About our Name…
City of Destiny Newsletter

Where did our city on Commencement Bay get its nickname? Tradition ascribes it to George Francis Train, the Yankee promoter who circled the globe in a record-setting 67 days, 13 hours in 1890 to publicize Tacoma’s advantages as a world transportation hub.

But Herbert Hunt notes in *Tacoma: Its History and Its Builders* that Editor Julius Dickens of Steilacoom’s Puget Sound Express had employed almost the identical expression long before.

The moniker “City of Destiny” is hardly original or unique. The phrase is often – and perhaps best – applied to Jerusalem in the Holy Land.

On the other side of the globe, in India, the port city of Visakhapatnam uses the title. At various times, Detroit, Mich.; Las Vegas, Nev.; Sunnyvale, Calif.; Des Plaines, Ill.; Idaho Falls, Idaho; and Wolf Point, Mont., all claimed the “City of Destiny” title. In 1908 the promoters of Saint Johns, Ore., had dreams of grandeur and called their townsite the “City of Destiny.” Today, it’s part of Portland.

Even so, we make no apologies for calling our publication The City of Destiny Newsletter. The phrase was an important part of early-day Tacoma’s sense of civic identity, and no city is so closely identified with “City of Destiny” as Tacoma.

Dale R. Wirsing
Editor
Bokorm1@comcast.net


View from on High

Longtime Tacoman Tom Barnwell photographed the Five Corners intersection of downtown from the Medical Arts Building about 1945. The landmark Music Box Theater at Ninth and Broadway is prominent at right. Designed by famous architect Stanford White, it was built as the Tacoma Theater in 1889 and opened in 1890. It was remodeled for motion pictures and renamed the Broadway Theater in 1927. Its grand opening on Feb. 4, 1927, attracted more than 20,000. The building, renamed the Music Box Theater in 1933, was destroyed by fire April 30, 1963.

To the east, across Broadway, the gleaming white structure was the Roxy Theater and Jones Building. The combination vaudeville house and office building was constructed in 1917. The theater was named for its operator, entertainment impresario Alexander Pantages. Vaudeville gave way to movies, and the theater became the Roxy in 1932, taking its name from New York theater magnate Samuel Lionel “Roxy” Rothafel. In the early 1980s, after a period of neglect and a major civic effort, the theater was restored to something resembling its former glory and reopened as the Pantages Theater.

The distinctive, wedge-shaped building at lower left is the Bostwick Building, constructed in 1889 and one of earliest buildings remaining in Tacoma’s downtown.

Photo courtesy Tom Barnwell

Visit the Tacoma Historical Society’s site on the web
www.tacomahistory.org
Cedar and salmon the warp and woof of Salish existence

...Most of the traditional Coast Salish culture centered on two things: the Alaska Red Cedar, which they utilized in almost every aspect of their lives, and from which they did literally believe that they were descended, and the salmon, who were both the staple of their diet, and whom they believed were the reincarnated ancestors of the very first human beings, returned into the world to feed their hungry grandchildren.

A Salish newborn’s diapers were made from cedar bark pounded into loose fibers soft as human hair, and wadded up between the baby’s legs inside its swaddling. The baby’s cradle was made from cedar boards. The child was raised in a cedar post, beam, and board house. The child learned to eat from cedar bowls and played with cedar rattles. The child grew to wear waterproof woven cedar bark clothing and rain hats, and traveled most of their life in cedar canoes. Eventually the youth learned to fish with cedar lines and nets, and to work with cedar tools.

At the end of life a Salish person would he buried either in a cedar-board box, a cedar canoe on a raised overhead platform or on a platform of cedar boards set up in a tree. So cedar surrounded a Salish person from their birth to their death. In this way Grandmother Cedar still watched over and cared for her Salish children.

Contact with Whites was a benefit to Salish people... until Americans took over and settlers flooded in

By Chuck Larsen

Commerce among the Salish was ... influenced by the coming of the Europeans and Americans in the era before the White settlers arrived in the region.

European trade goods found their way west long before the Europeans arrived, often through the Chinook traders of the Columbia River who traveled far and wide. Then the Northwest Company out of Montreal, the Hudson Bay Company out of London, and the Russian America Company all established trading outposts on the Northwest Coast from the 1740s and 50s onward up in Alaska, and from the early 1780s and 1790s in British Columbia, Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. And the Americans also arrived in the 1780s to start trading over the sides of their ships, and built trading posts on land beginning in 1811.

