

## CHAPTER III

### A NEW BEGINNING

There was joy among Old Town longshoremen on July 21, 1897. Jimmy "The Diver" MacMahon was home after a year in the Klondike. All of the old-time stevedores and riggers gathered at MacMahon's favorite haunt, the O. M. Sanders Saloon, to pay respects to one of their own who had struck it rich. When "The Diver" stepped into the tavern, a brigade of old longshore friends standing at the bar right-faced at the command of a lookout. They turned around with such eagerness that several bumped into each other. But it was only a few seconds before they had "The Diver" by the hand, shaking hard for old time's sake.<sup>1</sup>

McMahon had been a charter member of the Stevedores, Longshoremen and Riggers Union of Tacoma. He had earned his nickname diving off the McCarver wharf to rescue the tool of his trade, a brand-new hand truck. When the union had disbanded in the spring of 1896, McMahon trekked north to prospect. He found gold on Adams creek, ten miles from the Bonanza strike. Altogether he brought out \$65,000 in gold dust. He left Tacoma longshore union brothers Charles Johnson and Emil Krantz still looking for El Dorado.<sup>2</sup>

The reappearance of the prosperous McMahon coincided with the passing of the Panic of 1893 in Tacoma. For the first time since the onset of the economic depression, the employment level rose instead of declining. There were 4,463 gainfully employed workers in 1897, up 235 compared with the previous year. On the waterfront lumber handlers loaded 172,053,000 board feet into vessels. Coal passers shovelled 458,394 tons into the wings of steam vessels, and wheat handlers stowed 1,493,325 bushels into ships bound for Asia, Europe, and South America. Eighteen ninety-seven turned out to be a good year.<sup>3</sup>

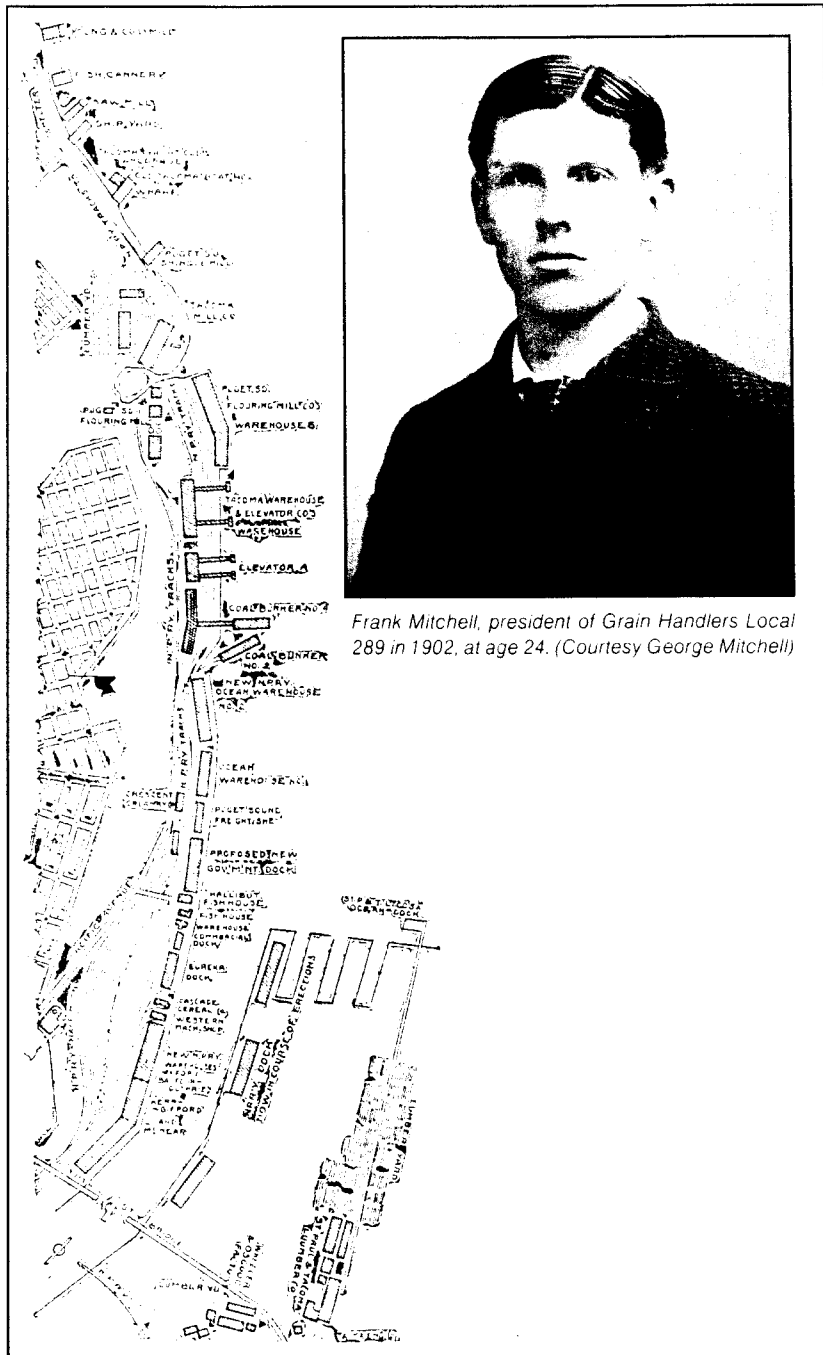
George Greetham of Pacific Coast Steamship Company and Orlando Carter of McCabe & Hamilton Stevedoring controlled general cargo- and wheat-loading jobs on the Tacoma waterfront. The men who worked for Pacific Coast Steam called themselves the "Pension Gang." They were assured of work every fifth day on a Pacific Coast Steam vessel arriving from California to connect with another coming from Alaska. Usually, the ships anchored at the Ocean dock in the evening. No matter whether discharging or stowing cargo took ten or seventeen hours, the men received 40 cents an hour. There was no overtime for night work or turning to on a holiday.<sup>4</sup>

Two hundred men worked in Pacific Coast Steam's pension gang. They were picked by foreman Greetham. Bright, well educated, and ambitious, Greetham had served many terms as president of the Stevedores, Longshoremen, and Riggers' Union of Tacoma before becoming a stevedore boss in 1894. His routine for handling a ship never varied. When the freight agent notified him that a ship was coming, Greetham walked out to the blackboard in front of Pacific Coast Steam's wharf office and wrote the name of the ship and the arrival hour. After the ship moored, the mate whispered in Greetham's ear which hatches to discharge and where to stow the outbound Tacoma freight. When he had all of the information, Greetham walked into the warehouse where the men waited. From his hip pocket, the stevedore foreman pulled out a time book. As he called out names, Greetham checked them off in his book.

