

Spring 2022

All the Princesses' men: working for the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service 1901-1928

Neil H. Christenson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.ewu.edu/theses>



Part of the [Canadian History Commons](#), [Cultural History Commons](#), and the [United States History Commons](#)

ALL THE PRINCESSES' MEN:
WORKING FOR THE BRITISH COLUMBIA COAST STEAMSHIP SERVICE 1901-1928

A Thesis
Presented To
Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts in History

By
Neil H. Christenson
Spring 2022

THESIS OF NEIL H. CHRISTENSON APPROVED BY

DATE _____
DR. JACKI HEDLUND TYLER, CHAIR, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

DATE _____
DR. J. WILLIAM YOUNGS, MEMBER, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

DATE _____
DR. STACI KIMMONS, MEMBER, GRADUATE STUDY COMMITTEE

Acknowledgements

I am, first and foremost, deeply indebted to Dr. Jacki Hedlund Tyler who served as chair of my Graduate Studies Committee. Her mentorship throughout the entire process and her edits of my writing were of the utmost importance to this thesis' production, perhaps surpassed only by her guidance at points of particular stress throughout my research. This, of course, in addition to all that I learned about the craft of historical writing in regularly-scheduled class with her.

Similarly, it was with Dr. Bill Youngs and Dr. Larry Cebula in whose courses I first produced publishable work. These initial forays into history meant for open consumption identified areas of my writing I needed to improve, and I am exceptionally grateful for their help in improving those areas. I am additionally appreciative that Dr. Youngs also agreed to membership on my Graduate Studies Committee.

My deepest thanks to the archivists I had the tremendous pleasure of working with throughout my research. In particular, the staff of the British Columbia Archives in Victoria were willing to take the time to train a foreign graduate student—in the middle of a pandemic, no less—in the practical side of archival research. Their friendly coaching on everything from when *not* to wear gloves to how to best photograph materials for later review contributed immeasurably to my professional development. Additionally, Ashlynn Prasad of the Vancouver Maritime Museum was supremely helpful in identifying resources held in that institution's collections, including several that it is unlikely I would ever have discovered without her aid.

Finally, I am profoundly grateful to every educator throughout my many years of studies who signaled “full steam ahead” and then patiently waited for me to find the engine room. It is to them that this thesis is dedicated.

Land Acknowledgments

For clarity and consistency, this thesis uses the legal names recognized by the modern Canadian and United States governments for places known by many names since time immemorial to this region's first peoples.

Research for this project was completed at:

- The BC Archives on the traditional territories of the Songhees and Xwsepsum Nations.¹
- The Vancouver Maritime Museum on the unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.²
- The University of Washington on land that touches the shared waters of all the tribes and bands within the Suquamish, Tulalip, and Muckleshoot Nations.³

Eastern Washington University resides within the traditional homelands of the Spokane People and other tribes who are connected through their shared history of the region.⁴

¹ Royal BC Museum, home page, accessed May 21, 2022, <https://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca/>. The BC Archives are collocated with the Royal BC Museum.

² Vancouver Maritime Museum, "About Us," accessed May 21, 2022, <https://vanmaritime.com/about/>.

³ University of Washington, "Native Life & Tribal Relations," accessed May 21, 2022, <https://www.washington.edu/diversity/tribal-relations/>.

⁴ Eastern Washington University, "About Us," accessed May 21, 2022, <https://www.ewu.edu/about/>.

Table of Contents

Introduction: The British Columbia Coast Steamship Service	1
Chapter One: Running the Boats	13
Chapter Two: Serving the Customer.....	38
Chapter Three: Working Together.....	67
Conclusion: All the Princesses' Men	96
Bibliography	100
Curriculum Vitae	103

Introduction

The British Columbia Coast Steamship Service

The story of the Pacific Northwest begins with the water. The water divided land from land, but also connected land *to* land. People came to the land, and they used the water to connect with each other. They formed shared experiences of the water and integrated their collective knowledge of its patterns to create new ways to live alongside it. Eventually, people designed steamships—wonderous machines powered by the vapor of water. People joined together to form companies that would build and operate these machines. One of these companies was called the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service.

Many people shared in the experience of this company's steamships. Passengers used them to reach their destinations. Businesspeople rented space aboard them to move their goods, even if they did not travel on the water themselves. The goods they moved ended up being bought by consumers, many of whom had never even seen a steamship, much less heard of the Coast Steamship Service, but they, too, were impacted by the industry. Most of all, the people who worked on and around the ships experienced them, but theirs is the story told least.

Growing up beside the waters of the Puget Sound, Strait of Georgia, and the broader Salish Sea, it is hard for me not to see all of the connections back to our waterways. I took my first ferry ride before I was old enough to even hold up my own head and I learned many of my first words while being walked along the Sound's fjords. As I got older, I came to love all things involving transportation and the connections that travel inspires; travelling in Western Washington, I took it for granted that boats connect places and therefore people. Toying as a child with the jobs I might want "when I grow up," I started to consume stories about travel both

present and past, and so learned about the work that went into the business of transportation. A decade or so later, between my periods of formal historical study, I became a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary to indulge my urge to deepen my knowledge of and experience with the water. My time with that organization rewarded me with some portion of cultural immersion in the marine industry. This experience, coupled with working for several summers on Orcas Island, gaining lifeguard certifications, and teaching hundreds of elementary schoolers the basics of saltwater paddling, brought me even greater appreciation for the ways in which water impacts people.

Some evening or other, probably after a day trip facilitated by a Washington State Ferry, my thoughts wandered northward and I wondered what the precursor to BC Ferries had been. This question sparked my research into the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service (BCCS). I soon discovered that BCCS had most everything a historian could want. It possessed a history of around 100 years, which is more than enough to study but not so much that it could not be studied deeply. It had fascinating characters about whom to learn. There were triumphs and tragedies to be retold. From a logistical standpoint, it was a well-established company that left copious archival records. I delved deeper into its history until I found, as historians do, unanswered questions and so began my own research.

While considering my notes from that research one evening at my father's house, Dad brought my attention to an old 16mm home movie that had been made by my late grandfather. It showed my grandparents, aunt, uncle, and toddler father boarding a ferry in Seattle that was flying the old Canadian Red Ensign and a funny checkered flag. I skipped back in the video to try and spy its name.¹ It was *Princess Joan*, built in 1930, whose construction was envisioned by

¹ Earle Christenson, *Trips 1953-1956*, 1953, film, personal collection of John Christenson.

BCCS Manager James Troup and set in motion by his successor Cyril Neroutsos (both figures with whom readers will become quite familiar).² After my elation at seeing the subject of my research and subsequent disappointment that it was out of the temporal span of this particular project, I reflected on the connectedness a short clip like this represents. There are very few people in the Pacific Northwest whose lives have not been impacted somehow by the legacy of the BC Coast Service, even if their family did not travel on a ship flying the red-and-white checkered BCCS flag. The water and the technologies we have contrived to travel upon it connect us to our history and to the stories of those who came before, stretching back to time immemorial.

The first peoples of the Pacific Northwest have been here since before reckoning. In that time, they developed means for travelling upon the water that connects the mainland and islands of this place. Using these inventions, at least twenty established trading routes were in use by 1750, facilitating the movement of people, goods, and information between nations.³ Other nations soon became aware of the region and its resources, and in 1849 the United Kingdom created the Colony of Vancouver Island to impose its claim for territory in the Pacific Northwest.⁴ On the other side of the Strait of Georgia, the Colony of British Columbia was not incorporated until 1858 during the Fraser River Gold Rush.⁵ About six years later in 1866, the two colonies united into a single British Columbia.⁶ Five years later still in 1871, BC joined the fledgling Dominion of Canada after securing a promise for a transcontinental railway to connect

² Norman R. Hacking and W. Kaye Lamb, *The Princess Story: A Century and a Half of West Coast Shipping* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1974), 275.

³ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia* 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 17.

⁴ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 56.

⁵ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 72.

⁶ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 85 and 102-103.

them with the east.⁷ While the people on the mainland could be assured that they would have access to the prairies, Great Lakes, and Atlantic, British Columbians on both sides of the water were waiting for reliable connections between the two former colonies.

The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) introduced the first steam-powered vessels to the Salish Sea. In 1836, the original *Beaver* arrived and promptly began freight and passenger service.⁸ In addition to their trading duties, *Beaver's* crew were also used to enforce Canadian, and Company, interests in the mid-1800s.⁹ The expanding colonies soon warranted imperial protection and beginning in 1854 a Royal Navy presence at Esquimalt near Victoria bolstered the maritime traffic and maritime enterprises in the area.¹⁰ Even despite this increase, parties, including the Whatcom County Sheriff during the San Juan Boundary Dispute, sometimes still found themselves using rowboats and canoes to travel Pacific Northwest waters.¹¹ Clearly, improved services were needed.

In December of 1877 the need for an enhanced shipping fleet was underscored when Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) announced the selection of Burrard Inlet near the future metropolis of Vancouver as their western terminus.¹² The decision shocked and angered many on Vancouver Island who had expected the terminus to be at Esquimalt, but equally meant that strong ferry ties between the Island and mainland would be even more critical.¹³ In 1883, HBC finally accepted that they could not manage the cross-strait traffic alone. They merged their shipping venture with Fraser River steamship pioneer John Irving's company to create the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company (CPN, and originally of no corporate relation to CPR).

⁷ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 102-103.

⁸ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 1.

⁹ Mike Vouri, *The Pig War: Standoff at Griffin Bay* (Seattle: Discover Your Northwest, 2016), 43.

¹⁰ Neil Christenson, "Esquimalt Harbour," December 6, 2021, <http://islandhistories.com/items/show/141>.

¹¹ Vouri, *The Pig War*, 41-42.

¹² Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 111.

¹³ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 110-111.