But for a while the big winner in this rush to do business with Native peoples in the Pacific Northwest was the Hudson Bay Company, which merged with the Northwest Company in 1824 after the Northwest company had pushed the Americans out at the beginning of the War of 1812, and then succeeded the Russian American Company in running the Alaska trade later.

The Puyallup people who made their home on Commencement Bay were an important group in the Salish culture. In ancient times, Salish traditions name the Puyallup River watershed as one of the richest environments on the Sound. So the Puyallup peoples, the S’Puyallupamish, were also remembered as among the most generous people on the Sound, being called “the people who give more.”

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in the 1850s.

What all of this did for the Salish peoples was to introduce thousands of new trade items into their culture, ranging from copper pots to steel sewing needles, to colorful cloth and blankets, to muskets and steel weapons and tools, to apples, and black tea from China. It was said that “the white men brought us the rainbow to wear on our bodies,” for these goods universally made life easier and more colorful.

It is … important to understand that Hudson Bay Company … discouraged settlement by Whites in the territories where they traded, understanding that European-style farming was incompatible with a trade based on beaver and weasel pelts. So the Native peoples were largely free to adjust to the White man’s technologies and material culture on their own terms without the added pressure of invasion and settlement by an alien people. For a generation or two, the culture of the Coast Salish and all of the other peoples along the Pacific Northwest Coast prospered and flowered on their own terms through their contact with the Whites.

But all of that would generally come to an end in the Puget Sound region as the Americans took power in the 1850s and homesteading settlers flooded into the region, triggering the Indian Wars south of the 49th parallel.

Author Chuck Larsen has done extensive research into the Coastal Salish culture. He holds degrees from the University of Puget Sound and Pacific Lutheran University. He has taught at the Chief Leschi Tribal Schools. The son of a Norwegian immigrant father and a Native American mother, he is an enrolled member of the Nundawaono (Seneca) Nation of the Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, Ohsweken, Ontario, Canada, and the Confederation Metis du Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

Help Wanted
Volunteers to help with the Tacoma Historical Society’s growing collection. Record, inventory, and document gifts to the society. Compensation: Hands-on experience with documents, photos, books, and other items that are part of the fabric of Tacoma history. Computer skills helpful but not essential. 472-3738 or info@tacomahistory.org.

Help Wanted
Volunteer editor for the society’s newsletter. Editorial and computer skills needed, along with familiarity with Tacoma history. 472-3738 or info@tacomahistory.org.

Help Wanted
Volunteer computer wizard to perform various wonders for the society. Compensation: Applause and gratitude. info@tacomahistory.org
Regretting the passing of Jim Holzworth

The pursuit of local history has lost a friend.

James F. (Jim) Holzworth died June 7 at the entirely too young age of 67. Lost with him was an encyclopedic store of information that he carried in his head about our area, particularly its railroad heritage.

Jim reveled in trains—model ones and real-life ones. He could look at a passing freight and tell you what it was carrying and where it was headed. His father had been an engineer for the Northern Pacific and later the Burlington Northern. But his particular railroad passion was the Milwaukee Road. Jim’s e-mail handle was Milw261, after a famous Milwaukee steam locomotive that was returned to operation in 1983.

He was curator for the Milwaukee Road museum here and was active in the planning for the Milwaukee Road museum being developed in a historic depot at South Cle Elum. Tax-deductible donations may be sent to Cascade Rail Foundation, c/o Jim Holzworth Memorial Fund, PO Box 462, South Cle Elum, WA 98943.

Jim is remembered as an enthusiastic and faithful volunteer for the Washington State Historical Society. A few items from his personal collection have been donated to the Tacoma Historical Society.

All of us who knew him will miss him deeply.

■ Dale Wirsing


From the board room

Your Tacoma Historical Society board has:

• Moved ahead on the groundwork for a downtown exhibit center for Tacoma history. The board is working with Chris Fiala Erlich, a consultant to historical societies and museums.

• Raised the price of tickets to the 2005 Tour of Historic Homes to $15 for non-members of THS; members will be able to buy tickets at the discounted price of $12. The Tour will be held April 30 and May 1.