The first chosen were skilled men. A rigger to swing out the ship's booms and set the proper tension on the guy wires. Then Greetham picked a team composed of donkey engine driver, hatch tender, and winch man. For the "basement" Greetham hired eight stevedores who removed the hatch covering and crawled down the ladder to break open freight with their steel hooks. The hold men loaded the freight into slings. The hatch tender signalled the winch man to lift the load and place it on the wharf. Three longshoremen stood on the dock to untie the sling. Two dozen truckers carted the crates and bales into a warehouse. Inside, a ship's clerk and a freight agent checked the bills of lading against the markings on crates and packages.

Because of his "limey" accent, Greetham was hard to understand when he called out names. The stevedore boss had serious trouble pronouncing Filipino and Portuguese surnames. He simplified Bacigalupl to Bacey. Greetham did not even try to pronounce one Portuguese longshoreman's name who he simply renamed "Pat Finnegan." Mostly Greetham yelled out nicknames — "Speak Easy Sam," "Gunny Sack Pete," "Salmon Sam," "Mayor of Gig Harbor," "Limerick," "Reckless Reuben," "Napoleon," "Guzzler," and "Hell Roaring Jack." Everyone on the front had a nickname that reflected either his origin, personal peculiarity, or unusual experience. "Hell Roaring Jack" received his moniker for catching and taking down a wild steer on the Ocean wharf.

Thirty longshoremen on the Tacoma front belonged to the "China Gang." They worked Oriental steamers for McCabe & Hamilton. Orlando "Grizzly" Carter was the foreman. Carter selected men according to how fast they worked. "Grizzly" was not afraid to turn to. He could operate a donkey engine, drive winch, break out cargo, or unload a sling. McCabe & Hamilton longshoremen received 35 and 40 cents an hour. Pay varied according to whether a man worked in the hold or tended sling. Hand-trucking between ship and warehouse paid the least, 30 cents an hour. Still, the pay was 10 cents more than the railroad truckers who moved freight from the warehouse to rail car. Pushing a hand cart was not considered skilled work. All a man needed was a strong back and good legs to push a 150-pound iron-wheeled truck with upwards of 250-pounds of crates or sacks. Longshore coal passers lived in shanties beside the NP's



Frank Mitchell, president of Grain Handlers Local 289 in 1902, at age 24. (Courtesy George Mitchell)

The Tacoma waterfront in 1900. (Tacoma Daily Ledger, May 21, 1900, Tacoma Public Library)

Half Moon yards. It was the dirtiest job on the waterfront. The coal was tipped from the rail car onto an electric conveyor belt leading into the hold. Twenty-five to thirty men shovelled the coal from the square of the hatch into the wings of the ship. The coal men worked ten hours a day for 40 cents an hour. Coaling in the hold was onerous work, but wheat-packing took the most endurance. In a ship's hold longshoremen grabbed 100-pound wheat sacks as they came down bundle conveyors from the coaming of the hatch. Barefooted, they trotted across other sacks until they reached the spot to drop the sack into place. Wheat packers earned the highest pay on the waterfront, 50 cents an hour.



Wheat docks along the City Waterway (Thea Foss Waterway) at the turn of the century. (Washington State Historical Society)

The most clannish of the Tacoma longshoremen were the 100 lumber handlers. Scandinavians who had hit the beach dominated the stowing of lumber at sawmill docks in Old Town. The longshore lumbermen worked for Barneson & Chilcott Stevedores, who held the greatest number of contracts for loading foreign ships calling at Puget Sound. The Old Town lumber handlers preferred not to work general cargo, ores, or wheat. Lumber was clean to handle. The "aristocrats of the beach" worked in pairs in the hold, four to each side of a hatch. If the pieces were long, two men carried the sticks together. They were easily identified by their large leather aprons and thick gloves. Lumber handlers considered their work skilled. It was not easy to lay a flat load with different sizes of timbers. Nor was it simple to put down a deck load that did not tear loose in a storm. Barneson & Chilcott paid 40 cents an hour regardless of whether it was working a deep-water ship going to Asia or a coastwise steam schooner heading for California.

The majority of Tacoma's 350 longshoremen were family men who owned homes on the bluff above Old Woman's Gulch or in Old Town. Near Thirtieth and McCarver, in a section called Vino Villa, the Scandinavian lumber handlers lived in patch-like villages beside Italians, Slavs, and Irish. Along the waterfront near the Tacoma Mill and in hillside gulches, bachelor longshoremen squatted in shanties or houseboats. The "lonejacks" made the newspaper headlines. Between working vessels, eating meals, and sleeping, the single longshoremen sought to ward off lonesomeness. According to the press, the most popular places for their amusement were "Sawdust Row" in Old Town, and "Paradise Row" on Pacific Avenue from Seventh to Ninth streets. The bachelors liked to "go against" Sawdust or Paradise Row. A drink had to be taken at every bar. The man who could drink a schooner at every saloon on the row and sail past the last point on an even keel was considered a hero.