CPN quickly grew to prominence in the “coastwise” (i.e. coastal) trade along the Strait of Georgia, and by 1901, the company owned fourteen vessels.¹⁴

On January 10, 1901, Canadian Pacific Railway surprised British Columbians by becoming the majority owner of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company and on March 5th they installed their new chief of operations: James William Troup.¹⁵ A towering figure in the history of BCCS, Troup had navigated the rivers and fjords of Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia for many years and had long since earned the title of “Captain,” by which he was commonly known.¹⁶ Captain Troup, now tasked with managing a fleet of saltwater vessels, initially made very few changes, notably continuing to operate the service under the name “Canadian Pacific Navigation Company” despite it now being owned by CPR.¹⁷ Eventually, the “CPN” name would be phased out in favor of “British Columbia Coast Service.”¹⁸ BCCS, often just called the Coast Service, operated as a semi-autonomous division of CPR. Troup was officially responsible to one CPR Vice President or another over the years, but in practice was given a relatively free hand to run the Coast Service how he believed most prudent.¹⁹

One way in which Troup used this authority was to push through the purchase or construction of a slate of new vessels. While the ships bought from CPN retained their old, non-royal names, all newly acquired vessels (with three exceptions during Troup’s time as Manager) would bear the title “*Princess*.”²⁰ The naming scheme took hold in popular parlance and thus

¹⁴ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 188.

¹⁵ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 187-188.

¹⁶ Robert D. Turner, *The Pacific Princesses: An Illustrated History of Canadian Pacific Railway’s Princess Fleet on the Northwest Coast* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1977), 41.

¹⁷ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 188.

¹⁸ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 188-189.

¹⁹ Turner, *The Pacific Princesses*, 41.

²⁰ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 191 and 341-345. The exceptions were *Joan* (not to be confused with the later *Princess Joan* built in 1930), *City of Nanaimo*, and *Nootka*.

BCCS added yet another byname: the “Princess Fleet.”²¹ The first new *Princess* was *Princess May*, formerly the *Hating*, bought shortly after Troup became Manager in 1901.²² Less than a year later, *Princess Victoria* and *Princess Beatrice* were on order from a shipyard in England.²³ Over the next twenty-six years until Troup retired, twenty more vessels came into service on the coastwise trade.²⁴

The trade was certainly busy enough to support such a fleet. While the Victoria-Vancouver run had been a staple since CPN days, the addition of Victoria-Seattle as a major route after the loss of competitor Puget Sound Navigation Company’s (PSNC) *Clallam* inaugurated a new era for the Coast Service.²⁵ Initially called the “crazy run” due to pushing *Princess Victoria* hard to complete a double service between Seattle-Victoria-Vancouver daily, the addition of a direct Vancouver-Seattle leg in 1908 completed the “triangle service” which headlined BCCS schedules for decades to come.²⁶ A rate war between PSNC and BCCS promptly ensued, seeing fares cut by both parties as low as \$0.25, but ultimately resolving in PSNC’s semi-capitulation and acceptance of a working truce with their Canadian rival.²⁷

While service between Victoria, Vancouver, and Seattle took much of the attention of BCCS executives, they did not lose sight of other routes. The Gulf Islands, located between Vancouver Island and the mainland, sat in the eye of the “triangle” and were not served by the mainline boats. Instead, a smattering of vessels from the purpose-built *Island Princess* to the old

²¹ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 191; and Turner, *The Pacific Princesses*, 41.

²² Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 192. *Princess May* was named for the soon-to-be Queen Mary, then still Duchess of Cornwall and York, in anticipation of her visit to BC.

²³ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 193.

²⁴ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 269 and 341-343. Although only twenty entered BCCS service, twenty-two were purchased. *Princess Margaret* and *Princess Irene* were commandeered by the Royal Navy, had an “HMS” added before their “*Princess*,” and were pressed into service as minelayers in World War I (*Ibid.*, 343).

²⁵ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 211.

²⁶ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 212-213.

²⁷ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 212-216.

but comfortable *Charmer* called at ports among the islands.²⁸ The rugged west coast of Vancouver Island was served by two vessels in succession, both dedicated exclusively to its service: *Tees* and then *Princess Maquinna*.²⁹ Navigating the Strait of Georgia on the other side of the island, leisure travel to Alaska saw a particular boom during World War I as Canadian and American vacationers turned their attentions northward instead of eastward to European destinations.³⁰

By the end of Troup's tenure as Manager, BCCS embraced tourist traffic as a key part of their operations. The company heavily promoted special outings and sightseeing cruises, drawing upon its reputation for outstanding service to bring in new customers.³¹ The advertising seems to have worked. "From the original purchase price of \$531,000" in 1901, wrote the late W. Kaye Lamb, BCCS' value had increased to \$8,606,000 by 1929 and netted \$1,333,000 profit at its high in 1927.³² Retiring "at the peak of his fleet's prosperity," James Troup left the company in 1928, consigning to history an era of profound growth for BCCS.³³ Troup's nearly three decades leading the Coast Service constitute a convenient framework within which to examine the early period of the company, and it is within these temporal bounds that this project is set.

Two academic histories of BCCS have been published in book form. Norman Hacking and W. Kaye Lamb had the honor of authoring the first of them: *The Princess Story*. Hacking and Lamb's work is split evenly between what they call the service's "ancestry" and then the BC Coast Service itself.³⁴ Viewing BCCS as the successor to previous fleets is not only historically

²⁸ Turner, *The Pacific Princesses*, 139.

²⁹ Gordon Newell, ed., *The H. W. McCurdy Marine History of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Superior Publishing, 1966), 219.

³⁰ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 244.

³¹ Turner, *The Pacific Princesses*, 135-136.

³² Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 273.

³³ Turner, *The Pacific Princesses*, 139.

³⁴ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, unnumbered [immediately prior to page 1] and 181.

accurate from an economic perspective, but it also correctly recognizes the longstanding central position of maritime transportation and trade in the Pacific Northwest. Recalling Hudson's Bay Company vessels and tracing their legacy directly down to CPR's *Princesses* provides a thorough understanding of the changing needs served by shipping companies and how the creation of BCCS was a response to those historical pressures. Hacking and Lamb expertly evaluate the Princess Fleet's operation as a company and how it met the needs of customers.

The other of the more scholarly treatments of the BC Coast Steamship Service is Robert Turner's *The Pacific Princesses*. While this is an "illustrated history" and clearly meant for a slightly broader audience than Hacking and Lamb's book, it nonetheless offers a thorough overview of the fleet. Beginning in the 1840s and offering only a passing reference to indigenous modes of transportation, Turner covers in only thirty pages the corporate ancestry that Hacking and Lamb retell in one hundred seventy-nine.³⁵ What Turner's *Princesses* may lack in prose it more than makes up for in presenting history visually. The book is filled with an outstanding collection of photographs, pamphlets, and charts that provide context otherwise difficult to relate through the written word alone.

Two other books bear mention in relation to histories of the BC Coast Service. The first is *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners*, a second work by Robert Turner.³⁶ While *Pacific Princesses* may be "illustrated," *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners* approaches the level of a coffee-table book. Published in 2001, it draws heavily on *Princesses* for its content but makes the history of the fleet more accessible to a general audience with its even shorter page count, approachable vocabulary, and color photos. On the other extreme, *The H. W. McCurdy Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, produced by a committee of authors and edited by Gordon Newell, is a

³⁵ Turner, *The Pacific Princesses*, 1.

³⁶ Robert D. Turner, *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners: The Canadian Pacific's Princesses* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 2001).

chronological and encyclopedic record of major maritime events from 1895 to 1966, but does not attempt scholarly interpretation of those events.³⁷

An observation of the paperback edition of *The Princess Story* exemplifies one of the main problems with the existing historiography: its lack of attention to the people. The book's back cover gives its top half to an uncaptioned photo of a group of men posing for the picture, about a third of whom are in vaguely "uniform" attire; below the picture is the headline "a saga of memorable ships."³⁸ The anonymous crew are ignored completely in favor of the ships they worked on. The titles of books on the subject, too, show the preoccupation with the vessels themselves, none more so than *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners*.

The unpublished notes of these historians further show their lack of focus on labor. The W. Kaye Lamb Collection at Vancouver Maritime Museum is blessed to have Lamb's notes from compiling his work on the Princess Fleet, including those related to his coauthored *Princess Story*. The collection is replete with lists of ships, their technical details, the dates of when service started or stopped at certain ports, and even a beautiful hand-drawn map of CPR disasters in Alaska's Lynn Canal, but the closest it comes to dealing with *people* are his several biographical sketches of Troup and a list of ships' officers in 1901.³⁹ Previous historians' focus on James Troup is understandable—he was a tremendously important figure in the company's history—but he was only one of many and was even noted by his contemporaries as especially open to input from his subordinates.⁴⁰ Even when considering Troup alone as representative of

³⁷ Newell, *Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*.

³⁸ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, back cover. Indeed, the crews' uniforms would be indistinguishable from any other company's if not for their unique cap badges identifiable only to those already somewhat versed in the company's history.

³⁹ W. Kaye Lamb Collection, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver. The list of officers is in folder 15, box 1. Lynn Canal map is in folder 1, box 2.

⁴⁰ J. A. Heritage, interview with W. Kaye Lamb, notes, W. Kaye Lamb Collection, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver. Troup is discussed further in Chapter One.

the human element in previous works, authors have given the man—as opposed to the Manager—short shrift. In Hacking and Lamb’s book, Troup-the-Man is introduced in single (albeit substantial) paragraph early on but is almost immediately subsumed by Troup-the-Manager.⁴¹ Considering only him is to exclude all the other employees of the company and do a disservice to understanding the human element of the company’s story and the labor required to keep the company afloat.

Historians of maritime labor have generally sought to synthesize the experiences of classes of sailor across many different employers. Attempting an expansive argument that the shipping industry had been a global one since the nineteenth century, *Sweatshops at Sea* by Leon Fink focuses on the developments in sailors’ labor that had international reach.⁴² Particularly useful are his examinations of early twentieth century seamen’s unionism and how race impacted labor. In making a globalized and long-spanning argument, however, Fink’s work does not account for local differences nor does he engage deeply with how the transition from sails to engines affected the seaman’s craft. Eric Sager’s *Ships and Memories*, on the other hand, confines its focus geographically to Canada and temporally to the “Age of Steam,” and is an excellent survey of work aboard steamships.⁴³ Its poignant depictions of the realities of nautical work display an appreciation for the people who operated these boats, but perhaps loses, at times, the thread that sailors were also employees of companies, large and small.

The vessels of this company, the BC Coast Service, were run by people. At no point did a BCCS *Princess* spontaneously operate, even when personified as a “she”—a convention

⁴¹ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 185-186.

⁴² Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World’s First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), Kindle.

