Long-deferred smiles

Lumber mill employees entering the yards at St. Paul & Tacoma Lumber Co. were smiling as they returned to work Aug. 5, 1935. There had been few smiles in the preceding months. A bitter 13-week strike erupted in clashes between National Guard troops and strikers and their supporters at 11th and A in downtown Tacoma. The strike ended with union recognition, a 50-cent minimum wage, a 40-hour workweek, 8-hour day, and time and a half for overtime. Robert Tschida's eyewitness account, pages 4–6.


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Herbert Hunt, the man who wrote it all down ...................... 3
Tribute to Ottilie Markholt, labor activist and historian ...... 7
Questions about a mystery mansion

Dear Tacoma Historical Society,

I have been trying to find some information on a mansion that once overlooked downtown Tacoma and the Tideflats. It was up on the east side hill off East 34th Street by the gulch where the freeway now goes through to the Mount Rainier exit.

It was still there in 1958 when I was a kid. It was a huge pink-and-white mansion with servants’ quarters, and the mansion had big pillars. I know it was torn down when they put in the freeway.

What I have always wanted to know is who owned it and who lived in it and what happened to all the things that were in it. It had to be a wealthy or at least prominent person.

When my sister and I were kids we lived by it and would go down into the gulch and go inside it. Obviously it had not been lived in for probably 60 or 70 years. It had been terribly vandalized and all the windows on the bottom level were broken but there were artifacts in it that were priceless. I have always wondered what happened to all those beautiful things. There was a clawfoot piano, clawfoot dining table and chairs, an oak Victrola wind-up type record player with the dog on it, and other beautiful furniture. We went upstairs and there were 6 bedrooms. There were old iron and brass beds with rams’ heads on them and other ornate carvings.

While hunting around as kids we were looking in a closet and we found a tiny door at the back of the closet. It was only about 18 inches wide and maybe 4 feet tall. We opened it, and there was a tiny winding staircase that led to the attic. The staircase was so narrow and the steps very tiny so we had to go up them sideways.

In this attic there were huge old trunks of awesome items. Dresses with bustles, jewelry, photo albums, old newspapers and magazines from the 1800s and early 1900s. Hats with ostrich plumes, a wooden full-length mirror and frame, ornate gilded birdcages, Civil War items, old rifles, coins and much more.

We never took anything and left it all alone. I was only 11 and at the time did not realize the value of these items. Now that I am older I have always wondered what happened to those things. They should have gone to the Historical Museum and maybe they did.

Would you know anything about this house and its contents or who used to live in it? The address would have been somewhere in the East 2900 or 3000 block or around that area. I would appreciate any information you can give me. I have always been curious about the place and have never forgotten it.

Thank you so much …
Tim Hervey
Roy, Washington
(253) 686-2893
Herbert Hunt documented early-day Tacoma.

**Tacoma editor left chronicle of enduring value**

*Cancer cut short the career of Herbert Hunt*

By Dale Wirsing

For more than eight decades, the first book Tacomaans have reached for when they want to know something about the early days of their city has been *Tacoma, Its History and Its Builders*, by Herbert Hunt.

But who was Herbert Hunt? What fitted him to so capably chronicle the history of his adopted city?

Hunt was a talented journalist with a passion for accuracy and a great capacity for work. His position as editor of the *Tacoma Daily News* put him at the center of civic decision-making.

He came to Tacoma in 1905 to become city editor of the *News* and succeeded Albert Johnson as editor, a position he held for 12 years. (Johnson left the *Tacoma Daily News* to become editor and publisher of *Grays Harbor Washingtonian* in Hoquiam in 1907. Johnson would later serve nine terms in Congress.)

Herbert Hunt (he seems never to have used a middle initial) was the eldest of 11 children born to an Indiana physician, Dr. Tilghman Hunt, and his wife, Amanda Hunt. He was born April 17, 1869, in Coatsville, Ind. He attended public schools in Coatsville before entering DePauw University, Greencastle, Ind., where he graduated in 1891.

According to Hunt’s autobiographical sketch, “he immediately entered newspaper work in Chicago, which he gave up in order to return to the university and take a course in law. He then became connected with a newspaper in South Bend, Indiana, leaving it to join the staff of the Indianapolis *Sun*. In 1893 he became telegraph and then city editor of the Baltimore *World* and the next year he returned to the *Sun*, where he remained until 1900, when he went to Everett, Washington, as editor of the *Evening Record*….1

Paul W. Harvey, in his history of Tacoma newspapering, *Tacoma Headlines*, describes Hunt as “a scholar, a fast and tireless worker and was interested in nearly all lines of civic and cultural advancement. He twice refused to become professor of journalism at the University of Washington under President Henry Suzallo.”2

Hunt had married a fellow DePauw student, Lucille Marshall, in 1894 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The couple had four children, Marshall, Katharine, Louise, and Herbert Jr.3 The family home was at 3730 N. 28th St.