Of the 350 Tacoma longshoremen in 1900, 140 had belonged to the Number Ones or Number Twos. Sixty-eight of the veterans worked for Carter and Greetham. Seventy-two old timers were lumber handlers. Of the old leadership, Anderson, Crombie, Dalton, Gregan, Peterson, Seymour, Peterson, Trench, and Wessels still worked on the waterfront. Burdette and Glenfield had moved to Seattle to work out of longshore Local 163.<sup>5</sup> The Klondike gold rush and Spanish American war created new jobs on the waterfront. Twice attempts were made to start a longshore union, but both efforts failed.<sup>6</sup>

### Tacoma Longshoremen Reorganize

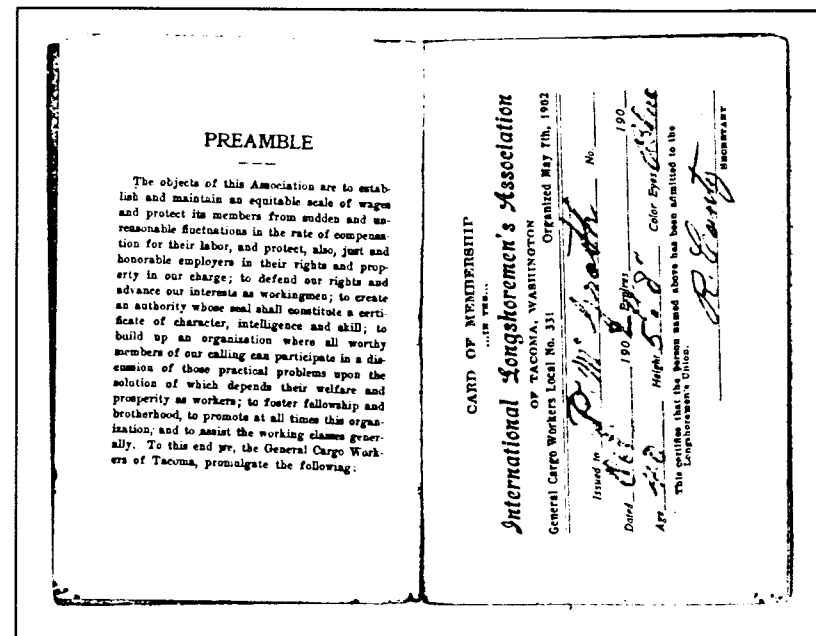
As Tacoma's economy recovered after the Klondike gold rush, working people reconstituted their unions. On November 13, 1899, the Printers, Plumbers, Electricians, Locomotive Firemen, Brewery Workers, Iron Molders, Cigar Makers, and Millmen reorganized the Tacoma Trades Council.<sup>7</sup> Three months later, George Noonan appeared before the trades council to inform delegates that Pacific Coast Steam had locked out Vancouver longshoremen. The steamship company demanded that only company foremen do the hiring.<sup>8</sup> On May 4, 1900, oldtimers Charles Seymour and Maurice Dalton organized remnants of the Number Twos and Old Town newcomers into a General Cargo Workers' Union. The new union obtained a charter as Local 179 from the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA).<sup>9</sup>

Three weeks after Local 179 began, ILA organizer W. S. Lair of San Francisco arrived in Tacoma at the request of David Crombie and other uptown longshoremen to organize a Grain Handlers' Union. The new union started in Germania Hall with fifty-seven members signing the roll. The next night twenty-five signatures were added to the list. Afraid that they would be blacklisted by McCabe & Hamilton, the Grain Handlers kept their membership roll secret. The Grain Handlers received a charter as Local 289 from the ILA.<sup>10</sup>

On February 4, 1902, ILA President Keefe visited Tacoma where he found longshore unions in "a rather deplorable state." Local 179 existed "only on

paper." and Local 289 still operated in an aura of secrecy. Keefe met with Thomas Arthur, a member of 289, "who took a very active interest in our [ILA's] welfare, and with his cooperation was able to bring about a meeting of a few members of each local." The next week, Keefe and a joint committee from locals 179 and 289 met twice with Ed Hamilton, "for the purpose of further discussing ways and means of organizing the men employed by Mr. Hamilton." The stevedore boss agreed not to interfere with efforts to unionize "the China Gang" or any other group of McCabe & Hamilton employees.<sup>11</sup>

When deep-water and coastwise locals organized, Local 179 changed its name from General Cargo Workers to Lumber Handlers. At the same time Grain Handlers Local 289 made public its membership roll. The "China Gang" became Deepwater Longshore Local 306 during February 1902, and Pacific Coast Steamship's "Pension Gang" organized as Coastwise Longshore Local 331 on May 7, 1902.<sup>12</sup>



Membership card of the Coastwise Longshoremen Local 331, 1902.

(Noonan Collection, Tacoma Public Library)

To facilitate mutual support and united action against their common employers, during June 1902 eight Pacific Northwest locals, including four from Tacoma, sent their first resolution to the upcoming ILA convention. The locals asked for authorization to create "a powerful central organization" on the West Coast to organize 17,500 nonunion waterfront workers.<sup>13</sup> Charles Seymour

and Nelson C. Peterson of Tacoma Local 179 participated in the July 1902 ILA convention that approved the formation of a West Coast branch organization. This convention also changed the name of the ILA to the International Longshoremen, Marine and Transportworkers' Association of North and South America and the Island Possessions (ILM&TA). This imposing title reflected the desire of delegates to recruit all waterfront workers—longshoremen, sailors, fishermen, tugboatmen, marine firemen and engineers—into one union. Within this broad framework, ILM&TA longshoremen would have sole right to load and unload vessels. The ILA's new name and claim to exclusive control of cargo-handling caused a jurisdictional dispute with the Sailors' Union of the Pacific. SUP Secretary Andrew Furuseth appealed to the AFL to stop longshore intrusion into his jurisdiction. While the AFL sought to find a solution, ILM&TA President Daniel Keefe and his supporters ignored the sailors' protests.<sup>14</sup>

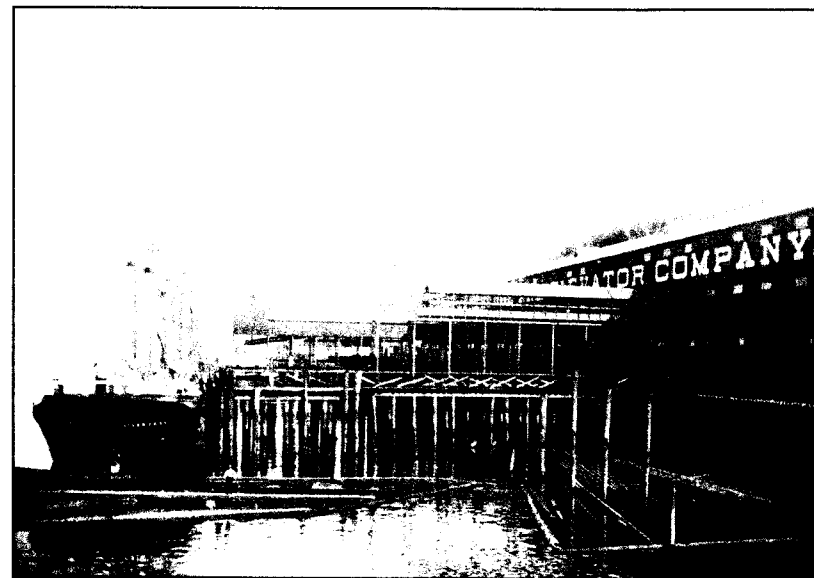
The ILM&TA's assertion that only longshoremen could work cargo on and off vessels created a special problem with the Sailor's Union of the Pacific. Contrary to prevailing practice on the Great Lakes, Atlantic, and Gulf coasts, steam schooner sailors in the Pacific Coast lumber trade customarily worked one hatch alongside longshoremen. This practice insured continued employment and increased job security. Complicating the situation was the fact that many Pacific Northwest longshoremen carried membership books in the Sailors' Union. The dual members alternated between working on the beach and going to sea.<sup>15</sup>