⁴³ Eric W. Sager, *Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada’s Age of Steam* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1993).

frequently observed in the historiography. While the historiography of BCCS has admirably tracked the formation and acquisition of companies, celebrated the purchases and sales of ships, and charted the shifting routes served, it has largely ignored the people staffing the boats. But it was managers who made decisions about when and how to deploy capital. Crewmembers maintained and ran the vessels. Officers shouldered responsibility for hundreds of lives as they ferried passengers and cargo from port to port. To focus exclusively on how much horsepower “she” generated, or the profits earned for “her” corporation’s shareholders, is to lose sight of the foundation of history. This thesis aims to anchor the story of BCCS firmly to the people whose labor made the company’s services possible.

Just as the story of the Pacific Northwest begins with the water, the story of the BC Coast Service starts with the people who plied that water. Chapter One discusses the individuals who were directly involved in operating the boats. Captains, Officers, Engineers, and Seamen were all partly responsible for safely navigating⁴⁴ the Salish Sea, and each group held its own distinct status aboard. Ashore, the Manager and his Victoria headquarters staff oversaw the fleet of coastwise vessels, made recommendations up to higher headquarters in Winnipeg, and passed directives down to the crews.

While the service that customers were buying was the transportation facilitated by the employees in operational roles, actually *servicing* those guests required an entirely different class of crew. Chapter Two focuses on the staff who created customers’ experiences with BCCS. Along with their colleagues sequestered away in the ship’s galley, uniformed Stewards and Pursers assisted passengers while freight crews handled goods and mail. Agents crewed the

⁴⁴ It should be noted that in nautical parlance, “to navigate” means not only “to determine one’s location and chart a course,” but also “to operate or conduct one’s vessel.” In that sense, it could be considered synonymous with “to sail” but “navigate” is the preferred verb because “to sail” implies the vessel is propelled by the wind. BCCS vessels were universally steamers, not sailboats.

company's physical presences on land, sometimes forming a vital link in the communications chain between Victoria and vessels further afield.

Both sides of the company—Operations and Customer Service—needed to work together in order to generate wages for themselves and profits for shareholders. In growing and industrializing British Columbia during the height of labor movement, working together was not always without its challenges. Chapter Three examines labor relations within BCCS, particularly as they came to a head during strikes in 1918 and 1919. It will be seen that workers' demands and the company's responses fit generally into a pattern of relearning how to work together during a period of strain and change. Additionally, the strikes reveal some of the intersections between the crew's social and economic identities in broader British Columbian society.

Ultimately, working for the British Columbia Coast Service was a good proposition for many. It was stable, maritime employment that cultivated community among the crew. BCCS was relatively responsive to worker demands and management kept abreast of pay discrepancies. It was, however, still demanding work. Rules and regulations had to be learned and obeyed. Machinery needed to be oiled and boilers fed fuel. Revenues had to be accounted for and guests shown to their cabins. Literal tons of freight were loaded and unloaded. Meals were prepared by the score. The ships, assaulted by salt spray and the daily activities of hundreds aboard, had to be meticulously cleaned. Most importantly, all of these tasks had to be done while maintaining an environment in which customers could simply enjoy the glamour of travel without thinking about the hours of labor that went into their experience. That was the task of the employees of the BC Coast Steamship Service. The story of their work deserves to be retold.

Chapter One

Running The Boats

“The duty of all...will be the comfort of the public”

- Regulations for the Navigation of the British Columbia Coast Service Steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company

Ships are meant to travel across waters, not merely sit upon them. A ship does not move on its own, however. The Seamen, Engineers, and Officers who worked for the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service (BCCS) were responsible for navigating their vessels throughout the waters of the Pacific Northwest and providing its people with reliable connections between the region’s many ports. While the specific communities they served and the boats on which they served them were decided mostly by BCCS Manager James W. Troup, the Captains and their crews were the ones who made the system work.

While generally found ashore, Troup was nonetheless a noticeable presence in all aspects of operating the Coast Service. Afloat, the top of the social hierarchy was the Captain, who was given ultimate responsibility for the crew’s work and the vessel itself. Below him and bound to similar operational and social responsibilities were the Officers. The line of command flowed from the bridge to the engine room, where the Engineers, Firemen, Oilers, and Coal Passers toiled in their hot and dirty compartments away from the public’s eye. Although visible, the work of the Seamen, Quartermasters, Lookouts, and Watchmen was supposed to fade away into the background of life aboard. Each of these groups were part of the broader crew that served Canadian and American customers, but they are distinguished by serving BCCS’ guests indirectly. Nonetheless, these workers were the ones who generated the service purchased by the company’s patrons. The tasks assigned to each group within the operational divisions of the crew

reveal how different kinds of work were valued and the kinds of people expected to accomplish the work.

Managing the Fleet

Captain James W. Troup managed the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service for nearly thirty years from 1901 to 1928. He presided over a period of expansion and transformation in the company, including its deployment of the new boats christened with the name “*Princess*” and the inauguration of the hallmark “triangle service” between Victoria, Vancouver, and Seattle. Troup was not one to leave details to his subordinates, and the Manager had an active influence in everything from scheduling to the percentage of cargo space reserved for canned fish.¹ Of the many roles he played within BCCS, two bear the most significance: using his decades of experience to decide the routes that were to be supported by his company and designing the vessels that would run them.

Troup began his nautical career captaining riverine steamships along the waterways of the Pacific Northwest. In truth, Troup had a bit of a wild his youth. Gaining a reputation as daring to the point of foolhardy, in 1878 he took *Harvest Queen*, a paddle-wheeler, over the Columbia River’s Celilo Falls, breaking both of the ship’s rudders, part of its sternwheel, and snapping its anchor chain.² After stopping briefly for some emergency repairs, Troup then proceeded down river and shot both Ten-Mile and Five-Mile Rapids “with only minor damage.”³ In 1881, Troup captained *Harvest Queen* down Tumwater Rapids, and in 1890 went through

¹ J. W. Troup, “Memo of items that will be brought up by me at Meeting,” October 21, 1916, folder 2, box 8, Earl Marsh Collection (PR-2362), British Columbia Archives, Victoria (hereafter cited “EMC”).

² Gordon Newell, ed., *The H. W. McCurdy Marine History of the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: Superior Publishing, 1966), 8.

³ Newell, ed., *Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*, 8.

Cascade Rapids.⁴ Eventually growing out of at least some of his hubristic tendencies and having put on years with John Irving's mixed fresh- and salt-water Pioneer Line in lower British Columbia, Captain Troup became the chief of the Columbia & Kootenay, later Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), Lake and River Service.⁵ It was from this posting that Troup was promoted upon CPR's takeover of the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company.

At the beginning of Troup's tenure, British Columbia was a bifurcated, though officially united, province. Victoria, the province's capital, was located on Vancouver Island. Vancouver, across the Strait of Georgia, was quickly taking over for New Westminster as the urban center on the mainland, due in no small part to BCCS parent company Canadian Pacific Railway's decision to make Burrard Inlet (on which Vancouver lies) its western terminus. Connecting the two population centers fell to the steamship crews. There was never really any question that Vancouver and Victoria would have connections by water; even in the midst of strikes when all other routes were cancelled, Troup himself would take the boat out on the Vancouver-Victoria run if necessary.⁶ The outlying runs, however, were more in question. At meetings with his senior subordinates, Troup did not shy away from difficult questions: "are we... continuing permanently in that [the Gulf Islands] business, or are we to drop out in favor of some other Company? . . . Are we to operate the 'Princess Charlotte' in [the Alaska] trade next summer? If so, how many trips?"⁷ Clearly, Troup was comfortable with the answer being "no." Regarding a remote and unprofitable Alaskan community, the captain recommended pulling the plug: "In

⁴ W. Kaye Lamb, notes, folder 12, box 1, W. Kaye Lamb Collection, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver.

⁵ Norman R. Hacking and W. Kaye Lamb, *The Princess Story: A Century and a Half of West Coast Shipping* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1974), 186.

⁶ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 24, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷ J. W. Troup, "Memo of items that will be brought up by me at Meeting," October 21, 1916, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

view of the small amount of patronage given us by the Granby bay people, would suggest that it is time for us to consider withdrawing from that port.”⁸

One service from which Troup would find it difficult to withdraw was the famous “triangle” between Victoria, Vancouver, and Seattle. Partly, this was due to sentimental reasons. The triangle had been largely the captain’s baby, requiring years of planning and building to grow. As a business friend wrote him late in their careers: “The old triangle is probably dearer to you and me than anybody else, as we have sat up with it and nursed it longer.”⁹ Parental feelings towards the service aside, there were sound business reasons for maintaining all three legs. BCCS was, after all, a division of a railway company and “the triangular route between Vancouver, Victoria and Seattle performs services that are of very great importance to our rail interests,” its own profitability somewhat notwithstanding.¹⁰

The main drain on profitability was capital investments. Ships are expensive, especially when built to James Troup’s standard. When he first took over in 1901, BCCS was comprised mostly of vessels acquired from the Canadian Pacific Navigation Company.¹¹ After those had been replaced, then the company focused on having relief vessels. After the *Tees* was unexpectedly taken out of service, Troup remarked that “practically three services were disturbed on account of this accident.”¹² He continued, arguing: “The necessity for adequate spare boats to any company increases with the number of boats required in performing its services, and we

⁸ J. W. Troup, “Memo of items that will be brought up by me at Meeting,” October 21, 1916, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

⁹ Joshua Green to J. W. Troup, October 17, 1925, CPR Other Corr., box 29, Joshua Green papers, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, University of Washington, Seattle (hereafter cited “Joshua Green papers”).

¹⁰ J. W. Troup, “Proposed Programme of Improvements to the B.C. Coast Service,” December 14, 1911, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

¹¹ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 188.

