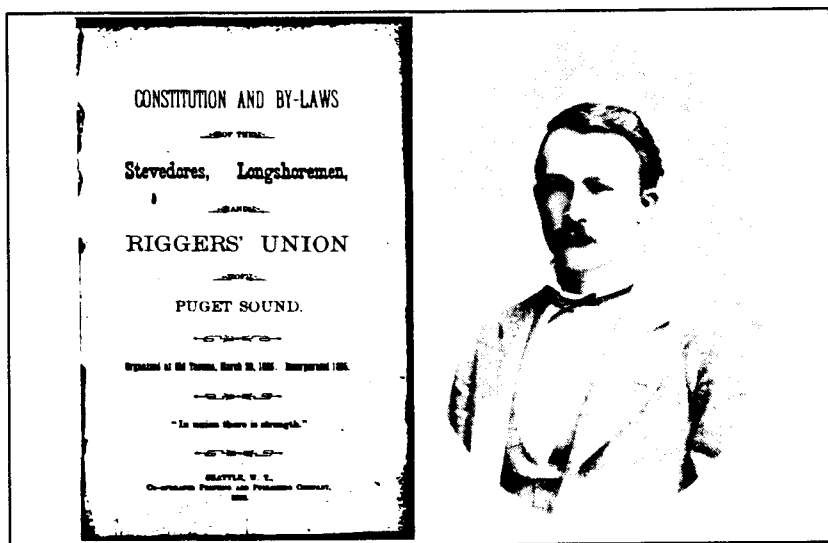
Atkinson answered that only Captain Libby of DeLion Stevedoring Company could change hours or wages of men loading deep-water vessels. After meeting with the longshoremen, Captain Libby told a reporter, "I was willing to give them all I received for loading the vessels, but I did not think they should ask for more." The strike committeemen took the stevedore boss's proposal to a general meeting of 150 Old Town workers. The men sent back five demands:

1. None but members of the union shall be employed.
2. Number employed shall not be increased after the start of loading.
3. Men shall receive 40 cents and foreman 50 cents an hour.
4. No men shall be discharged during the process of loading.
5. While at work the men will be allowed to smoke all they want.³²

Libby told a reporter that giving in meant financial ruin for DeLion & Company. On the second day of the strike only one person showed up for work at the mill company wharf. He left when told the other men had struck. Libby chartered the tug *Biz* to fetch twenty or more strikebreakers from Seattle. The stevedore boss offered scabs \$50.00 a month and board. A dozen Seattle men agreed to go, if Libby could get police protection.³³ Libby asked Tacoma Mayor R. Jacob Weisbach to send police to the waterfront. Weisbach wired Governor Watson C. Squire asking what he should do. While waiting for the governor's answer, Weisbach issued a proclamation warning all men "to desist from any unlawful actions."³⁴ Strikers responded to Weisbach and Libby's actions by sending telegrams to Knights of Labor assemblies in other

Puget Sound ports and Portland asking working men not to accept jobs in Tacoma.³⁵

In a face-to-face meeting with Mayor Weisbach, the longshore strike committee promised not to use physical force. Later, during a meeting with a *Tacoma Ledger* reporter, striking longshoremen vowed that if Captains DeLion and Libby did not agree to their demands, they would "take the work in hand themselves and make arrangements with the captains or agents of the foreign-bound vessels to load the cargoes, working the vessels on a cooperative basis and acting independently of their present employers."³⁶ For five days the strike at the Tacoma Mill Company wharf remained deadlocked. There was no violence. There were no strikebreakers. Not one piece of the 2.5 million board feet of lumber moved. Each day that no loading occurred cost DeLion \$200 in penalties. Finally, on March 26 Captain John Cameron, personal representative of DeLion, agreed to the longshoremen's demands. At noon the men returned to work the *O'Brien*, *Ivy*, and *Enos Soule*. The forty-two lumber handlers had won recognition of their union, a closed-shop, wage increase, and the right to smoke.³⁷



Constitution of the first longshoremen's union and their first adversary, Port Townsend Stevedore Boss Rudolph W. DeLion. (Constitution, International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union Library; portrait courtesy Peter Simpson)

On Sunday, March 28, 1886, the strikers formalized their new organization, The Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers Union of Puget Sound (SL&RU). John Cunningham, a 29-year-old Irishman who had almost been killed in a ship-loading accident in 1885, was elected president; James Watson, vice president; Charles Walker, recording secretary; Maurice Dalton, financial secretary;