### Trouble with Pacific Coast Steamship Company

McCabe & Hamilton Stevedoring "surprised" Seattle and Tacoma longshoremen on August 30, 1902, with a printed wage scale posted on their office window. There was no change in the basic rate, 40 cents an hour for work between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Pay increased from 40 to 60 cents from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Loading of wheat, barley, or flour, 100 pound sacks or over, paid 55 cents from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and 82½ cents from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. Work on Sundays, Christmas, Independence Day, and Labor Day was considered the same as overtime, 60 cents an hour. It was the first wage increase since August 1, 1889.<sup>16</sup>

Eighteen days after McCabe & Hamilton increased wages, Local 289 grain warehousemen demanded wheat exporters grant recognition, preference in hiring, and a raise from 25 to 30 cents an hour. Four major wheat exporters offered truckers 27½ cents an hour and weighers 32½ cents an hour.<sup>17</sup> Warehousemen rejected the employers' proposal. The grain workers struck for four days, sticking with their original demands. By September 19, Local 289's strike had backed up 600 rail cars full of wheat. In Commencement Bay fifteen empty grain ships lay idle. The next day grain exporters agreed to pay truckers 30 cents an hour, and to hire nonunion men only "when occasion required." The

men jubilantly accepted the employers' offer.<sup>18</sup>



Ship Rialto, Liverpool, loading wheat at the Tacoma Warehouse and Elevator Company, early 1900s. (French photo, Oregon State Historical Society, neg. ORHI 85495)

At the same time Local 289 returned to work, Tacoma and Seattle general cargo locals bargained with shipping lines and stevedoring companies for increased pay in the overtime category. All employers acceded to 60 cents an hour for night work and holidays except Pacific Coast Steam. When Seattle Local 552 struck PCSC for the wage increase on September 8, 1902, union seamen took their place on the *City of Seattle*. When the *Seattle* moved to Tacoma, Coastwise Local 331 refused to work the ship. For almost three weeks Seattle Local 552 and Tacoma Local 331 watched seamen and scabs discharge and stow Pacific Coast Steam ships. The Western Central Labor Union protested to Sailors' Union officials in San Francisco about the actions of PCSC seamen, but Bay City authorities instructed the sailors to continue longshoring.<sup>19</sup>

On September 27, Seattle and Tacoma union representatives met with Pacific Coast Steam's Vice President J. D. Farrell. The PCSC official offered 10 cents extra for night work, but refused to pay more than 40 cents for Sundays and holidays. With the assent of Seattle, Tacoma longshoremen accepted Farrell's offer, pending action by the first convention of West Coast union longshoremen in Portland, Oregon, during October 1902.<sup>20</sup>

### Origins of a West Coast Longshore Organization

President Keefe proceeded to the West in October 1902 to establish a coastwise organization that would recruit new affiliates and build up the existing

locals. Portland Local 265 hosted the convention of twenty West Coast unions desiring to create a Pacific Coast Branch of the ILM&TA. Delegates decided to elect annually a president, secretary-treasurer, and executive board. There would be an annual convention to consider coastwide policies and grievances of the locals.<sup>21</sup>

The first major complaint discussed was the accusation of Seattle delegates that the Sailors "willfully, maliciously, and knowingly, and without due cause, [acted] against the best interests of the members of the I.L.M. & T. A." After the San Francisco delegation defended the Sailors' Union, the convention voted to ask President Keefe to confer with Sailors' Union officials.<sup>22</sup> Tacoma was involved in a grievance against Pacific Coast Steamship Company. Along with representatives of Eureka, San Diego, and Seattle, Tacoma Local 331 complained that Pacific Coast Steamship refused to recognize their locals or to pay the union wage scale. After interminable debate, a majority of the delegates referred the resolution to the executive board.<sup>23</sup>

After the convention adjourned, Keefe travelled north to Puget Sound to meet PCSC Vice President Farrell. On October 14, the ILM&TA president asked Farrell to offer Seattle what Tacoma had settled for, 50 cents an hour for night work. Farrell refused, stating that he was still upset with the unbusinesslike way Seattle Local 163 walked out on September 8. As he was leaving, Keefe asked Farrell to think the proposition over.<sup>24</sup> Farrell promised that he would. Four months later Pacific Coast Steam agreed to pay the Seattle longshore union the Tacoma wage scale.<sup>25</sup>

Tacoma Coastwise Local 331 merged with Deepwater Local 306 to become the Freight Handlers' Union during the spring of 1903. Local 306 became the largest longshore union in Tacoma with a membership of 200. The union had an initiation fee of \$20.00, monthly dues of 50 cents, and a funeral assessment of 25 cents for each death. An oral agreement with employers stipulated a ten-hour day, 40 cents an hour for general cargo work, and 50 cents for wheat-handling.<sup>26</sup>

