Washington Public Port District Formation

1911 – 1990

The **Port of Bellingham** first entered the ferry business in 1923 when it built a landing for the Canadian Pacific Railway's ferry, *Motor Princess*. The auto-ferry traveled between Sidney, B.C. and Bellingham in roughly three hours, each way. Today the port's Fairhaven Terminal accomodates passengers using the Alaska Ferry System and a privately-operated ferry operating between Bellingham and Victoria, B.C.

1911 Seattle & Grays Harbor
1912 Vancouver
1913 Bremerton
1915 Kennewick
1917 Brownsville
1918 Tacoma & Everett
1919 Kingston

1940 Pasco & Ridgefield
1941 Klickitat
1948 Shelton
1949 Edmonds
1935 Camas-Washougal

1960 Grand Coulee & Coulee City
1961 Woodland, South Whidbey & Kahlotus
1964 Sunnyside, Skamania & Skagit County
1965 Moses Lake & Ephrata
1966 Othello, Wahkiakum County #2 & Warden
1967 Coupeville

1910s 1920s 1930s 1940s 1950s 1960s 1970s 1980s 1990s

1959 Orcas
1958 Benton, Clarkston, Columbia, Garfield, Wahkiakum #1, Chelan County, Douglas, Mattawa, Royal Slope, Quincy & Whitman
1954 Chinook
1952 Walla Walla
1951 Poulsbo & Hoodsport
1950 Friday Harbor

1978 Pend Oreille
1990 Grapeview
1988 Grandview
1986 Centralia, Chehalis & Lopez

1929 Tracyton
1928 Ilwaco, Peninsula & Willapa Harbor
1927 Dewatto
1926 Anacortes & Mabana
1925 Keyport, Tahuya
1924 Port Townsend
1923 Port Angeles, Manchester & Waterman
1922 Olympia & Illahee
1921 Allyn, Bellingham & Longview
1920 Kalama & Silverdale

The **Port of Grays Harbor,** founded in 1911, is known for its log and lumber shipments. Here, the "billionth foot" is loaded aboard a Japanese ship in the 1920s.
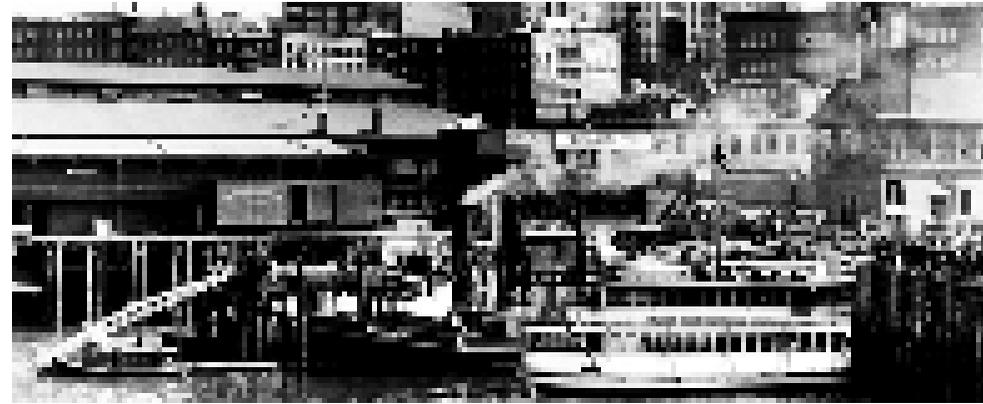
History of Washington's Public Ports

Washington's early waterfront years were marked by a problem common to many states: private ownership of critical waterfront transportation facilities enabled a few private parties to charge monopoly prices for the use of important public harbor assets.

*The Wenatchee Municipal Airport Terminal building was dedicated in 1959. A new and larger terminal replaced the original building in 1992. Today Pangborn Field is co-managed by the **Port of Chelan County** and the **Port of Douglas County**.*

Washington port areas become public

Waterfront monopolies in Washington were first broken in 1889 when the new state constitution provided that the beds of navigable waters belonged to the people, and the Legislature could designate what places would be harbor areas. It also provided a system for leasing waterfront tidelands and uplands in those areas.

In 1911 the Legislature enacted laws that allowed citizens to establish port districts and elect commissioners to administer the districts and oversee their development and operation. After this, the ports belonged to the public, and the people who used them were freed from the problems created by private monopolies.

Washington's public port districts were originally authorized to provide maritime shipping facilities and rail/water transfer facilities. Since then, many additional authorities have been granted to: build and operate airports (1941); establish industrial development districts (1955); develop trade centers (1967), and; develop economic development programs and promote tourism (1980s).

While many port laws have changed since 1911, the most important provisions still remain. Because they are public, but must operate in a proprietary way much like private business, public ports are a special form of local government. Ports are still governed by state and federal laws.

*By 1913, the **Port of Seattle's** central waterfront main wharf and sheds were completed and available to traffic. Pictured here are the fireboat Snoqualmie and the S.S. Kitsap, circa 1910-1915.*

*In September 1911, the Port of Seattle became the **first autonomous municipal corporation in the nation** to engage in port terminal operation and commerce development. The formation of the Port of Grays Harbor soon followed.*
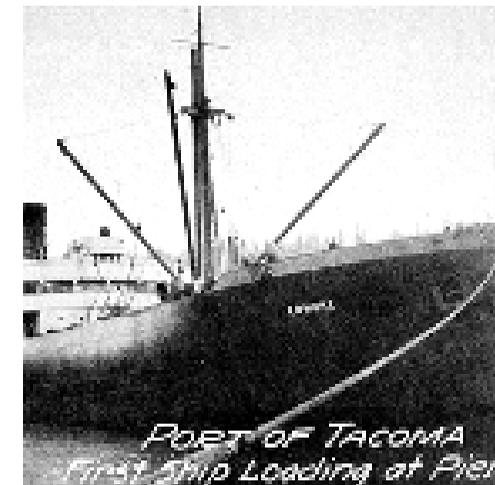
*First ship loading at the **Port of Tacoma** pier, March 25, 1921. Today, the port is the sixth largest container port in North Amercia.*