• Moved ahead on plans to republish Herbert Hunt’s classic Tacoma, Its History and Its Builders.

• Appointed John Washington to the board. He is a Realtor and served as publicity chairman for the Tour of Historic Homes. He will be leading our campaign to expand our membership base.

• Adopted a revised collections policy for the society. The policy will be posted on the society’s website: www.tacomahistory.org.

— Dale Wirsing, Vice President
Tacoma artist’s logging paintings featured in new book

A collection of Tacoma logging artist Don Olson’s paintings depicting historical methods of logging has been displayed at the Camp Six Logging Museum at Point Defiance Park for many years. Since Olson began developing his artistic talent in the 1970s, his paintings of both Northwest scenery and logging have been shown in museums and purchased by collectors.

Now a book featuring 29 of his paintings – titled *Logging Retrospective: Don Olson’s Oil Paintings* – is available through the Camp Six Logging Museum.

Olson’s experience working in the logging industry in the 1930s through the 1950s enables him to portray logging methods with historical accuracy.

His unique “ghost logger” paintings contrast early logging methods using steam donkeys, skid roads and misery whips with the chain saws, cats and logging trucks of the 1950s.

Copies are available at Camp Six for $39.75 (tax included). For mail orders, add $5 for shipping and handling. Camp Six Logging Museum can be contacted by calling 253-752-0047 or writing 5400 North Pearl Street, Box 7, Tacoma WA 98407.

This and that...

THS has purchased a professionally prepared, portable trifold exhibit on the Delin mill, the first white establishment in what was to become Tacoma. Swedish immigrant Nicholas Delin built the first sawmill on Commencement Bay at the head of what is now Thea Foss Waterway in 1852. The informative exhibit was researched by Kae Paterson and designed by Chris Fiala Erlich. It attracted quite a bit of attention at the THS table at the Steilacoom Sesquicentennial Festival. It will be available for display at other events.

- THS members Robin and Kae Paterson were honored for their volunteer service to the Working Waterfront Maritime Museum Sept. 17 when they were designated “Living Legends.”
- It looks as if Tacoma will gain one more festival with a history motif. Railroad enthusiasts are planning Tacoma Railroad Days 2005 for June 24–26.

Thank-yous:
- Wilma Peterson for painstakingly handling the calls to our information line, 752-8110.
- Esther Keelean, for faithfully recording the message on our phone line.
- Kae Paterson, Wilma Peterson, Dodi Hacker, Vi Bruno, Shirley Milatz and Anita Dorman for helping with the THS exhibit and booth at the Steilacoom Sesquicentennial Festival Aug. 21.
- Bill Johnston, for taking charge of our table at Ethnic Fest in July.

Congratulations:
- To Tacoma’s Norden Lodge No. 2 of the Sons of Norway, which is observing its centennial this year. Normanna Hall; at South 15th and Martin Luther King Jr. Way, dates to 1923.
The Tacoma Historical Society is a volunteer-supported non-profit organization, incorporated in the state of Washington, and dedicated to the preservation, promotion, and presentation of the history of the City of Tacoma and its people.

We believe a community and its neighborhoods are enriched and strengthened by awareness of their unique cultural, political, and social history. We strive to increase the level of this awareness for all persons who live in, visit, or are curious about Tacoma.

We actively collect, document, and preserve artifacts related to Tacoma’s past from the period immediately preceding the location of the Delin Mill on Tacoma’s waterfront in 1852 up to the significant events of the present day.

The Tacoma Historical Society and its museum will forge connections between past and present generations, fostering an appreciation of the past and a sense of place within our community’s history. This we will do by collecting, documenting, and sharing the unique and complete history of our city.
TACOMA HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
Regular meetings  
Auditorium of Tacoma Public Library  

December 13, 2004 – Monday, 7 pm  
Gary Fuller Reese  
retired librarian and Northwest historian, will recount the development of Tacoma Public Library’s Northwest Room and fill us in on his current projects.

January 10, 2005 – Monday, 7 pm  
Tom Stenger  
Tacoma historian and city councilman, will tell of The Hills of Tacoma.

February 14, 2005 – Monday, 7 pm  
Paul R. Michaels  
Artist Paul R. Michaels will tell of the days When Tacoma Was the Lumber Capital: The Ruston Way Waterfront Mills.  
He will share stories he discovered while researching for his waterfront plaques.