An acute shortage of workers occurred in Tacoma during the summer of 1903.<sup>27</sup> Local 306 demanded, and received, an appointment with Pacific Coast Steam's General Manager Ford. The longshore delegation asked for 60 cents an hour overtime for nights, Sundays, and holidays. Ford told the men Tacoma would not receive higher wages than other Pacific Coast ports. The manager also told the longshoremen that the Northern Pacific freight presently handled in Tacoma could easily be rerouted to Seattle.<sup>28</sup> The boss asked Local 306 President John Chase to give notice if the union planned to take action. Without warning Ford, on August 8, 1903, union longshoremen refused to discharge PCSC's *City of Puebla* unless the company acceded to the wage demand. Tacoma Agent F. W. Carleton refused to consider a raise. When questioned about rumors that other longshore unions might declare Pacific Coast Steam unfair, Chase remarked, "We do not ask any such movement, and have nothing but the kindest feelings for the officers of the company."<sup>29</sup>

When the second Pacific Coast Branch ILM&TA convention assembled in Tacoma on October 27, delegates decided to make a united stand against Pacific Coast Steam. If the company persisted in refusing to discuss a reasonable settlement, delegates empowered the branch executive board to request President Keefe to order all locals to enforce the penalty clause of the international constitution.<sup>30</sup> After ILM&TA International Representative J. E. Riordan persuaded Pacific Coast Steam to pay the prevailing coastwide scale of 40 cents and 50 cents to both Tacoma and Vancouver, strikers accepted the compromise settlement.<sup>31</sup>

Puget Sound longshoremen considered stevedore bosses Rudolph DeLion and William L. McCabe parasites. To unionists the bosses were middlemen who robbed workers of the fruits of their labor. When McCabe left for Seattle in 1894, his partner Edward Hamilton took over the Tacoma office. During 1900, Hamilton had not objected when Tacoma longshoremen reorganized. On November 11, 1903, Ed Hamilton died of typhoid fever at the age of thirty-eight. He requested Local 306 lead his funeral procession and that the former president of the local, Charles Magnus, be one of the eulogists. Hamilton is the only Tacoma stevedore boss to be paid tribute by a resolution spread upon the minutes. "We have always found him just, honorable and considerate toward his employees to a degree far beyond that shown by the average employer of labor."<sup>32</sup>

### Sailors Versus Longshoremen

The Sailors' Union moved the struggle with the ILM&TA from convention halls to the docks during February and April, 1904. Seamen stopped ILM&TA longshoremen from loading cargo in San Pedro and Astoria. Two months after the Astoria episode the ILM&TA responded. The third Pacific Coast Branch convention resolved that all locals working lumber on foreign-going vessels refuse to work with sailors. Sailors' Union officials responded by submitting a coastwide referendum to their membership. Seamen voted to reassert "their right to perform all labor on board, in boats or on shore." At the same time sailors approved a policy of making written alliances with longshore unions "willing to renounce all claims to jurisdiction over any marine craft."<sup>33</sup> All Washington and Oregon longshore locals voted to retain ILM&TA charters except Aberdeen, where most longshoremen also carried membership books in the Sailors' Union. Aberdeen Local 100 returned its ILM&TA charter on February 4, 1905, and signed a mutual assistance pact with the Sailors' Union.<sup>34</sup> During the week following Aberdeen's secession, ILM&TA Fifth Vice President Charles Kelly visited Puget Sound ports. Tacoma locals 179 and 306 assured Kelly they would stick with the international, but Seattle Local 163 defected to the sailor-longshore alliance.<sup>35</sup>

At 4:00 p.m. on March 29, 1905, William L. McCabe told Seattle ILM&TA Local 552 men working the *Ocean Monarch* that the men had three hours

to accept a wage cut. At a special meeting Local 552 rejected McCabe's ultimatum. The next day Seattle longshoremen picketed the *Ocean Monarch* while scabs worked under the protection of private security guards.<sup>36</sup> Six days after Seattle's wages were cut, Tacoma Local 306 voted to fine ships loaded by the "unethical" McCabe & Hamilton. The penalty money would revert to Local 552. When the *Ocean Monarch* arrived in Tacoma the next day, the Freight Handlers' Union demanded ten cents an hour for each man on top of the union scale. Local 306 President John Chase said, "This fine must be paid or we will not load the ship . . . McCabe & Hamilton cut the union scale of wages in Seattle and partially loaded the vessel there with non-union labor. The stevedores are willing to pay the regular scale here, but we cannot do the work and remain affiliated with the International organization."<sup>37</sup>

When McCabe refused "on principle" to pay the fine, Tacoma union longshoremen struck the stevedoring firm. The union established a picket line from Seventeenth Street to Old Town. For the first time pickets patrolled in front of downtown employment offices. McCabe & Hamilton Agent Robert Buddy hired seven local and nine Seattle scabs on April 7 to work the *Ocean Monarch*.<sup>38</sup> After strikebreakers finished work the first day at the Tacoma Grain Company dock, they were beaten up. Only one strikebreaker showed up for work the next day. Buddy hired new men that he quartered and fed on the *Sehome*, a ship described by a member of the Washington State Board of Health as "unhealthy."<sup>39</sup> On the day of the brawl, McCabe had joined the Tacoma branch of the Citizens' Alliance, a national organization devoted to furthering the open-shop movement. At the request of Harvey L. Johnson, secretary of the Tacoma Citizens' Alliance, Judge Thad Huston enjoined Local 306 "collectively and individually, from interfering with or molesting any of the employees of the firm [McCabe & Hamilton]."<sup>40</sup>

Tacoma Lumber Handlers' Local 179 initiated in mid-April the formation of a Washington and Puget Sound Council of Longshoremen for mutual protection against regional incursions by the Sailors' Union and the stevedore companies. The twelve locals who belonged to the council notified the Ship Owners' Association that if seamen walked out, ex-seafarers in their locals would sail the deserted vessels. Unlike McCabe & Hamilton, neither Rothschild nor Barneson & Chilcott tried to take advantage of the jurisdictional war between the two maritime organizations.<sup>41</sup>

For seventy-three days, April 5 to June 17, 1905, the strike against McCabe and Hamilton continued. McCabe insisted that all suggestions for settlement from government or strikers be directed through the office of the Citizens' Alliance. In the midst of the strike, San Francisco employers telegraphed that the *Nevadan*, which had been loaded by strikebreakers in Tacoma, had been unloaded by ILM&TA men in San Francisco. This action destroyed the penalty principle.<sup>42</sup> Agent Pete Gill added to the woes of striking longshore unions. On April 22, Gill told newspapers that no member of his union would operate coastwise craft loaded by ILM&TA unions.<sup>43</sup> A week later, Sailors walked off

the *Jeanie* when ILM&TA men boarded to load the ship.<sup>44</sup> On May 9, the Sailors took 122 longshoremen favorable to their cause to Bellingham on the *Rainier* to fend off any attempts by ILM&TA Local 309 to load the ship.<sup>45</sup>