C. E. Daniels, treasurer; Charles Trench, tiler; George Fitzgerald, warden. Charles Kittles, chairman; John Northover, and Peter Peterson composed the board of trustees. Meetings were held every Wednesday evening in the rear of the Old Town Firemen's Hall. Within a year, New Town coal gangs and general cargo workers had joined the SL&RU.³⁸

The men adopted the motto, "In Union There Is Strength," and drafted a constitution and by-laws. Three months' experience as a longshoreman, rigger, or stevedore was necessary to apply for membership. An applicant had to be between the ages of twenty and forty-five. If a proposed member received more than five blackballs, his application was rejected. Initiation cost \$2.50 and dues 25 cents a week. Fines were levied for use of profane language or drinking during weekly meetings. The strongest penalty, expulsion, occurred if a member worked for wages under union scale.³⁹

The Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers' Union of Puget Sound was the first local north of Portland, Oregon. During June 1886, Seattle's waterfront workers organized, gained recognition from Pacific Coast Steam, and wages of 40 cents an hour.⁴⁰ A month later Port Blakely longshoremen unionized, but the mill spit local did not survive the winter. During the next nine years longshoremen established locals in Anacortes, Everett, Port Townsend, and Vancouver, British Columbia.⁴¹

The creators of the first longshore union north of the Columbia River were a diverse group. Thirty-one had been born in the British Isles, France, Germany, Norway, or Sweden. Eleven were born in the United States. A majority were ex-sailors who probably held dual membership cards in the Coast Seamen's Union. Only four had married and started families. Most lived in boarding houses or shanties near the Old Town wharves. Ages ranged from 19 to 59. For the next twenty-five years, Andrew Anderson, Walter Burdette, Maurice B. Dalton, Edward Glenfield, William Gregan, Charles Kittle, John Olson, Peter Peterson, and Peter Wessels participated in Puget Sound longshore unions. Walter Burdette was active the longest, taking a prominent part in the 1934 strike.⁴²

From the inception of longshoring, the industry has been identified as hazardous to health and body. Eleven of the charter members died of heart problems within six years.⁴³ Another three founders were permanently crippled. During August 1888, thirty-two-year-old black longshoreman George Wilson crushed his ankle while discharging a tea ship. A month later nineteen-year-old Frenchman Louis Nolan had his leg cut off while loading a wheat ship.⁴⁴ In 1889, the president of the local, Fred Burns, lost a leg loading logs. The Stevedores, Longshoremen, and Riggers' Union of Tacoma cared for the injured in the hospital and afterwards saw that the permanently disabled obtained jobs as watchmen.⁴⁵

On August 17, 1889, James Kelly became the first of fifty-two Tacoma longshoremen to be killed on the waterfront. The unfortunate accident occurred

when Kelly and other members of the union were unloading hemp from the steamer *Umatilla*. A 1,600-pound bale fell from a pile hitting Kelly on the back of the head, instantly paralyzing him. He died several hours later in the Fanny Paddock Hospital.⁴⁶ At Tacoma Cemetery, Kelly and twenty-two other founders are buried side by side in a section purchased by the Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers' Union. On September 22, 1908, Charles Trench was interred in the last plot.⁴⁷

Articles of Incorporation of the Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company. Know all men by these presents that we the undersigned, do hereby certify that on this 21st day of May A.D. 1886, voluntarily agreed to associate ourselves into a corporation for a period of fifty years from the date of these presents for the purpose of carrying on a general stevedoring and rigging business, in all its branches at all various ports on Puget Sound under the laws of Washington Territory. First. That the name and style of the Corporation shall be the Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company. Second. That its principal office and place of business shall be at Tacoma in Pierce County Washington Territory. Third. Its capital stock shall be one hundred and fifty {1250} dollars, to be divided into fifty shares of the value of twenty five dollars each.

Articles of Incorporation of the Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company, 1886.
(Pierce County Auditor)

The Cooperatives

During early April 1886, Captain DeLion sold a scow, donkey engine, chains, and other stevedoring gear to the Tacoma union for \$1,600. Longshoremen raised part of the money to pay DeLion by incorporating the Tacoma Stevedoring & Rigging Company, a cooperative composed of fifty shareholders, each of whom paid \$25.00. Bylaws stipulated that only members of the Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers' Union could buy shares. Cooperatives, as they were called on the wharves, held the preference over nonshareholders in getting work from Tacoma Stevedoring. To finish paying off DeLion during July 1886, the number of shares a member could buy was increased to 100.⁴⁸ With the goal of ultimately controlling the movement of all Puget Sound cargo, Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company bid on contracts at other ports. At