We do not know how long Hunt worked on his history of Tacoma. When it came off the press in October 1916, *The Daily Ledger* commented:

“It is an original work. The ground had never been covered in anything like a complete way. In fact, little had ever been written on the history of the city, aside from Thomas W. Prosch’s “McCarver and Tacoma,” published in 1906.

*continued on page 6*
The Great West Coast Lumber Strike of 1935

By Robert Tschida

Editor’s note: Some of the language in this account is intemperate, but it captures the feelings of the time.

From the first week in May until the first week in August 1935, loggers, plywood millworkers, sash and door men, and sawmill hands were involved in a strike against the owners. At first the strike was fairly peaceful, with mills and logging camps witnessing more and more workers leaving their jobs to join the walkout. As time passed, isolated demonstrations broke out in Washington, Oregon, and Northern California.

By May 11 about 3,000 lumber workers were idle in Tacoma, the Lumber Capital of the World. The strikers included a large number of women who worked in the mills. That did not matter. The mill owners and operators were busy buying quarter-sections of the daily newspapers to brainwash the public. The owners wanted the public to support their forcing the striking employees to return to their jobs. The ads also contended that the strikers were hurting their families by staying out. Moreover, other unions were getting hurt by the lack of materials caused by the strike.

Yes, those nice owners thought so much of their workers that “butter didn’t melt in their mouths.” The workers had no union shop, 10- to 12-hour working days and the pay was very low and, of course, no overtime pay. Medical coverage, vacation pay, sick leave, and holiday pay were unheard of at that time.

By printing these ads in the newspapers the owners and operators called themselves “The Committee of 200.” Neither names of owners nor mill names were ever listed. These ads were expensive. Contrast that with workers who were walking the picket lines without a strike fund.

In addition to seeking higher pay and better working conditions, the striking workers wanted the government to increase the tariffs on imported Canadian lumber and shingles on May 15, 1935. Five days later the McCormick Mills agreed to union representation and to give the workers 50 cents an hour. On May 21, 1935, the Spruce Veneer Package in Puyallup opened at the urging of berry farmers who needed veneer crates for their berries.

In Washington County, Oregon, some mills opened under the protection of the sheriff and his deputies. During this time the spokesperson for the big mills and timber barons stated, “The attempt to unionize the Northwest lumber industry has failed miserably.” Little did he know that in a year or two practically the entire logging and lumber industry would be unionized.

On June 3, 1935, several Seattle mills reopened under police protection. On the other hand TACOMA VOTED TO CONTINUE THE STRIKE. On June 7 Pierce County Sheriff J. C. Bjorklund stated, “I’ll not provide protection for men who desire to return to work. I will not prostitute my principles.” As a longshore leader Bjorklund had led the Tacoma cargo handlers in the Great West Coast Longshore Strike of 1934.

On June 8, 1935, mills in Longview opened with Washington State Patrolmen on duty. Mill owners and logging companies complained that Northwest lumber employees were enjoying “good conditions” and could not understand why their employees struck. Didn’t they realize that they were much better off than Southern lumber workers? Down South the lumber workers were only earning 15 to 20 cents an hour and working 48 to 60 hours a week. Well, the truth was that in the South the business people, factory and mill owners, and the local police and sheriff’s departments stopped any union activity. Union organizers were beaten and run out of cities and towns. Others were jailed on trumped-up charges. Often they were called “Reds” to frighten the general public. It took years before the South changed. Slowly unions worked their way into the factories. The movie Norma Rae starring Sally Fields demonstrated the hard struggle to establish union recognition in the South.

On June 18, Governor Clarence Martin told the Tacoma mill owners to open their businesses. The State of Washington would provide State Patrol officers for protection of property. On June 21 seven mills reopened with skeleton crews. Tacoma was a real union town,
Bayonets ready, members of the 161st Infantry of the Washington National Guard, attempt to control a crowd of striking lumber workers and their supporters who gathered on July 13, 1935, at 11th and A streets to protest the Guard’s presence and the City Council’s rule requiring a permit for such gatherings. The National Guard had arrived in Tacoma on June 23 to protect strikebreakers. The confrontation erupted into a 41/2-hour battle.


Showdown at 11th and A

second to none. Even San Francisco recognized that Tacoma was the top union town on the West Coast.