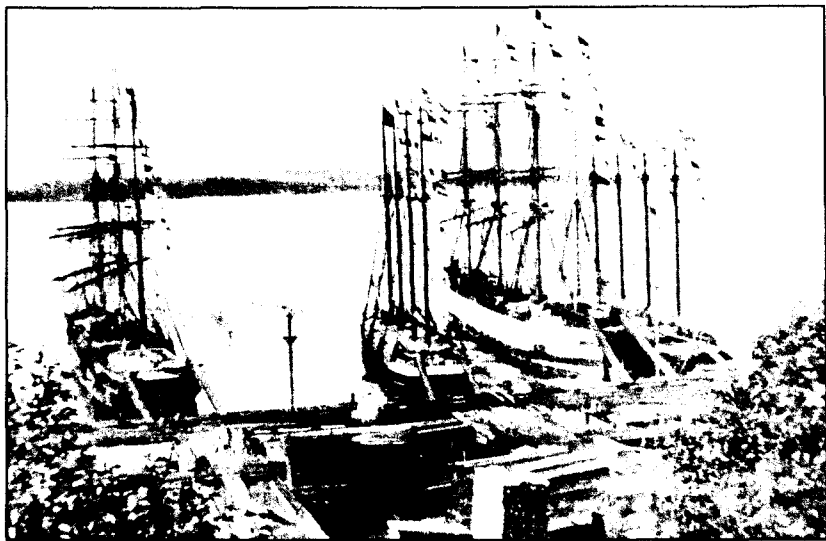
On May 14, the Seattle branch of the Sailors' Union sent fourteen men to Tacoma to stow lumber on the steam schooner *Charles Nelson*. Members of the Tacoma Lumber Handlers' Local 179 stopped the scab seamen from boarding the ship. Later, Sailors reappeared and finished the job.<sup>46</sup> At 9:10 p.m. on May 16, the steamer *Centennial* drew up under a slow bell at the Commercial dock carrying eighteen extra seamen to handle the cargo. Suddenly 200 men clambered aboard. The intruders carried revolvers, bricks, and belaying pins. Amid pistol shots and flying bricks, the scabs from Seattle ran to the stern. The crowd swarmed around the huddled mass. Three seamen were dumped overboard and ten hit with saps and belaying pins. After the Tacoma longshoremen left, the scabs reassembled and returned to Seattle.<sup>47</sup>

Although the *Centennial* crew was told by Sailors' Agent Pete Gill to quit the ship if Tacoma ILM&TA men tried to work the cargo, the seamen stayed aboard when Local 306 worked on May 17 and 18.<sup>48</sup> On the following day the Charles Nelson Company secured an injunction restraining ILM&TA men from interfering with the cargo movement of its vessels. Under police protection, the Sailors' Union sent eighteen men from Seattle on May 20 to finish loading the *Centennial*. There were no incidents.<sup>49</sup> A week later the last major battle between Sailors and ILM&TA longshoremen took place aboard the *Shasta* at Bellingham. One hundred and twenty-two Sailors fought off a surprise attack by forty-eight Local 309 men. Four seamen and two longshoremen were shot. Police arrested six Bellingham longshoremen for inciting a riot. In return for the Sailors not testifying against them, Local 309 voted to surrender its ILM&TA charter.<sup>50</sup>

Tacoma Local 306's situation became desperate. The union relied on jobs sacking coal at the bunkers. Citizens' Alliance Secretary Johnson had persuaded most shipping agents to contract exclusively with McCabe & Hamilton for the duration of the strike. Caught between shipping company solidarity behind McCabe and never-ending skirmishes with the Sailors' Union, Tacoma Local 306 and Seattle Local 552 called off the strike on June 17. McCabe told the strikers that scabs would receive work preference. The Tacoma Citizens' Alliance took full credit for the employer's victory. Johnson said he had other work in view, "but its nature is being kept secret at the moment."<sup>51</sup>

The pro-Sailor City Front Federation persuaded the San Francisco locals to leave the ILM&TA during July 1905. The following month Tacoma locals 179 and 306 and Ballard Local 531 surrendered their charters; and in August, Everett and Olympia gave up. Eventually eight other Washington State locals severed membership in the ILM&TA and its Pacific Coast Branch. Shortly after giving up its charter, the members dissolved Local 306. While handing in their ILM&TA charter, the Tacoma Lumber Handlers remained a member of the Washington and Puget Sound Council of Longshoremen. Composed of a dozen

lumber handlers' unions, this council emerged as the most viable force on the docks.<sup>52</sup>



Stern-loading lumber vessels dressed with flags. Tacoma. July 4, 1905.

(Magden Collection)

During the eight months following the San Francisco earthquake and fire, which occurred on April 18, 1906, Puget Sound lumber handlers loaded 21 million board feet on vessels bound for San Francisco during the next eight months. The great demand continued long after 500 business and residential blocks were reconstructed.<sup>53</sup> Capitalizing on the strong demand for lumber, Tacoma lumber handlers asked for a 10-cent-an-hour increase in straight and overtime pay on September 15. Without a single dissent, stevedore bosses acceded to the new wage scale.<sup>54</sup> The day after Tacoma's success, Portland grain handlers struck for recognition and 10 cents an hour increase in pay. Quickly, Rose City wheat exporters transferred to Tacoma all their grain business.<sup>55</sup> Three weeks before the strike, J. A. Madsen had tried to reorganize the defunct Tacoma Grain Handlers. Madsen went away knowing that the Tacoma wheat packers were too weak to stand up to the Exporters' Association.<sup>56</sup> In fact, while the Portlanders struck for eleven days, Tacoma grain handlers worked around the clock loading ships.<sup>57</sup>