¹² J. W. Troup, “Proposed Programme of Improvements to the B.C. Coast Service,” December 14, 1911, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

should not expect a never ending run of good luck.”¹³ Upper management, apparently, agreed and authorized the additional vessels. The final shipbuilding challenge of his career came with serving the growing motorist population of the Pacific Northwest. Old boats retrofitted with car decks generated “many complaints made by motorists on account of the difficulty and time occupied in stowing their cars on board, having to turn and twist in awkward places in order to get them on,” when they fit at all.¹⁴ “It is impossible to carry a closed car on the Nanaimo route,” an employee reported, due to the height of the deck. Ultimately, this, too, was recommended by Troup to “be provided without any further delay.”¹⁵ In order to ensure that new ships would serve the purposes with which Troup was so carefully familiar, he personally approved many of the details of each vessel. This included trips to the United Kingdom to supervise the final stages of construction for several of the boats purchased by the company under his administration.¹⁶

Managerial authority came with perks besides company trips across the pond. Most tangible of these benefits was pay. Troup made \$500.00 per month in 1909, increasing to \$700.00 in 1917, and only a year later it inflated again to \$833.33.¹⁷ Beyond wealth and its obvious comforts, the real privilege of Troup’s position was rubbing elbows with other powerful men. Arguably, the most spectacular of Troup’s acquaintances was the later King Edward VIII during his first tour of Canada while still Prince of Wales, though Troup missed His Royal Highness’ second trip to British Columbia.¹⁸ A much more frequent, if less royal, contact was

¹³ J. W. Troup, “Proposed Programme of Improvements to the B.C. Coast Service,” December 14, 1911, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

¹⁴ H. J. Maguire to J. W. Troup, August 27, 1925, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

¹⁵ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, October 15, 1925, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

¹⁶ A. J. Yarrow to J. W. Troup, January 9, 1920, folder 6, box 7, EMC.

¹⁷ [Second Vice-President] to J. W. Troup, June 10, 1909, folder 6, box 7, EMC; Grant Hall to J. W. Troup, February 12, 1917, folder 6, box 7, EMC; and C. E. Stockdill to J. W. Troup, January 21, 1918, folder 6, box 7, EMC.

¹⁸ “Prince of Wales, later Edward VIII, arriving at Victoria,” photograph, September 23, 1919, folder 2, box 1, EMC; and C. D. Neroutsos to J. W. Troup, October 11, 1924, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

Joshua Green, the contemporaneous head of the Puget Sound Navigation Company (PSNC), also called the Black Ball Line. As Troup's longtime friend and sometime rival, Green maintained a cheery correspondence with the captain. For instance, in lieu of postcards, the two habitually exchanged transportation passes valid on each other's networks.¹⁹ They leveraged their respective personal networks as well. For instance, Green, involved in trying to force through a railway easement for a timber venture on Vancouver Island, once asked Troup to set up a meeting with the Premier, the Attorney General, and two other provincial ministers since "you [Troup] are so familiar with British Columbia matters."²⁰ In return, the BCCS office in Seattle received special treatment from Green's post-PSNC venture, People's Bank. "I will see to it," Green wrote to Troup, "that the bank and its officials extend value received in every way for this account."²¹ It was, perhaps, in part due to the value received by both parties that Green would write in 1927: "My close friendship with the officials of the Canadian Pacific Railway has helped make life pleasant and happy for me. I admire not only their business ability but their wholesome balance in their social and family life."²²

Though his friends may compliment his business ability and work-life balance, the stress of managing the Coast Service still had its effects. It did not escape Troup that he was the custodian of a vital link between the main population centers of growing British Columbia. He reflected that BCCS was "practically the only means of communication, particularly between the Mainland and Vancouver Island," and resisted a potential rate increase accepting that "we have a responsibility and a duty to perform, and during dull periods we must bear our burden with the

¹⁹ Joshua Green to J. W. Troup, July 18, 1927, folder "Correspondence T," box 20, Joshua Green papers.

²⁰ Joshua Green to J. W. Troup, March 24, 1928, CPR Corr. with J. W. Troup, box 29, Joshua Green papers.

²¹ Joshua Green to D. C. Coleman, November 2, 1928, folder "Correspondence C," box 3, Joshua Green papers.

²² Joshua Green to J. W. Troup, August 15, 1927, CPR Corr. with J. W. Troup, box 29, Joshua Green papers.

public generally.”²³ Troup took this responsibility and burden seriously and seems to have worked himself hard when times required it. Working through “an attack of Influenza, or something very similar” that he had “never been able to shake” after two months in late 1918 and developing “an asmatic [sic] condition, which has become chronic,” Troup pushed his health to the limit in order to deal with the aftermath of *Princess Sophia*’s sinking in 1918.²⁴ Other projects, such as the deployment of the new ships *Princess Kathleen* and *Princess Marguerite*, even though planned well ahead, were large enough in scope to take a toll. Troup, who insisted on being involved in much of the minutia of the company’s workings, found that “there has been so much detail and anxiety connected with the installation of this service that I find it is beginning to tell on my nerves, and I will be obliged to take a lay off of a week or so in the near future.”²⁵ Just three years later, the old captain decided nearly three decades as manager of the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service were quite enough. James Troup retired on September 1, 1928.²⁶

Captains

Captains—officially known as “Masters” and less formally as “skippers”—were responsible for the ship and everything that happened aboard. Charged with “devot[ing] their whole time and attention to the management and care of their ship and cargo, and to the safety and comfort of the passengers,” to be a BCCS Captain was no easy calling.²⁷ The very first

²³ J. W. Troup to W. H. Snell, October 16, 1922, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

²⁴ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, December 11, 1918, folder 6, box 7, EMC. The loss of *Princess Sophia* is discussed further in Chapter Two.

²⁵ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, May 20, 1925, folder 6, box 7, EMC.

²⁶ J. W. Troup to All Officers and Employees, B. C. Coast S. S. Service, Afloat and Ashore, August 30, 1928, folder 6, box 7, EMC.

²⁷ *Regulations for the Navigation of the British Columbia Coast Service Steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company: General Instructions* (Victoria: Colonist Printing and Publishing, n.d. [1908?]), folder 7, box 9, EMC (hereafter cited “*Regulations*”), 8.

regulation in the Coast Service's manual underscores the captain's culpability, even in the event that some other member of the crew had made the mistake: "The *Master* will be held responsible for the observance of these instructions," not necessarily the crewmember who made the mistake.²⁸ In practice, as will be seen, the Captain could sometimes be absolved of culpability under the right circumstances, but the threat of joint responsibility inclined them towards thoroughness in their instructions to the crew. To that end, the Master "will see that thorough discipline is maintained," the regulation continued, "and they are held responsible for any pilferage on the ship, and for any damage to the Company's property through their own carelessness or that of their crew," again underscoring their generalized responsibility afloat.²⁹

The Captain's command on their vessel while underway was nearly absolute, regulations granting that "members of the crew are in every respect subject to the control and orders of the Master."³⁰ This meant, in essence, that if the Master gave a crewmember a direction, they had to obey it. If they failed to do so, they were subject to the Captain's discipline, up to and including termination. The only people over whom the master did not have total authority were the department heads such as the Chief Engineer or the Purser.³¹ The skipper could only suspend them if he had adequate cause while underway, and even then only "pending investigation from the Head Office."³² There was nothing on the ship that was not touched by the captain on a daily basis except, perhaps, the engine room itself which was left in the trust of the chief engineer.³³ He inspected passengers' quarters, frequently ate in the ship's dining saloon, and checked on the welfare of customers and crew. Most commonly, however, he could be found on the bridge or

²⁸ *Regulations*, 8. Emphasis added.

²⁹ *Regulations*, 8.

³⁰ *Regulations*, 3.

³¹ *Regulations*, 8.

³² *Regulations*, 8.

³³ See below under heading "Chief Engineer."

his adjoining quarters, supervising the safe navigation of the vessel. The Master's power while the ship was in port, while lessened as there was less safety-critical work being done, was still very much present. For instance, captains were responsible to "see that no idlers stay about the ships," nor that the families of crewmembers present distractions for them by "frequent[ing]" their workplace.³⁴ Besides maintaining command of an efficient ship personally, the skipper was also a critical link in the chain of communication between the Head Office and their crews.

The most routine of the Captain's communication tasks was the upkeep of the ship's several logbooks. Required to detail in various logs every movement of the ship, the crew on watch, the weather, the water drawn by the vessel (i.e., how far below the water line the bottom of the hull was) when entering and leaving Victoria and Vancouver, and several other minute pieces of information, the Captain's logs gave management a clear understanding of their voyages.³⁵ This insight into the voyage was particularly useful to management when captains were still getting used to giving regular progress reports via ship-board wireless. Captain Gillam of *Princess Maquinna*, which exclusively handled business on the west coast of Vancouver Island, was chastised by management for his lack of updates. "The Wireless reports from the 'Princess Maquinna' on the last trip were not at all satisfactory," wrote Troup, adding that he "should like to have a report from you at least once per day."³⁶ Progress checks notwithstanding, the log maintained by the captain provided a much fuller picture than brief messages via wireless. Certainly, in the case of accidents, the records from the log (which had to include the "full particulars" of the event) allowed the company to present a consistent version of events to other parties.³⁷ Similarly, the Captain's logs allowed the company to hold its own employees

³⁴ *Regulations*, 10.

³⁵ *Regulations*, 8.

³⁶ J. W. Troup to E. Gillam, August 1, 1913, folder 2, box 3, EMC.

³⁷ *Regulations*, 9.

accountable. Masters received the various company “Circulars” and were charged with communicating their contents to the appropriate members of the crew and then noting that they had done so in the log.³⁸ Supervisors documenting that their subordinates have been instructed in policy was far from unusual, but Captains were encouraged to do more than simply ensure good order and discipline aboard their ships.

Masters occupied a nebulous grey area between employee and management. When arguing against their unionization, management recognized Captains’ unique status among the company’s employees. Troup wrote that “the men in command of our steamers, in order to be successful, must necessarily be advised of the Company’s business interests, and treated with confidential matters, and should be on a different plane from other employees afloat.”³⁹ The business interests and confidential matters with which Captains might be entrusted could range from upcoming service plans to shipping rates and pay scales. It was Captains’ access to these financial details about which management was most concerned, as the information could be used in collective bargaining negotiations.⁴⁰ The Masters’ access to BCCS’ privileged business information combined with their practical knowledge of running their vessels also meant that they were excellently positioned to give advice on modifying the company’s operations. BCCS codified acknowledgement of Captains’ circumstances in this respect, adding to the service’s regulation book: “Masters are requested to report freely anything which in their opinion will better the service or tend towards the economical working of the line, and their suggestions are promised the most careful consideration.”⁴¹ While the company’s “most careful consideration”

³⁸ *Regulations*, 10. Circulars were general instructions meant for a whole class of employees.

³⁹ J. W. Troup to Andrew Goodlad, May 23, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁴⁰ This subject is explored further in Chapter Three.