On Grays Harbor, Aberdeen and Hoquiam were also strong union towns. Neither town was pushed around by the employers. Everett was also a tough union town. Nevertheless there were areas in Western Washington and Western Oregon that did not have union recognition and union shops. It was not unusual to see a man fall asleep at the dinner table after working hard all day. Most had to walk to and from their homes to work every day. When I was a kid, I remember watching them walk from the Eleventh Street Bridge up the steep hillsides in Tacoma. Sunday was the only day off. They were too tired to do much. They had to rest for the long, grinding week ahead.

On the morning of Monday, June 24, 1935, the strike started to get hot. Pickets and their supporters gathered on “A” Street by the Eleventh Street Bridge. The State Patrol and the National Guard troops, who had been purposely recruited from east of the mountains, menaced the strikers with bayonets and shot tear-gas canisters into the picket line at the head of the bridge. The military made no calls to the crowd to disperse. Rather, the troops gassed strikers and even pedestrians indiscriminately. Resentment ran hot as the troops were hissed and booted for using gas and rifle butts.

Indignation boiled over when scabs were escorted past the picket line and across the bridge by the troops. Strikers, their families, and friends all milled around shouting at the strikebreakers. Strikers and anyone else who protested were arrested, beaten and blacklisted. Their just cause, to obtain decent working conditions and decent pay was not to be if the employers could help it. Neither the Tacoma News Tribune nor the Chamber of Commerce had ever supported a strike, and they did not do so now. They were the lackeys of the owners. The newspaper proclaimed law and order, but for whom?

On the morning of June 25 charges were hurled at the National Guardsmen and the State Patrolmen that they had used excessive force against the strikers and their supporters. The Tacoma Central Labor Council sent a telegram to the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, pleading for Federal troops to counter the lawless and irresponsible activities of the State Police and National Guard. The two police forces had created a reign of terror in the City of Tacoma. To avert a massacre of the citizenry, the apparent objective of the forces, the troops must be removed.

continued on page 6
The telegram to President Roosevelt added: WHY WERE MACHINE GUN NESTS SURROUNDED BY SANDBAGS SET UP ON THE NORTH AND SOUTH SIDES OF THE WEST ENTRANCE TO THE 11TH STREET BRIDGE AND MACHINE GUNS DEPLOYED ON THE TRUCK BEDS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD TRUCKS?

Were the weapons of war to be used to mow down and slaughter the strikers, their families, and their supporters? Were they to be used against innocent bystanders? Is that what Law and Order really meant in 1935? Certainly it was not law and order. It was all about order. To keep the strikers in line at the behest of the big mill owners. To quell the workers, cow them into submission, to beat them into defeat. They must return to the 10- and 12-hour day, six days a week.

After the 24th and 25th of June 1935 the situation quieted down in Tacoma. There were outbreaks in other areas of Washington, Oregon, and Northern California. But on Friday, July 12, things boiled over again. Strikers were going to hold a parade in downtown Tacoma. They did not have a permit for a parade. (There wasn’t much chance of getting a permit given that the city officials, police department and Chamber of Commerce supported the employers.)

Large crowds gathered preparatory to the parade. The city police, State Patrol and National Guard swung into action to disperse the crowds. Strikers and sympathizers were beaten and jailed. They were first taken to the City Jail and then to the State Armory on 11th and Yakima. Scabs were beaten as they tried to cross the 11th Street Bridge.

The longer the strike continued the greater the number of employers who broke with the owners’ policy of breaking the unions. Mill owners agreed to 40 hours a week with an increase in pay and recognition of union representation. Slowly, almost mill by mill, the situation began to look better for the union cause. Longshoremen refused to load any ship with lumber produced by scab labor and wherever armed guards were present. Teamsters declined to drive through picket lines. Most important of all, the mills in Portland signed as a group with their local unions.

On Aug. 3, 1935, the long 13-week strike came to a close. Some mills refused to rehire strikers, but they quickly changed their tune when increased demand for lumber caused a shortage of workers in the woods and mills.

It was only a matter of a year or two before the entire lumber business came under union contract. Ships once more loaded union-produced lumber. The men and women employees of the mills, along with their union brothers in the woods, suffered so future generations could enjoy a 40-hour work week, overtime and safer working conditions.