Representatives from unions comprising the Washington and Puget Sound Council and four Oregon lumber locals met in Seattle on October 7, 1906. Delegates voted to demand the new Tacoma lumber-loading wage scale, 50 cents straight time and 75 cents overtime. Pacific Northwest longshoremen pointed out to the press that they were paid 40 cents straight and 60 cents overtime while the national average was 50 and 75 cents. If deep-water ships and

coastwise steam schooners did not raise longshore pay by April 15, union longshoremen vowed to call a general strike in Washington and Oregon ports.<sup>58</sup> The next day employers acceded to the council's demands.<sup>59</sup>

### The 1907 Strike

Successful negotiations with the lumber operators set in motion an attempt by the Washington and Puget Sound Council to recreate a West Coast longshore organization. During April 1907 the council reorganized into the Longshoremen of the Pacific Coast (LPC). The new regional organization now included general cargo locals as well as lumber handlers. LPC sent invitations to locals affiliated with the ILM&TA and the sailor-sponsored Pacific Coast Federation of Longshoremen. All turned down the invitation.<sup>60</sup>

The LPC executive board approved a circular letter notifying all Washington general cargo employers that the men desired a raise from 40 to 50 cents an hour straight time and 75 cents an hour for overtime.<sup>61</sup> To deal with the new longshore federation, Frank Burns of Alaska Steamship, William Dawson at Alaska-Pacific Steamship, stevedore boss William McCabe, David McKensie and J. P. Patterson of Pacific Coast Steamship, James Gibson of Washington Stevedoring formed the Puget Sound Shipping Association in the Seattle Citizens' Alliance office. The new employers' association was centered in Seattle, but all members had offices in Tacoma that employed longshoremen. Calling themselves the "Bilgewater," the bosses had been meeting at weekly luncheons since 1905 at Seattle's Butler Hotel. The driving force behind the new employers' association was Captain James Gibson. Known for his sartorial elegance and oratorical talents, Gibson had adeptly maneuvered the 1905 Seattle longshore strike to his advantage.<sup>62</sup>

After two inconclusive meetings between representatives of the longshore federation and the employers' association, the bosses locked out the Seattle Riggers and Stevedores on May 4. Stating that the federation's wage demands were unreasonable, the association declared for the open shop on the Queen City waterfront. "We are absolutely through with the longshoremen's union," an association spokesman told the *Tacoma Daily Ledger*. "From today we will employ anybody that will work, whether he is a member of the union or not." An unidentified stevedore boss added that his company planned to hire black strikebreakers.<sup>63</sup> Several days later James Gibson intimated that once the strike was over, the association would establish a hiring hall similar to one in Germany. The hall would have a restaurant and lounging room for the men when they were between jobs.<sup>64</sup>

McCabe & Hamilton, and later the same week, the remaining members of the shipping association, "voluntarily" raised Tacoma longshoremen's overtime pay to 60 cents an hour. At the same time employers cut the Tacomans' workday from ten to nine hours. This offer was not made to Seattle or any other member of the longshoremen's association.<sup>65</sup> Obviously, employer strategy was to divide

and conquer. The employers also tried to hire 500 strikebreakers to work on the Seattle docks, but only 115 signed up during the first week.<sup>66</sup> Employer concern over the scarcity of workers grew as the deadline for the Nome fleet departure neared, but they hesitated to divert the Nome fleet business to Tacoma.<sup>67</sup> Meanwhile, Seattle longshoremen visited Tacoma docks four times, trying to generate support for a sympathy strike.<sup>68</sup> On May 19 the shipping association and the longshore federation met to negotiate. The parties reached a settlement quickly. The agreement provided 45 cents an hour for a nine-hour day, and 60 cents for overtime. Negotiations could be resumed in six months by either party.<sup>69</sup>

Peace on Puget Sound docks was followed by a significant step toward solving the long-standing dispute between West Coast longshoremen and seamen. During July 1907, AFL President Samuel Gompers arbitrated the ILM&TA-Sailors' Union jurisdictional dispute. Gompers decided the ILM&TA must cease using "Marine and Transportworkers" in its title. He also ruled that in the coastwise trade ships' crews could work cargo from tackle to tackle. The two decisions amounted to major victories for the seamen. After another year of protesting without success, ILM&TA accepted Gompers's decision and resumed its first name, International Longshoremen's Association.<sup>70</sup>

Under the pall of an approaching worldwide depression, the executive committee of the Longshoremen of the Pacific Coast met members of the Puget Sound Shipping Association on January 20, 1908. After a caucus of the unions, which included Tacoma, the Lumber Handlers, spokesman Jack O'Neil tendered employers a one-year written contract binding all locals on the Sound. The proposal called for union recognition and preference. In return, the locals would accede to a wage cut of 5 cents an hour straight time and 10 cents overtime. The nine-hour day would be retained. O'Neil commented as he handed the proposal to the employers, "We have made you a proposition, and I think we have met you half way." Speaking for the employers, William Dawson replied, "I desire to say that we accept your proposition, with amendments decided upon, and want to thank you for the very gentlemanly and quick manner in which you have reached this decision."<sup>71</sup>

January 1908 was the best of times for Tacoma's 100 Lumber Handlers. For the first time since 1894, the union had gained recognition and hiring preference on Old Town docks. The fourteen-year struggle against aggressive stevedore bosses and Sailors had tested the durability of these longshoremen. When the situation seemed darkest in 1905, they had led in the creation of a council independent of Sailor and ILM&TA influence. To a large extent, the success of the Lumber Handlers was because of their unique skills in the holds of ships. Their reputation "of being the best men in the business" meant quick dispatch of tightly stowed ships.<sup>72</sup> Their output in the year 1907 turned out to be the greatest in history. The men packed 202,559,628 board feet into ships compared with 130,041,517 in 1906.<sup>73</sup> The work had been accomplished without a single fatality.