⁴¹ *Regulations for the Navigation of the British Columbia Coast Service Steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company: General Instructions* (Victoria: Colonist Printing and Publishing, n.d. [1908?]), folder 7, box 9, EMC, 9.

was offered for suggestions that would enhance profit, Masters' attentions were called to ensure that they logged the time and place in which they met or passed other BCCS vessels.⁴² While logging meetings with other ships was not uncommon, the positive instruction that the company's *own* ships be noted leads one to suspect that Captains were being used to generate reports on their fellow skippers. Logs could be compared against one another to ensure accuracy and Captains knew that their fellow officers were watching for them on the water, notating their timeliness. This was in keeping with BCCS regulations, which expected the master "to have general supervision over all employees, and to report to the Head Office at Victoria anything that to them may seem contrary to the interests of the Company or to the welfare and success of the service" even in cases in which they had only limited direct authority, such as over the heads of shipboard departments.⁴³ Things that may be "contrary to the interests of the Company" expressly included any employee using an "expression disparaging to the company," which he was required to report "at the first opportunity."⁴⁴

Beyond their responsibility to the ship and its crew, Captains had social responsibilities to the passengers. Regulations stated that "it is the duty of the Master to see that passengers of all grades receive uniform civility and attention from everyone in the service."⁴⁵ Part of this duty was the daily inspection made at noon by the Captain and the Chief Steward of all cabins and public areas of the ship to ensure they were "in a clean and neat condition" and otherwise in proper order.⁴⁶ Although the class of service rarely appeared in the company advertising materials, called out for special attention by the master were the "second-class or steerage

⁴² *Regulations*, 9.

⁴³ *Regulations*, 8.

⁴⁴ *Regulations*, 8.

⁴⁵ *Regulations*, 9.

⁴⁶ *Regulations*, 9.

quarters” to ensure that those “passengers are properly cared for by the Company’s employees.”⁴⁷ Properly caring for passengers meant taking the customer’s view in all aspects of operations. For instance, Captain Hickey of *Princess Victoria* was chided by Troup for allowing “the washing of decks over people’s heads” and for the discourteous use of the ship’s whistle.⁴⁸ Commanding a large, powerful steamer that had been in service only a year-and-a-half, Hickey seems to have been overly active in alerting other vessels to his presence when entering the capital city’s Inner Harbour. “You woke up all your passengers and half the people in Victoria... at 4.30 this morning . . . [and] repeated the annoyance about 30 minutes later” Troup complained in his letter to the Captain, before instructing him to exercise greater restraint with sound signals.⁴⁹ Noticeably, Troup’s instruction to Captain Hickey was not for purpose of safety or enhancement of operations, but instead solely for the sake of polite conduct towards the sleepers of Victoria. The skipper’s position as the most senior officer meant they had correspondingly higher expectations placed upon them; captains were certainly not, however, the only members of the crew of whom certain social norms were expected.

The Officers

All Officers were required to uphold a respectable appearance. As members of an educated class whose years of expensive training in maritime academies to prepare them for licensure exams, Officers represented the collected knowledge—learned both from books and experience—of centuries at sea.⁵⁰ Their education implied social standing and in some ways mirrored that of gentrified class that comprised the upper echelons of military command;

⁴⁷ *Regulations*, 9.

⁴⁸ J. W. Troup to P. J. Hickey, August 1, 1904, folder 6, box 7, EMC.

⁴⁹ J. W. Troup to P. J. Hickey, August 1, 1904, folder 6, box 7, EMC.

⁵⁰ Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 78.

historian Eric Sager suggests that this is why the Masters and Mates became known as “Officers,” arguing that steamships were “an industrial workplace that borrowed military language and attitudes.”⁵¹ Another of the merchant marine’s military acquisitions was the Officer’s uniform. BCCS Regulations required that uniforms be worn whenever aboard the ship regardless of whether it was underway or not.⁵² Officers’ dark woolen suits sported gold sleeve lacing indicating rank, the top two rows wove around each other to create a small square in which was embroidered a maple leaf.⁵³ Their peaked caps displayed devices depicting the company’s red and white checkered flag crowned, literally, with a crown and encircled in laurel made with gilt thread.⁵⁴ These they wore day and night, in sun and rain, through fog and salt spray. They kept them presentable in front of customers despite the hazards of the climate, errant spoonfulls of soup from dinner, and their own perspiration.

At least, in theory, their uniforms were safe from wine stains and burn marks since all officers were strictly barred from drinking or smoking at any point while they were on board. They were forbidden from going to the Bar Room or keeping a private stock within their own quarters. “Any report of officers drinking spiritous liquors,” the regulation read, would “be deemed sufficient cause for dismissal” and those found to be actually under the influence would “be *instantly* dismissed.”⁵⁵ Gambling, too, was prohibited, as was even wager-free card playing.⁵⁶ Officers were expected to reject the stereotype of the foul-mouthed sailor, being banned from profane language.⁵⁷ The company’s demand that they present an entirely wholesome, professional appearance is entirely understandable given officers’ visibility to the

⁵¹ Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 71.

⁵² *Regulations*, 4.

⁵³ Canadian Pacific, “Uniform Regulations,” 1931, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

⁵⁴ Cap device, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

⁵⁵ *Regulations*, 5. Emphasis added.

⁵⁶ *Regulations*, 5.

⁵⁷ *Regulations*, 5.

public. It is also understandable that the weighty social expectations placed upon them coupled with the burden of assisting in the command of the vessel led some to wonder why they should want to take the job when they could potentially make more money “as a quartermaster without responsibility, and without having to keep up any appearances.”⁵⁸

The officers did indeed have many responsibilities beyond keeping up appearances. Chief among them: “the safe navigation of the ship.”⁵⁹ “They must run no risk,” the rule emphatically continued, “which, by any possibility, might result in accident. They must always bear in mind that the safety of life and property entrusted to their care is the ruling principle by which they must be governed.”⁶⁰ Supporting the officers’ grave responsibility aboard the vessel were a number of other rules. They could not “under any circumstances” talk with passengers or leave the bridge if they were on watch, they could not engage in racing, and they were “expressly instructed to stop the engines instantly ... without waiting for the Master’s instructions” in the case of immediate danger.⁶¹ On the unpredictable Strait of Georgia, and particularly in its northern reaches on the route to Alaskan ports, weather that impaired visibility was (and is) not uncommon. To defray some of the risk, BCCS vessels were required to have “two Officers ... on the bridge and a double lookout kept” in addition to other precautions when faced with adverse conditions such as “thick or foggy weather, and in snowstorms.”⁶² When the ships typically only had three or four officers on their crews, the requirement for two of them to be in the wheelhouse not infrequently could be a significant burden on already busy employees.⁶³

⁵⁸ E. H. Beazley to J. W. Troup, May 11, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁵⁹ *Regulations*, 5.

⁶⁰ *Regulations*, 5-6.

⁶¹ *Regulations*, 6-7.

⁶² *Regulations*, 5.

⁶³ “B. C. Coast SS Service – List of Employees,” August 1905, folder 8, box 10, EMC.

The degree to which the individual officers were busy varied, naturally, by their specific position. The Chief Officer was one of the busiest since he effectively served as a deputy Captain and handled the administrative tasks that would otherwise be assigned to the skipper, including the updating two of the ship's logs under the Captain's direction.⁶⁴ Chief Officers also maintained the navigation equipment, most critically the charts and signaling devices such as day shapes and colored lanterns.⁶⁵ Keeping charts updated was not as simple as going ashore to purchase a new one since both hazards and aids to navigation would sometimes unexpectedly change location, requiring immediate update to the chart before a corrected version could be published.

The First and Second Officers worked in tandem with only slight differences in their roles. The First Officer took charge of safety equipment and was the ship's taskmaster, being given the instruction to "work the crew."⁶⁶ Working the crew included responsibility for the "expeditious and economical handling" of cargo, one of the only times an officer would interface directly with the company's freight operations. After loading operations were complete and then continually while underway, the First Officer would remain cognizant of the hatches and loading doors, ensuring that they were open at all times practical to allow fresh air into the hold but not when doing so "might endanger life or property."⁶⁷ Beyond just their work, the First Officer was also in charge of the crew's off time, including inspecting their quarters for cleanliness but also checking that the food served to them was "properly cooked and served," implying not only care for palatability and not only its wholesomeness.⁶⁸ These tasks were all completed with the

⁶⁴ *Regulations*, 10-11.

⁶⁵ *Regulations*, 10-11.

⁶⁶ *Regulations*, 11.

⁶⁷ *Regulations*, 11.

⁶⁸ *Regulations*, 11.

assistance of the Second Officer, whose only individual responsibility besides assisting his superiors was taking charge of the mail.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, the mailroom was a heavy responsibility; the contract for the Victoria-Seattle mail route alone was worth \$15,000.00 per year as of 1929.⁷⁰ This was on par with other mail routes BCCS held, such as the West Coast of Vancouver Island and Victoria-Skagway, which justified giving it an officer's precious individual attention.

Each of these officers also held a general responsibility for the safe navigation of the ship as any might be the officer in charge at a given moment. Except on the smallest boats that only had a Master and a Mate (synonymous here with "officer") due to their size and relative lack of complexity, BCCS vessels always counted a Master, a First Officer, and a Second officer on their payroll.⁷¹ Frequently, but not always, there was a Chief Officer or sometimes a second Second Officer, again depending on the ship's size and complexity, with the larger and most complex vessels warranting additional officers.⁷² Shipboard chains of command grew even more lengthened as the service progressed, and by 1931 the rank of Third Officer—essentially an officer at large who could step in wherever needed—was in use.⁷³ This clarity was necessary as aboard a ship the chain of command is vital; it was so vital that the chain of command from Master to Chief Officer to First Officer and so on appears as the third regulation in book.⁷⁴ The captain could, and did, devolve authority onto his subordinates to command the ship in his absence. This is devolution of command is exemplified by the regulation specifying that all crewmembers are "subject to the control and orders of the Master."⁷⁵ In fullness, the regulation

⁶⁹ *Regulations*, 11.

⁷⁰ H. J. May to C. D. Neroutsos, April 12, 1929, folder 2, box 9, EMC.

⁷¹ "B. C. Coast SS Service – List of Employees," August 1905, folder 8, box 10, EMC.