Along with my neighborhood friend George Ginnis, other kids, and I were eyewitnesses to the daily occurrences at 11th and “A” Street during May, June, July, and August 1935. The incidents gave us a deep understanding of what workers went through. We have remembered the events all of our lives. We will never forget what those workers endured. George Ginnis later became a longshoreman and rose to become the business agent and coast representative for Local 23. Ironically, Ginnis was elected to the same offices that J. C. Bjorklund had held in the 1934 strike. It should come as no surprise that George Ginnis was one of the leaders of Longshore Local 23 in the 1971 strike.
Remembering Ottilie Markholt — Labor Historian/Activist

Ottilie Markholt’s passing on Nov. 25, 2004, in Tacoma leaves a major vacuum in the field of West Coast labor history. For 69 years she dominated the field. Markholt wrote a dozen books and hundreds of articles on unionism. Her most notable volumes were *To Live in Dignity* and *Maritime Solidarity*. Her knowledge of the historical sources was encyclopedic, and she had an extensive collection of documents relating to Pacific Northwest labor history and race relations.

She began interviewing labor leaders such as Wobbly Ralph Chaplin, Sailor Pete Gill, and Longshore Worker Tiny Thronson in the early 1930s. Ralph Chaplin was a close personal friend until his death in 1961. Ottilie Markholt’s writing style was unmistakably trenchant, forceful, and devoted to the preservation of labor’s point of view.

Ottilie Markholt was also a labor activist, particularly in the activities of the Pierce County Central Labor Council. In spite of her desire to be an anonymous rank-and-filer she became a celebrity. She was the first chair of the Education Committee, a co-founder of both Solidarity Day and the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association. The Tacoma Historical Society gave her its Murray Morgan Award for outstanding scholarship in 1995.

Whether writing history or walking the picket line, this scholar-activist showed bulldog determination in support of labor causes, backed by biting disdain for those who were opposed—or even worse, indifferent.

Born in Candle, Alaska, on Feb. 25, 1916, Ottilie moved to Seattle with her parents when she was 3 years old. She was valedictorian of her class at West Seattle High in 1934 and attended the University of Washington for two years. Ottilie raised her two sons while working in Tacoma trade union offices, where she retired from Local 23 of the Office Employees International Union in 1981.

Ottilie is survived by her two sons, Bob and Lee Markholt; her four granddaughters, Lee Ann Allahyar, and Anneke, Anna, and Amy Markholt; five grandsons, Bob, Joe, Lee, and Alfred Markholt and John Theiler; three great-granddaughters, Amanda and Uriah Mark-holt and Ari Allahyar; two great-grandsons, Dustin Markholt and Kelly Allahyar; and one great-great-grandson, Caleb Crockett. She was often joined on union picket lines by her sons and grandchildren.

A memorial celebration of Ottilie Markholt’s life was held Jan. 30. She asked that memorial donations be sent to the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association, PO Box 75048, Seattle WA 98125.

— Ron Magden

Herbert Hunt continued from page 6

“In the death of Herbert Hunt, Tacoma lost one of its public-spirited citizens,” the *Tacoma Tribune* wrote. “During his 12 years here he had persistently worked for the upbringing of the cultural as well as the commercial development of the city.”

Hunt’s memorial service was held at First Congregational Church on Feb. 2, 1918. Glowing tributes and eulogies began on Page One of the *Tacoma News Ledger* and filled three columns in the tiny type of the day. The headline was “Loving Tribute Paid Herbert Hunt by his Friends.”

Herbert Hunt has of course receded from public memory. We have named no schools, streets, or libraries for him. But his chronicle of Tacoma’s origins and early days remains enduringly valuable.

5. Harvey, ibid.
8. Tacoma’s Hunt Middle School is named for Henry F. Hunt, principal of Stadium High School and later an assistant superintendent — and not Herbert Hunt. Confusion persists because Henry Hunt was the father of Herman Hunt, longtime *News Tribune* police reporter.
TACOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Regular meetings

February 14th, 2005, Monday—7:00 PM
Tacoma Community College-Downtown
In the historic Sprague Building, 1501 Pacific Ave.
“When Tacoma Was the Lumber Capital: The Ruston Way Waterfront Mills”
Paul R. Michaels, artist, will recount stories he discovered while researching for his waterfront plaques. He will be joined by Old Town historian J.N. Nerheim

March 14th, 2005, Monday—7:00 PM
Tacoma Community College–Main Campus, Building 10
“The Greatest Trial of the Twentieth Century”
Seattle artist Scott Fife

April 11th, 2005, Monday—6:30 PM
Tacoma Public Library
“Tacoma’s Amazing Renaissance”
David B. Allen, founding director of the Executive Council for a Greater Tacoma, will tell the story behind some of our city’s recent major civic advances. Annual meeting, awards presentations.

www.tacomahistory.org
253-472-3738