Port Blakely, mill manager John A. Campbell dispatched a letter on June 9, 1886, to R. W. DeLion for the stevedore boss to show ship captains:

*We wish to inform captains of vessels bound here to load, that we do not want them to employ any cooperative union stevedores or men belonging thereto; as we do not countenance the actions of the society and it will be the interest of both vessels and mill to employ those not in anyway connected with the union.*⁴⁹

Concerned that labor organizers were on their way, Manager J. A. Campbell hired a labor spy. The agent reported on June 24 that Tacoma longshoremen had sponsored a picnic for the purpose of organizing a Knights of Labor assembly at Port Blakely. Campbell reported to San Francisco that if any of his longshoremen or mill hands staged a demonstration, they would be ordered to leave at once.⁵⁰ Despite his precautions, Port Blakely longshoremen struck for recognition and the ten-hour day on July 1. Campbell quickly acceded. The mill manager explained to San Francisco that men were not plentiful on Puget Sound. "A little later on toward fall, we could clean them out, at least any of them belonging to the union."⁵¹

Tacoma Cooperatives faced stiff competition from a host of Port Townsend stevedore bosses. In 1858 David C. H. Rothschild had established a chandlery and shipping agency on Quincy dock. San Francisco shipowners, as well as deep-water ship captains, paid Rothschild a fee to do their custom house paper work, find a tug or towboat, and provide a stevedore contractor.⁵² In 1867 Rothschild leased part of his wharf storeroom to King & Case Stevedoring Company. K&C charged \$33.00 to supervise a two-week loading job anywhere on Puget Sound.⁵³ In the 1870s Charles C. Bartlett and Captain Rudolph W. DeLion opened stevedoring businesses in Port Townsend. Bartlett hired a foreman to assemble local lumber handlers to supplement the ship's crew. Captain DeLion maintained worldwide contacts in the deep-water shipping business, and brought to bear his years of experience as the captain of the lumber vessel *Otago*. In 1881 he entered into a partnership with Captain John B. Libby, regarded by San Francisco lumber yards as the stevedore boss who could pack the most lumber on a vessel.⁵⁴ Born in England of a stevedore boss family, James Griffiths emigrated to Washington Territory in 1885 to get away from Tilbury dock longshore unions. He formed a partnership with General John W. Sprague, a City of Destiny bank president. Griffiths & Sprague constructed the tug *Mogul*, to race Rothschild's Whitehall boat to meet foreign ships coming down the straits.⁵⁵

There were lookouts posted at Port Angeles who reported sightings of vessels by wire to King & Case, Griffiths & Sprague, and DeLion & Company.⁵⁶ When a foreign vessel was sighted "Within an incredible short period of time Whitehall boats were dancing over the billows."⁵⁷ The race to get the towing and stevedore contracts paid off. Invariably the first ship broker

aboard won the contest.⁵⁸ The fierce competition between the stevedore companies at sea did not preclude social amenities on land. After work, the maritime businessmen often gathered "with a friendliness that is incomprehensible" to discuss the day's experiences.⁵⁹

DeLion emerged as the foremost stevedore boss on Puget Sound in the early 1880s. On Port Townsend's Quincy dock, DeLion installed a donkey engine to handle cargo. Instead of shoving timbers through the stern or using block and tackle, bundled pieces of lumber were placed in rope slings, swung over the ship's side, and placed on chutes leading into the ship's hold. DeLion's donkey engine proved to be twice as fast as loading through the stern.⁶⁰ During 1882, DeLion and Libby contracted to supervise the loading of all deep-water vessels calling on Hanson & Ackerson's mill in Old Town. In succeeding years, DeLion maintained close relations with Mill Superintendent Atkinson.⁶¹

Trouble on the Waterfront

The peak of Tacoma's 1886 maritime business occurred during the fall. Eighteen foreign vessels and fifteen domestic ships usually filled the wharves or waited in the harbor. This maritime boom attracted dozens of loggers, farmers, and fishermen seeking work to tide themselves over until spring. Longshoremen viewed the influx of unorganized workers with uneasy concern. At 9:00 p.m. on October 1, eight men led by Edward Glenfield and Jack Mathews went to the shanty of Charles Starkweather, a newcomer looking for work on the waterfront. The men shouted for Starkweather to open the door, but he refused. Glenfield fired a shot in the air. When Starkweather opened the door, the gang rushed inside. According to Starkweather, the intruders forced him to take off his clothes. "They covered me from head to foot," he said, "with coal tar, while they tore up my pillows and emptied the feathers on my body." He was told to get out of town. Starkweather paddled a canoe to Vashon Island. The next day he was admitted to Puget Sound Hospital suffering from exposure.⁶²