⁷² "B. C. Coast SS Service – List of Employees," August 1905, folder 8, box 10, EMC.

⁷³ Canadian Pacific, "Uniform Regulations," 1931, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

⁷⁴ *Regulations*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Regulations*, 3.

continues that they must obey the Captain “*or* Officer in command for the time being.”⁷⁶ Each of the officers’ sections within the regulation manual is preceded by a section describing how they will keep watch and be assigned temporary command at sea in lieu of the Captain.⁷⁷ Because any of them could be expected to take charge of the boat from time to time throughout the course of the voyage, it was critical that *each* officer be up to the task. Accidents, even minor ones, usually caused demotion for the officer found responsible.

Demotions for cause were used in the aftermath of accidents where guilt could be clearly placed. Collisions were not at all uncommon during the Troup years since accurate local charting and forecasting were still developing, as were ship-to-ship and ship-to-land communication technologies. A BCCS insurance claims book shows seventy-nine entries from 1929-1931 for events that could have generated claims, although it was noted many did not.⁷⁸ When such an event was severe enough to warrant an investigation into its cause by management, the key factor that determined whether personnel actions were taken was the officer in question’s judgement. After an accident in 1919 in which the officer in charge, Mr. Palmer, struck land while navigating through Seymour Narrows at night during low tide, management found that even though the Captain had left written orders to be woken up for the passage, Palmer had merely called for him once and then continued to command the ship. This earned him a demotion to Second Officer since “he should have definitely satisfied himself whether or not the Master was going to take charge of the vessel, in view of his instructions to be called for that purpose.”⁷⁹

While Palmer’s demotion was for multiple errors—the unsafe navigation of the ship stemming

⁷⁶ *Regulations*, 3. Emphasis added.

⁷⁷ *Regulations*, 10-11.

⁷⁸ “Insurance Claims 1930,” December 1929-December 1931, Business Records, BCCS Fonds, Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver.

⁷⁹ C. D. Neroutsos to J. W. Troup, August 11, 1919, folder 15, box 5, EMC.

from failure to get the captain—it only took a single mistake for a captain to face losing stripes. When *Princess Royal* was caught in an unexpectedly strong current while turning and landed bow-first at its pier in Vancouver, Captain Anderson was found at fault. Even though management found that “the Master has a very good record and has always heretofore used care and good judgement when handling vessels,” because he “did not do so on this occasion” Anderson found himself “disrated to First Officer and will not be given command again for some time.”⁸⁰

In none of these cases, however, were the affected Officers dismissed. While dismissals were certainly possible for other causes, such as intoxication, accidents seem to have been accepted as one of the standard hazards of the sea. Even in cases where it was clear that the officer’s judgement was at fault, as with Palmer and Anderson, there were still ameliorating circumstances. Palmer took a ship through unfamiliar waters at low tide and Anderson was caught by a current; both failed to effectively prevent the accident, but neither was entirely human error either. Both Troup and Neroutsos had spent time as officers in command on British Columbian waters and understood what could go wrong.⁸¹ Both, also, were heavily involved as managers in the design of BCCS vessels and understood their technical limitations. The Officer on the bridge did not, after all, directly control the ship’s propulsion. He merely communicated his instructions to the engine room, staffed by an entirely different department of the ship, and expected them to be executed promptly.

⁸⁰ [Marine Superintendent] to D. C. Coleman, November 7, 1928, folder 13, box 5, EMC.

⁸¹ Neroutsos was particularly familiar with the Pacific Northwest’s hazards. He had been the Chief (and sole surviving) Officer on the ill-fated *Islander* when it was lost in Alaska’s Lynn Canal in 1901. Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 136.

Chief Engineer

The Engineers, sequestered away in the engine room away not only from the rest of the crew but the passengers too, were led by a Chief Engineer appointed by BCCS management. Given “full charge of this important Department and staff” but still “strictly enjoined to enforce fully all the orders of the Master,” the Chief Engineer nonetheless served as a counterweight to the Captain.⁸² The Captain could not dismiss the Chief Engineer, nor was he particularly expected to manage the Engine Department’s day-to-day affairs. The Chief Engineer was also the only crewmember given the assigned task of drawing the Captain’s attention to their standing orders whenever a command in “conflict with instructions from headquarters” was issued.⁸³ The only power that the Chief Engineer lacked as it related to administering the engine room was “the authority to award punishment,” although he was expected to “assist in promoting the discipline and cleanliness of the ship.”⁸⁴ In all other respects, everything that pertained to engineering was his to command.

The core function of the Chief Engineer’s job was to ensure that the correct amount of propulsion was delivered when called for by the bridge. To this end, he was instructed to be personally present “when entering or leaving port, or when passing through any passages or channels” that could require special “promptitude” in responding to the wheelhouse’s instructions.⁸⁵ He was responsible, too, for all firefighting equipment throughout the vessel, a natural fit for the head of the department whose job it was to intentionally light roaring fires within the hull of a wooden ship.⁸⁶ “Working in harmony with the other Departments” required

⁸² *Regulations*, 11.

⁸³ *Regulations*, 11.

⁸⁴ *Regulations*, 11 and 13.

⁸⁵ *Regulations*, 12.

⁸⁶ *Regulations*, 13.

close communication with the Captain in particular so that the boiler fires could be appropriately stoked or banked to conserve fuel while still delivering the needed amount of steam.⁸⁷ By extension, the engine room's stores—primarily equipment and fuel—were under the Chief Engineer's jurisdiction, including checking storage spaces like coal bunkers for stowaways.⁸⁸ Outside of the immediate environs of the engine room, the Chief's "special attention" was called "to the fresh water and sanitary arrangements... remembering that the latter are... for the use and convenience of passengers and crew."⁸⁹ In short, if it was particularly dirty or mechanical, the Chief Engineer was responsible for it with his crew.

The Engine Room

Working in the engine room was a crowded, loud, hot, and dirty affair. The Engine Department could employ anywhere from five members, Chief Engineer included, such as aboard the old and tiny *Otter*, to a whopping forty-three on the modern and massive *Princess Victoria*.⁹⁰ Among them were not only the engineers, ranking all the way down from Chief to Seventh Engineer often with multiple double-filled billets, but also the firemen, coal passers, and oilers. The licensed engineers, whose "skill was rare, highly valued, and rewarded," were at the top of the social ladder within the department, while the less technically-savvy were looked down upon as workers who did their labor "because they could find nothing else."⁹¹

Every square foot given to the engine room was space that could not be used for revenue generation, so the company was incentivized to make the compartment as small as could still be

⁸⁷ *Regulations*, 10-11.

⁸⁸ *Regulations*, 10-11 and 15.

⁸⁹ *Regulations*, 17.

⁹⁰ "B. C. Coast SS. Service – List of Employees," August 1905, folder 8, box 10, EMC.

⁹¹ Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 49.

operational. The Engine Department's workspace was, therefore, cramped to say the least. Pipes and ducts through which scalding steam flowed presented constant burn hazards and, combined with fires used to produce the steam, contributed to a hot environment. Nor could the crew expect an immediate respite from the heat upon arriving in home port, as BCCS instructions were that "fires must not be drawn [extinguished] before receiving permission from the Superintendent."⁹² The ships were initially coal-fired, eventually transitioning to oil-burners, and coal dust would have been tracked throughout the compartment by the coal-passers and firemen.⁹³ Lubrication oil was regularly added throughout the voyage by the oilers, a job that while "not technical or difficult," called "for patience and fidelity."⁹⁴ Oil needed to be continually applied because it was continually lost to burning and drainage, both of which also contributed to a messy workplace. It is no wonder that the members of the Engineering Department were the only ones out of the crew who had no day-to-day uniform mandate.⁹⁵

The Engineering Department's day-to-day was comprised of long days and nights. For most of the engine room crew, their working hours while in port were 7:00 am to 5:00pm although the Chief Engineer had the benefit of arriving at 9:00am.⁹⁶ Nor did their day necessarily end at the five o'clock hour. While away from home, the crew would be sleeping aboard the vessel regardless, but even while docked in Victoria or Vancouver regulations required that "one Engineer must sleep on board at night, coming on board not later than 10:00 P.M. ... so that he can be called if required."⁹⁷ The most likely cause for the engineer's nighttime summoning would have been a nearby fire. Fire was, after all, the greatest threat to wooden-hulled ships and

⁹² *Regulations*, 16.

⁹³ Hacking and Lamb, *The Princess Story*, 227-228.

⁹⁴ Harold Brown to [?] Warren, nd [late January or early February 1935], folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹⁵ *Regulations*.

⁹⁶ *Regulations*, 13.

⁹⁷ *Regulations*, 13.

since the vessel's propulsion depended entirely on the action of engineers, in order to move the boat to a position of safety away from a nearby fire, one would have to be aboard to move it.

The Engineers had, arguably, a role even more important than the officer in command for keeping the ship safe. After all, the engines were controlled directly from the engine room by its crew, not from the bridge. Orders were relayed from the commanding officer to the engine room by way of a telegraph dial, but it was the engineers of the watch who executed the order. To that end, BCCS rules were clear about expectations for alertness. Regulations required that “the Engineers of the watch are on no account whatever to leave their posts until relieved,” and “must be on or near the driving platform” when “in places of intricate navigation.”⁹⁸ An even more restrictive rule was in place for assistant engineers, who “must *always* be near to the starting platform, to be in readiness to stop the engines if required.”⁹⁹ Safety walkthroughs were mandatory at the beginning and ending of every watch, with positive instructions to “inspect all journals, bearings, etc., and see that all watertight doors ARE FREE FROM OBSTRUCTION.”¹⁰⁰ The only other place in the regulation manual in which all capitals are used also pertained to the engine room. It demanded that “WHEN A GAUGE GLASS IS BROKEN, IT MUST BE REPAIRED AT ONCE.”¹⁰¹ That BCCS management only felt the need to draw employees' attention to safety instructions so dramatically in the Engineering Department's section emphasizes their safety-critical role aboard the ship. Ultimately, the ship did not move without the engineers, firemen, coal passers, and oilers. In motion and at rest, however, there were a plethora of other tasks that needed doing, and not by the Engineering Department.

⁹⁸ *Regulations*, 14.

⁹⁹ *Regulations*, 14. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ *Regulations*, 14. All capitals original.

¹⁰¹ *Regulations*, 15.