## CHAPTER III A NEW BEGINNING

1. FDL, July 22, 1897.
2. Ibid.
3. WCT 1897, p. 1. WCT 1898, p. 1.
4. This section of Chapter 3 is based on an anonymous feature article in the *Tacoma Sunday Ledger*, entitled, *Life and Work of Tacoma Longshoremen*, January 9, 1898. The article was rediscovered by Brian Kamens, Northwest Room, Tacoma Public Library. George Greetham served as Superintendent of Stevedores for PCSC in Tacoma from 1894 through 1909. Orlando Carter was head foreman for Puget Sound Stevedoring and its successor, McCabe & Hamilton, from 1890 until 1905.
5. Reichl Files. United States Census for 1900, Pierce County, Tacoma, Washington. McCabe & Hamilton Employees' List, 1901. Polk's City Directories for 1900 and 1901.
6. Noonan Tacoma, p. 2. George Noonan chronicles no union activity from 1897 through 1899. Similar to thousands of other Americans, Noonan contracted gold fever when the *Portland* docked in Seattle with a ton of prospectors' gold on July 15. He quit his job as purser of the *Fairhaven* and boarded the *Al-Ki*, the first ship to leave Seattle for the gold fields after the *Portland* docked. See PI, July 19, 1897. The Tacoma Trades Council was dormant from March 14, 1895 to November 13, 1899.
7. TTC, November 13, 1899.
8. Ibid., February 26, 1900.
9. Noonan Tacoma, pp. 4-5. Established in August 1892 by ten Midwest locals, the ILA adopted a system of fines for mutual support. If a vessel used scabs in one port, the next ILA port imposed a fine. The effort proved highly successful in the Great Lakes region.
10. *Seattle Union Record*, June 1, 1901. Hereafter cited as SUR.
11. *Proceedings of the 1902 ILA Convention*, pp. 24-25. Hereafter cited as ILA.
12. *Third Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor of the State of Washington, 1903-1904*, p. 146. Hereafter cited as BL. In December 1902, Lumber Handlers' Local 179 had 63 members. The initiation fee was \$25.00, monthly dues, 50 cents; funeral benefit, \$60.00; average daily wages, \$3.75 for a nine-hour day.
13. *Proceedings of the 1902 ILM&TA Convention*, pp. 135-136. Hereafter cited as ILM&TA. Locals petitioning the ILA convention for a West Coast organization were: Aberdeen 100; Portland 263 and 265; Tacoma 179, 289, 306, and 331; and Whatcom 309.
14. Ibid., p. 152.
15. Excerpt from a speech by Henry C. Barter given at the 1905 AFL Convention in ILM&TA 1907, pp. 57-58. See the Jack Weaver File, ILWU Library. John Now Interview.
16. TDL, September 3, 1902.
17. Ibid., September 17, 1902. The four wheat export companies involved were Balfour, Guthrie & Company; Kerr, Gifford & Company; Tacoma Warehouse & Elevator; and Puget Sound Warehouse Company.
18. Ibid., September 20, 1902.
19. WCLU, September 24, 1902.
20. BL 1901-1902, pp. 157-161.



21. *Proceedings of the 1902 ILM&TA Pacific Coast Branch Convention*, pp. 8, 17, and 18. Hereafter cited as Branch. All Pacific Coast Branch convention minutes are courtesy of Otilie Markholt.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 15 and 20.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, 19, and 20.
24. BL, 1901-1902, p. 176. ILM&TA 1903, p. 19.
25. SUR, February 21, 1903.
26. BL 1903-1904, p. 146.
27. TDL, July 3 and 23, 1903. Tacoma factory workers jumped from 7,299 in 1902 to 8,811 in 1903. See WCT 1902, p. 1, and WCT 1903, p. 1.
28. *Everett Daily Herald*, November 9, 1903. Hereafter cited as EDH. The *Herald* cites as its source, N. Posten, Assistant Manager to the Pacific Coast Company.
29. TDL, August 9, 1903. At the same time Tacoma struck, Vancouver, British Columbia, walked out on Pacific Coast Steam, demanding an increase from 35 cents to 40 cents for straight time, and from 40 cents to 50 cents for overtime. See Markholt, *Unionism*, pp. 353-354.
30. PI, October 30, 1903.
31. ILM&TA 1904, p. 121.
32. TDL, November 14, 1903.
33. *Coast Seamen's Journal*, January 25, 1905. Hereafter cited as CSJ. All references to CSJ are courtesy of Otilie Markholt.
34. Noonan Tacoma, p. 6. ILM&TA 1905, pp. 134-135.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 135-136.
36. PI, March 31, 1905.
37. TDL, April 5, 1905.
38. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1905.
39. *Ibid.*, April 7 and 12, 1905.
40. *Ibid.*, April 8, 1905.
41. Resolution sent from the Puget Sound Council of Longshoremen to Samuel Gompers, June 10, 1905. TDL, May 15, 1905. Thomas Bishop, President of Local 179, was elected the first president of the council and W. V. Shields of Port Hadlock secretary.
42. *Ibid.*, April 26, 1905.
43. PI, April 24, 1905.
44. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1905.
45. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1905.
46. TDL, May 14, 1905.
47. *Ibid.*, May 17, 1905.
48. *Ibid.*, May 18, 1905.
49. *Ibid.*, May 20, 1905.
50. ILM&TA 1907, pp. 63-66. *Bellingham Herald*, May 24, 25, 26, and 27, 1905.
51. TDL, June 18, 1905.
52. ILM&TA 1907, pp. 60-63. Letter from J. A. Madsen to Daniel J. Keefe dated August 25, 1905.

53. PI, November 13, 1906. WCT 1907, p. 34.
54. TDL, September 25, 1906.
55. *Ibid.*, September 26, 1906.
56. *Portland Local 265 Minutes*, September 6, 1906. Hereafter cited as Portland. Courtesy of Jess Stranahan and Martha Hendricks.
57. TDL, October 5, 1906.
58. PI, October 8, 1906.
59. TDL, October 10, 1906.
60. PI, April 19, 1907. Lumber Handlers' Local 179 became Local 1 of the new federation.
61. *Ibid.*
62. Interview with Elizabeth Dawson, daughter of William C. Dawson.
63. TDL, May 5, 1907.
64. *Ibid.*, May 10, 1907.
65. *Ibid.*, May 8, 1907.
66. PI, May 15, 1907.
67. *Ibid.*, May 19, 1907.
68. TDL, May 16, 1907.
69. PI, May 20, 1907.
70. For the voluminous correspondence of Gompers with Furuseth and Keefe concerning to the longshore-seamen's jurisdictional dispute see AFL Samuel Gompers Era Microform Reel 52.
71. *Waterfront Employers' Association Minutes*, January 20, 1908. Olaf Peterson of Lumber Handlers' Local 1 represented Tacoma.
72. TDL, April 6, 1906.
73. WCT 1907, p. 1. WCT 1908, p. 1.