During his week in the hospital Starkweather preferred charges against Glenfield and Mathews. The two longshoremen were arrested, charged with assault with a deadly weapon with intent to murder, and tried in the Pierce County District Court. Judge Alexander Campbell dismissed the charge against Mathews and reduced Glenfield's to simple assault. Glenfield was fined \$200 and told by the judge that "the right to combine into a union for mutual protection did not include the right to prevent other people from working whenever and wherever they want."⁶³

Three weeks after Starkweather was tarred and feathered, the struggle between Cooperatives and Captain DeLion resumed. Although he bid 25 cents more per 1,000 board feet than the Cooperative, DeLion received the Tacoma Mill Company contract to load the *Persia*. Fearing trouble with Cooperatives, Mill Superintendent Atkinson hired a special guard. DeLion used the ship's crew and imported Port Townsend men to load the ship. The stevedore boss promised scabs

\$5.50 a day. Port Townsend longshoremen Robert Henry and Edward Hughes worked two days, but quit after talking with union longshoremen. Hughes asked foreman John Solder for his two days' pay. Solder paid Hughes \$8.00, but the latter demanded \$11.00. "Solder took out a (two-foot wooden) belying pin and pounded Hughes over the head, using him up pretty badly." In severe pain, Hughes struggled to the forecave where he lay down. Later, police officers carried him from the ship.⁶⁴

An hour later, Robert Henry boarded the ship. He demanded \$11.00. After a few words, blows were exchanged between the two men. Then Solder drew a revolver and shot Henry. The bullet entered through Henry's armpit and glanced down his back. Henry was able to walk ashore. Cooperatives took Henry to the Fanny Paddock Hospital. On the way he fainted from loss of blood. Fortunately, the bullet did not cause paralysis and Henry recovered. Solder was arrested, charged with assault and battery with intent to kill, and held for grand jury investigation.⁶⁵ The grand jury ignored the charges and dismissed the case against Solder.⁶⁶

Even though Solder won the court battle, no one would work for him. In the end, DeLion had to promise union lumber handlers that he would stop using sailors and nonunion longshoremen in loading deep-water ships. Union longshoremen turned to on the *Persia*.⁶⁷ Within a month DeLion tried to mix sailors with union longshoremen while loading the *Dartfort* and *Oasis*. Union longshoremen refused to work until DeLion fired the sailors.⁶⁸ Feuding with the union did not stop DeLion from advertising Tacoma longshore "quick dispatch." In his 1888 flyer sent around the world to shipmasters and shipowners, the boss stevedore lauded Tacoma longshoremen as the fastest lumber handlers on the Sound.⁶⁹

Proof of the Tacoma longshoremen's swift handling of cargo came from Fraser and Company. During 1886 the tea company sent ships to San Francisco to test California productivity. Early in 1887 Fraser & Company named the City of Destiny its permanent West Coast receiving port for the tea fleet. Costs of stevedoring and towing to Tacoma averaged 10 percent less than San Francisco. In sailing time, Tacoma had proven to be five days shorter to Yokohama than San Francisco. In elapsed rail time, the City of Destiny was two days quicker to Chicago, and four days faster to New York. From 1887 through 1892, sixteen ships from Japan and China called at Commencement Bay carrying 37 million pounds of tea. The tea trade led to additional ships bringing from the Orient 20 million pounds of straw goods, 4 million pounds of rice, and 1.6 million pounds of silk. Thus, capturing the tea trade marked Tacoma's first major victory in international trade competition. This triumph foretold a promising future for the port, the longshoremen, and the community.⁷⁰