The Deck Department

Running a boat requires more than navigation and movement, however, it also requires deck hands. While the Captain and Officer were technically also members of the Deck Department, Able Bodied Seamen (typically abbreviated “ABs”), Quartermasters, Lookouts, and Watchmen composed the rest. Expected to be “intelligent and reliable men” with “experience in their particular duties before joining the service of the Company,” very little else is said in the company’s manual about them or their “particular duties.”¹⁰² Most of the evidence for what each of these Deck Department members did comes from descriptions of other classes of crewmembers. Lookouts, for instance, were involved in keeping a literal eye out for hazards as the ship navigated since Captains were instructed to note who the lookouts on duty were in the event of an accident.¹⁰³ Quartermasters, too, were named in the log after a collision or grounding, though since they were generally “without responsibility” for the safety of the vessel, this would have been for later questioning about the correct weight distribution of the cargo they managed.¹⁰⁴ The watchmen supervised the ship overnight. It was to them that the engineer sleeping on board in port would report and it was they who “report[ed] hourly to the Officer of the watch on the Bridge” about the status of the Saloon at night.¹⁰⁵

For everything else, there were the Able Bodied Seamen. Stereotyped as “a jumble of unskilled and none-too-bright laborers recruited from across the world for an arduous but predictable work-life,” ABs were given the tasks that were too menial for the officers, not mechanical enough for the Engineers, and also not direct customer service.¹⁰⁶ The diminished

¹⁰² *Regulations*, 4.

¹⁰³ *Regulations*, 9.

¹⁰⁴ *Regulations*, 9; and E. H. Beazley to J. W. Troup, May 11, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁵ *Regulations*, 13 and 20.

¹⁰⁶ Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea*, 146, Kindle.

skill of ABs in the age of steam as opposed to the age of sail is due largely to the centralization of knowledge by those responsible for navigation and propulsion, the same Officers and Engineers who directed ABs' labor.¹⁰⁷ They handled the lines (ropes) and were the ones to physically turn the helm, albeit always under the direction of the Officer of the Watch.¹⁰⁸ They loaded and took off the mails, freight, and express.¹⁰⁹ ABs trained weekly during fire drills and boat drills, keeping their skills sharp for the event of an emergency.¹¹⁰ No other class of crewmember being specifically tasked with the maintenance and cleaning of the hull and outer decks, this unending labor also fell to the seamen. Despite the requirement to have previous experience, the fact that the position *could* be done by someone with minimal knowledge made it attractive for workaways, people who exchanged work for passage. After all, anyone who could reasonably take direction and wrap a line around a cleat could make themselves useful aboard the vessel, freeing up the more technically savvy ABs for tasks which required their particular skills. While the practice was discouraged, serving as an AB as a workaway was certainly possible.¹¹¹ For instance, ten of the people lost in the sinking of the *Princess Sophia* were on the boat as workaways from Skagway, despite the requirement that justification for their presence be given.¹¹² The management to whom these decisions needed to be justified, however, was not estranged from the actual practice of sailing.

¹⁰⁷ Eric Sager, *Ships and Memories*, 59.

¹⁰⁸ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁹ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹¹⁰ *Regulations*, 6.

¹¹¹ *Regulations*, 20.

¹¹² F. F. W. Lowle, "Passengers on 'Princess Sophia' when lost on Vanderbilt Reef," October 29, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC. The loss of *Princess Sophia* is discussed at further length in Chapter Two.

Conclusion

Running the vessels of the BCCS required the dedicated efforts of their crews. Captain Troup enjoyed the powers and privileges of management, setting the company's course and speed as it grew. The Officers received the spotlight of social recognition, but also bore the burden of responsibility, none more so than the Master. Engine room staff, cramped and cloistered, implemented the Officers' orders for propulsion and ensured the proper working order of fuel- and grease-hungry steam-powered machinery. Around them all worked the Able Bodied Seamen. The ABs bobbed here and there around the ship, completing the small tasks that comprised the rest of the sea's working symphony. But just as customers do not board a boat to go nowhere, companies do not operate ships with no passengers or cargo. A group even more diverse than the ship-runners were given the many-faceted task of serving the customer.

Chapter Two

Serving The Customer

“ . . . must endeavor to give every satisfaction to the passengers, and his attention to their comfort must be unceasing.”

– Regulations for the Navigation of the British Columbia Coast Service Steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company

While not entirely the typical process of boarding due to a late dinner in Chinatown, this recollection set in 1910 is an amusing overview of the passenger’s experience on one of Canadian Pacific Railway’s (CPR) British Columbia Coast Service (BCCS) steamer. In it, the unnamed author and his brother Emil had just (literally) run across Vancouver in order to make their midnight sailing on time. Joined by “two other chaps [who] were thundering along behind us,” the four found a solitary member of the crew who informed them “that the PRINCESS MAY would be detained until three in the morning, and that most of the passengers had retired to their staterooms.” Not yet ready for bed, they availed themselves of the male-exclusive social space: the smoking room. The next morning, the author and Emil were roused by a gong-wielding crewman announcing breakfast, at which they saw that “most of the passengers appeared to be English couples, charmingly sedate and proper,” especially those at the Captain’s table. After breakfast, they note that *Princess May* was freshly painted and adorned with gulls “waiting for a handout from the Ship’s scullery after meals.” Trips to both the “parlor” (likely what is called the Social Hall on ships’ plans) and Smoking Room occupied their morning before being called to lunch. Upon arrival in Prince Rupert the next day, the author notes that both the Captain and First Officer were on the bridge for docking. A three-hour visit to town concluded with the 30-minute-warning whistle from *Princess May*. A late-returning passenger (the RCMP Constable nicknamed “Spike” whom they had met their first evening aboard) brought the vessel

back to the dock after pushing off. The voyage continues unimpeded from there to Skagway, where the brothers disembark.¹

Notice each place the crew touches the brothers' story. The first is the crewman who greeted them on the gangplank and informed them of the ship's detention. While the story is set in 1910 and it would be entirely plausible for this delay to be due to the loading of freight,² the fact that the author reports only a lone member of crew and not a bustling dock crammed with stevedores indicates some other cause, like perhaps a late mail delivery. The next morning, the brothers are gonged awake by a Porter, waited upon by Stewards, and served a breakfast made by the Cooks while admiring the Captain holding court with the primmest and properest of the passengers. They are amused by seagulls that were apparently habituated to expect leftovers from generous Cooks or Stewards. They utilize two public spaces continuously cleaned and maintained for them by the crew. Two Officers guided the ship into port. They are summoned back to the boat by a warning whistle blown by the bridge crew. The Bridge Officer (one would assume the Captain, given his presence for docking) orders the ship back to the pier rather than leave a single passenger behind. At every point, the journey was made enjoyable by the labors of the crew.

BCCS was nothing without the customers it served. Serving those customers were a crew of predominately white men with many different roles to play. Freight workers were routinely vilified by the Passenger Department for delaying ships' schedules. Nonetheless, the Freight Department was, in ways, more in tune with the larger needs of CPR as a whole and were therefore willing to make tradeoffs that negatively impacted BCCS specific service. Even still,

¹ Author unknown, "The 'Princess May,'" n.d. [ca. 1910], folder 12, box 3, Earl Marsh Collection (PR-2362), British Columbia Archives, Victoria (hereafter cited "EMC").

² As noted below, under heading "Freighting."

the Coast Service was remembered most for the luxurious experience it provided to the passengers who enjoyed it. Stewards, Porters, Pursers, and Cooks all had a part in maintaining the company's top-notch service afloat. Ultimately, regardless of whether one was a shipper only interested in the movement of their freight or one of a pair of brothers trying to get to Skagway, the employees of the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service would do most everything within their power to serve their customers.

Freighting

The Coast Service fulfilled many industrial functions, among them, a transporter of bulk freight. Every ship was designed with at least some freighting capacity, though this competed directly with the vessel's passenger accommodations. The internal competition between freight and passenger departments did not stop at marine architecture. Cargo activities had an unfortunate habit of delaying vessels and delayed vessels meant irritable customers. During a meeting, BCCS Manager James Troup argued that "the passenger business was being injured at times by the crowding of the boats with undesirable freight, thereby delaying them beyond schedule."³ In response, "the Freight Department contended that it was necessary to do this in order to keep our various customers along the Coast in line, and in many cases, to protect the Rail interests."⁴ Keeping the company's interests "in line" meant to keep the business with CPR's *steamship* line and thereby "protect the Rail interests" on the other side of the Strait of Georgia. BCCS was, after all, a division of the Canadian Pacific *Railway*, not a wholly independent company. The Coast Service's freight business was linked more closely with rail than the passenger side because while there was a significant local passenger traffic between

³ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, November 13, 1916, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

⁴ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, November 13, 1916, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

Vancouver, Victoria, and Seattle, the shipments of cargo rarely terminated at any of these ports. Given this, the Freight Department was more sensitive to the larger picture of BCCS' place within the broader CPR network. Nonetheless, they acknowledged that bulk freight did cause delays.⁵ The rest of those present at the meeting seem to have accepted their admission of culpability and their promise that cargo operations would be more closely monitored and even "curtailed where it was going to delay the boats," despite their misgivings about prioritizing passenger traffic at the expense of CPR's other interests.⁶

Freight Department managers' concern with "curtailing" cargo activities was not without basis. Five years earlier, in 1911, freight crews were being pushed hard to load ships to capacity. For instance, the *Princess Adelaide* left Vancouver "at 1:00 o'clock [pm], arrive[d] at Victoria at 6:[00] p.m., and from that time until midnight, as many men as can work properly, are engaged every minute of the time in unloading and loading freight from the return trip."⁷ The breakneck speed being requested of the men was, however, still not enough. Because passenger baggage and contracted mails (along with "quantities of bulky scenery in connection with the show companies moving from Victoria to Vancouver") took priority over common freight, Troup lamented that it was ultimately "necessary to leave freight lying on the wharves almost daily, at both ends of the route."⁸ "This, of course," continued the captain, "creates dissatisfaction among the shippers," and one would easily infer that it added stress to the freight bosses as well.⁹

Against the backdrop of this history, it is little wonder that the Freight Department pushed back

⁵ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, November 13, 1916, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

⁶ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, November 13, 1916, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

⁷ W. Troup, "Proposed Programme of Improvements to the B.C. Coast Service," December 14, 1911, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

⁸ W. Troup, "Proposed Programme of Improvements to the B.C. Coast Service," December 14, 1911, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

⁹ W. Troup, "Proposed Programme of Improvements to the B.C. Coast Service," December 14, 1911, folder 1, box 8, EMC.

against accusations that they were delaying the boats for no reason. They did an essential service for the company as a whole but were only noticed when things went wrong. The passenger department, on the other hand, was responsible for delivery the royal treatment that the Princess Line was known for.