CHAPTER I THE FIRST TACOMA LONGSHOREMEN

1. Feature article *Strange Lives in 'Shacktown,'* in *Tacoma Daily News*, December 21, 1907. Hereafter cited as TDN.
Trench obituary in *Tacoma Daily Ledger*, September 24, 1908. Hereafter cited as TDL.
2. *1880 United States Census of Pierce County*.
3. TDN, December 21, 1907.
4. R. F. Radebaugh, *The Founding of Tacoma*, pp. 29-30 and 34. Courtesy of Gary Fuller Reese, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library.
5. Herbert H. Hunt, *Tacoma Its History and Its Builders A Half Century of Activity*, Volume I, pp. 209, 239, 263, and 277. Hereafter cited as Hunt 1.
6. Hanson Mill Company *Ledger*, 1882, pp. 582, 717, 723, 766.
7. Charles M. Gates, *Readings in Pacific Northwest History: Washington, 1790-1895*, p. 217. The first ships loaded at the Starr Street wharf in 1869 were the *Samoset* bound for San Francisco and the *Maggie Johnston* for Victoria.
8. Joseph Daniels, *Mining History of Pierce County, Washington Coal Fields, 1860-1962*, p. 67. Hereafter cited as Daniels.
Hunt, Volume I, pp. 129, 200 and 213.
9. Daniels, p. 67.
10. The 1885 Pierce County Assessors' Census listed names, ages, and birthplaces of the coal handlers. Their addresses will be found in the 1885 Tacoma City Directory.
11. The first 104 tons of Wilkeson coal were dumped into the hold of the steamer *Idaho* in 1878. See Hunt, Volume I, pp. 129, 200 and 213. For descriptions of coal handling see TDL, April 29, 1893, and July 24, 1910.
12. Henry Villard, *Early History of Transportation in Oregon*, p. 85. Pacific Coast Steam's steamship *Dakota* should not be confused with the sailing ship *Dakota* captained by Isaac Gilkey.
13. *Along the Shore The Story of the Vancouver Waterfront As Told by Longshoremen Themselves 1860s-1975*, pp. 10-15. Hereafter cited as Vancouver. The 1883 Victoria City Directory lists the early British Columbia longshoremen. None became charter members of the Tacoma longshore union.
14. George Noonan, *History of Early Waterfront Organizations in Tacoma*, p. 1. Hereafter cited as Noonan Tacoma. Prior to 1900 longshoremen used the term "found" to describe room and board.
15. *Post-Intelligencer*, October 23, 1884. Hereafter cited as PI. Newspapers often confuse the terms stevedore, longshoreman, and rigger. Waterfront workers identified a stevedore as a cargo handler who worked aboard the ship. A longshoremen handled the cargo once it was on the dock. A rigger readied the ship's booms and cables to move the cargo from hatch to wharf. A stevedore boss bid on jobs to load cargo. He provided the gear and hired the men to handle the cargo. Prior to 1884 Puget Sound newspapers called all waterfront workers "stevedores." Beginning with the 1884 Seattle longshoremen's strike, the papers used the terms longshoremen and stevedores interchangeably.
16. PI, March 9, 1886. During the 1890s, Tacoma developed an extensive mosquito fleet business. See Wilbur Thompson and Allen Beach's *Steamer to Tacoma*, pp. 11-29.
17. TDL, August 8 and 11, 1885.
18. Noonan Tacoma, p. 1. The Boston Alongshoremen's Provident Union was the first recorded American waterfront local in 1847. New Orleans followed in 1850, and New York and San Francisco in 1853. In the Pacific Northwest the Portland Longshoremen's Protective Union was formed on May 19, 1868. For the history of early waterfront unions see Charles R. Barnes, *The Longshoremen*, pp. 93-108; Maud Russell, *Men Along the Shore*, pp. 11-15; Daniel Rosenberg, *New Orleans Dockworkers*, pp. 56-58; *The ILWU Story*, pp. 12-13; and Otilie Markholt, *Maritime Unionism*, Volume 1.
19. TDL, January 5, 1884. For the histories of early Tacoma unions see Otilie Markholt, *To Live in Dignity*.
20. *Investigation by the Commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics in the Condition of Men Working on the Waterfront and on Board of Pacific Coast Vessels. June 29-July 5, 1887*, p. 3.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 63.
22. Jonathan Garlock, compiler, *Guide to the Local Assemblies of the Knights of Labor*, pp. 528-529.
23. On October 1, 1885, TDL printed twenty-two principles subscribed to by Knights of Labor.
24. TDL, January 9, 1886.
25. Noonan Tacoma, p. 1. TDL, December 22, 1885.
26. Hunt, pp. 240, 277, and 319.
27. TDL, September 26, and 30; October 4, 15, 18, and 25; and November 1, 1885.
28. Florence Peterson, *Strikes in the United States 1880-1936*, p. 21. Hereafter cited as Peterson.
29. Samuel Gompers, *Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography*, pp. 96-97.
30. TDN, March 22, 1886.
31. *Ibid.*, March 25, 1886.
32. PI, March 24, 1886.
33. *Ibid.*, March 25 and 26, 1886.
34. TDL, March 24 and 25, 1886.
35. PI, March 25, 1886. TDL, March 25, 1886.
36. *Ibid.*
37. *Ibid.*, March 27, 1886.
38. *Constitution of the Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers Union of Puget Sound*, p. 2.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 6, 7, 8, and 12.

40. *Seattle Daily Times*, June 15, 1886.
41. *Western Central Labor Union Minutes*, March 6, 1895. Hereafter cited as WCLU.
42. Many of the signatures of charter members appear on the Incorporation papers for the Stevedores, Longshoremen, and Riggers' Union of Puget Sound and the Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company. Both documents are in the archives of the Washington Secretary of State. The Pierce County Assessor's 1887 Census lists ages, birthplace, and family status. The 1887 Tacoma City Directory lists addresses. There are longshore union membership rolls of the Aberdeen, Seattle, Tacoma, Port Gamble, and Port Blakely locals in the Waterfront Employers of Seattle files.
43. Tacoma Cemetery Records. TDL, March 28, July 23 and 25, September 13 and 19, November 28, 1888; August 17, and 25, September 22, December 16 and 24, 1889; July 14, 1890; and October 25, 1892. Of the forty-two charter members, the cause of death has been established for twenty-seven of them. From 1909 to 1959, injuries and cause of death are listed on the dues sheets of members. See Frank E. Reichl, *Membership Files of Tacoma Longshoremen*. Hereafter cited as Reichl Files.
44. TDL, August 17, and September 13, 1888.
45. *Ibid.*, December 31, 1889.
46. *Ibid.*, August 19, 1889.
47. Tacoma Cemetery Records.
48. *Articles of Incorporation for the Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company, May 21, 1886. Supplemental Articles of Incorporation of The Tacoma Stevedoring and Rigging Company, July 1, 1886.*
49. Port Blakely Mill Company Correspondence to R. H. Holmes, San Francisco, Box 57, June 9, 1886. Hereafter cited as PBMC.
50. *Ibid.*, June 24 and December 15, 1886.
51. *Ibid.*, July 1, 1886.
52. *Puget Sound Argus*, November 30, 1877. Rothschild also served as the agent of the Pacific Coast Ship Owners' Association. His primary job was "to prevent crews from leaving their vessels." See PBMC, Box 57, September 8, 1886.
53. Based on an advertisement in Rothschild & Company's monthly *Ships' Calling Register*, April 1882 in PBMC Box 57. Rates were reported by PBMC to Renton, Holmes & Company in San Francisco on January 26, 1882.
54. *Ibid.*, Box 57, February 1, March 1 and 8, and June 17, 1886.
55. James Griffiths, *Shipping Reminiscences of 62 Years 1874 to 1936*, pp. 9-17. Hereafter cited as Griffiths.
56. The telegraph wire reached Port Angeles during August 1877. See PBMC Box 54, August 28, 1877. There was little competition in the handling of coastwise vessels. Contracts were signed in San Francisco stipulating lumber dimensions and designating a particular stevedore company to be engaged. This information and the expected day of arrival were sent by mail to the appropriate Puget Sound mills.
57. *PI*, April 22, 1887. No mention is made of the Tacoma Cooperative Company in this article.
58. Griffiths, p. 17.
59. *PI*, April 22, 1887. For an account of a party at the DeLion residence attended by the Rothschild and Bartlett families see *Daily Argus*, March 20, 1885. Courtesy of Peter Simpson.
60. TDL, December 23, 1881.
61. PBMC, Box 13, June 1, 1882.
62. District Court, Second Ward, Tacoma, Pierce County, Washington Territory, Case Number 1950, October 7, 1886, and March 11, 1887. TDL, October 3, 5, 6, and 7, 1886.
63. TDL, March 22, 1888.
64. *Ibid.*, October 26, 1886.
65. *Ibid.*
66. *Ibid.*, March 9, 1887.
67. *Ibid.*, October 30, 1886.
68. *Ibid.*, November 27, 1886.
69. Flyer from the Office of R. W. DeLion & Co., April 30, 1888.
70. *West Coast Trade, New Year Number, 1896*, p. 33. Hereafter cited as WCT. Portland also made an attempt to become the tea fleet's American terminus. The *Carrier Dove* was diverted from Tacoma to Portland. She went aground twice on sandbars making the total elapsed time from Yokohama to Portland forty-nine days. See E. T. Short column, *After Many Years* in the *Tacoma Times*, December 15, 1934. Hereafter cited as Short.