Welcome Aboard

“My idea of the people served by the British Columbia Coast Steamship fleet,” wrote C. B. Foster in a memo to CPR leadership, “is that they want, first and above all, a dependable service, and, secondly, they want a good service, and after that they want a service as cheap as they can get it.”¹⁰ While fares may have changed with the times, BCCS was unwavering in providing a good, dependable experience for their passengers. Dependability arose in part from standardization.

Just as the officers and engineers did, customer-facing crewmembers also had to abide by the *Regulations for the Navigation of the British Columbia Coast Service Steamships*.¹¹ Among those rules that affected their daily experience were:

89. Pursers will see that their Assistants comport themselves in a gentlemanly manner....

105. The use of improper language is at all times strictly prohibited....

108. The Chief Steward, on shipping employees, will see that they have a sufficient supply of clothing to make them appear neat and tidy. They must always wear the Company’s uniform, which consists of blue serge trousers, shell jacket and vest of the same material, a peak cap, three white vests and a cotton working suit ... The Stewardess must wear blue and black dress, white cap and apron....

119. The working hours in port for all employees, except cooks, employed in the Chief Steward’s Department, will be from 7:30 A.M. until 5:30 P.M. [an undated handwritten note amends this to 8:00 to 5:00]. On days previous to sailing and on

¹⁰ C. B. Foster, “Passage Fares – British Columbia Coast Steamship Line,” January 23, 1923, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

¹¹ The responsibilities of Officers and Engineers are discussed in Chapter One.

Sundays, a half holiday will be permitted, but on sailing days, no shore leave will be granted to anyone, except by permission of the Chief Steward.¹²

The double emphasis on “gentlemanly manner” and proper language points towards the atmosphere that managers wanted the crew to create. These were not mere ferry boats, they were coastal liners, elegant and refined vessels catering to an elegant and refined clientele.¹³ This refinement was reflected in the crew’s attire, which could have been one of two different style of suit depending on the task of the moment. The specific instruction to maintain three white vests, not merely one to be worn and one in reserve, again indicates the high importance given to “looking the part” for their guests. Maintaining the look of the rest of the ship required time, however. Ten hour shifts in port (later reduced to nine hours) gave the crew time to keep the ship in peak condition, and they even got the liberty of half a day off on Sundays and the day before setting out on extended trips. Nonetheless, once out for the voyage, the requirement that the Chief Steward give personal authorization for shore leave meant that staff were effectively tied to the vessel until they returned to port. Uniformed, gentlemanly (or ladylike, for the stewardesses) behavior for ten hours per day was not a bad job for British Columbians who wanted a life on coastal waters. Conditions would even be improved as union activities made incremental advancements to pay and hours.¹⁴

Upon boarding, guests would typically be greeted by the Purser, whose responsibility it was to collect fares from all passengers.¹⁵ Once checked in, guests would be assisted to their stateroom by stewards and porters, “a sufficient number” of whom were to be “on hand at all

¹² *Regulations for the Navigation of the British Columbia Coast Service Steamships of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company: General Instructions* (Victoria: Colonist Printing and Publishing, n.d. [1908-1949?]), folder 7, box 9, EMC (hereafter cited “*Regulations*”), 18-22.

¹³ Discussed further under heading “Social Grandeur” in this chapter.

¹⁴ See Chapter 3: Working Together.

¹⁵ *Regulations*, 17.

times” to carry luggage and guide passengers to their staterooms.¹⁶ Even once settled in, bell boys were at all times on call to promptly attend to customers’ needs such as providing additional linens or when dining periods were.¹⁷ Within those dining periods, passengers were free to purchase meals at their leisure without the need to schedule a seating in advance.¹⁸ Throughout the day, guests could take in the scenery while strolling the deck, socialize in one of the few public saloons, go ashore briefly when in port, or rest privately in their cabins, all while the crew worked around them to clean and prepare for the next item in the itinerary.

In all, a cruise aboard a BCCS steamer was generally a pleasant and reasonably priced affair. Despite the crew’s wages, cost of supplies, and depreciation of the luxurious ships themselves, passengers were charged less than comparable outings elsewhere.¹⁹ After the maiden cruise of *Princess Maquinna* along the west coast of Vancouver Island in 1913, Troup wrote glowingly to his General Passenger Agent, H. W. Brodie: “The round trip rate of \$24.00 for five days’ sail, is less than board and lodging at a decent hotel... we had about half a dozen round trippers on the “Maquinna” on her first trip, and they were more than delighted, and will, I am sure, persuade some of their friends to go before the summer is out.”²⁰ BCCS steamers did not just outperform land-based hotels on price; they competed with them directly in luxuriousness as well.

¹⁶ *Regulations*, 20 and 23.

¹⁷ *Regulations*, 20.

¹⁸ Author unknown, “The ‘Princess May,’” no date [ca. 1910], folder 12, box 3, EMC. The luxurious dining experience is discussed under heading “Fine Dining” in this chapter.

¹⁹ The financial situation of BCCS, including crew wages, is discussed further in Chapter Three.

²⁰ J. W. Troup to H. W. Brodie, July 31, 1913, folder 2, box 3, EMC.

Social Grandeur

Public areas on BCCS steamers were lavishly appointed. Besides one's own cabin, there were four main public areas on ships during the Troup era: the dining saloon, the social hall, the smoking room, and the deck. The options were even more limited for women as they were not permitted in the smoking room. This must have been particularly disappointing as the smoking room was designed to be the heart of social life aboard ship. Aboard *Princess Mary*, for instance, the smoking room was the only place with both public seating *and* views—the dining saloon was available only for meals and the “inside saloon” was just that: inside.²¹

Men's smoking rooms also received special attention in their decorations. *Princess Kathleen's* was particularly known for its First Nations-inspired art. Intricate totem poles and figures carved in traditional poses ornament the space at eye level while a double row of small, decorative buttresses created a stepping effect at the ceiling.²² To their partial credit, BCCS management spent several weeks researching coastal art in correspondence with the Victoria Memorial Museum in Ottawa (not to be confused with the British Columbia Museum in Victoria).²³ Despite Troup writing to a museum official “I am quite in accord with your views that we should do all we can to keep this North American Indian art from going completely out of existence, and out of memory,”²⁴ it apparently escaped his own memory that First Nations artists would have been better experts on their own cultural heritage. While wishing them to be remembered, Troup also seems to have been ambivalent about the merit of Indigenous designs, referring to them in another letter as “British Columbia Coast ‘art.’”²⁵ Nonetheless, the

²¹ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, January 30, 1928, folder 10, box 3, EMC.

²² “‘Princess Kathleen’ – smoking room, promenade deck,” photo, n.d. [ca. 1925], folder 1, box 2, EMC.

²³ Harlan Smith to J. W. Troup, March 7, 1924, folder 7, box 2, EMC; J. W. Troup to C. E. E. Usher, March 17, 1924, folder 7, box 2, EMC; and J. W. Troup to Harlan Smith, March 22, 1924, folder 7, box 2, EMC.

²⁴ J. W. Troup to Harlan Smith, March 22, 1924, folder 7, box 2, EMC.

²⁵ J. W. Troup to C. E. E. Usher, March 17, 1924, folder 7, box 2, EMC. Internal quotes original.

appropriated designs were incorporated by Scottish craftsmen into *Princess Kathleen's* most important male social space.

While undoubtedly beautiful, decorations required meticulous cleaning by the crew. The outstretched wings of a thunderbird, the projecting snout of a bear, the brim of a human figure's cedar hat, and each of the over a hundred buttresses were all horizontal surfaces that would require regular dusting. Leather upholstery of the booths and chairs needed maintenance. Constant sea-spray against windowpanes—not to mention the occasional gift from a seagull—had to be cleaned or else the male passengers would lose their view. Perhaps most tedious of all for the stewards, while the center of the room was tiled, the seating areas were carpeted, allowing tobacco ash to collect and be ground in under foot.²⁶ The crew themselves were not permitted to contribute to the carpet's ash collection, being specifically prohibited them from smoking either “in the passenger saloons or while on duty.”²⁷ There was, however, required to be a watchman in the afternoons as this was a time of peak use and the risk of fire was of paramount concern.²⁸ Whether he enjoyed being surrounded by secondhand smoke likely depended on the individual watchman, of course.

Luxury Accommodations

A majority of the ship was unobserved by an afternoon watchman, however, being taken up by passenger cabins which generally slept one or two people each. The most luxurious option was the Cabin de Luxe. The room featured a four post bed complete with curtains, a two-tiered nightstand, ornately upholstered armchair, straight-back chair with embroidered cushion, radiator

²⁶ “‘Princess Kathleen’ – smoking room, promenade deck,” photo, nd [ca. 1925], folder 1, box 2, EMC.

²⁷ *Regulations*, 18.

²⁸ *Regulations*, 20.

set into a mock fireplace mantelpiece, basin with taps for both hot and cold water, electric lamps, and a doorway onto a room with tiled floor that appears to step up into a lavatory shared with another Cabin de Luxe on the other side.²⁹ Here, again, are objects of distinct luxury which required constant maintenance by the crew. The wooden surfaces required dusting and polishing, the bedcurtains and linens laundering, the fabric upholstery periodic mending, and the shared bathroom daily cleaning. Balanced against these constant needs were other touches that gave the room a homier feeling but required minimal upkeep from the crew, such as a portrait of a young woman on the wall and a vase of dried flowers on the mantle.³⁰ Throughout the voyage, regardless of which cabin they had booked, passengers had free access to paper and envelopes through the Purser's office that they could mail when the ship made port calls.³¹ This, of course, was not just good customer service but smart marketing. BCCS relied in part on word-of-mouth referrals among the wealthier residents of BC, as evidenced by Troup's hope after the maiden voyage of *Princess Maquinna* that those who went on the first cruise would "persuade some of their friends to go before the summer is out."³²

With the exception of the senior officers,³³ crew quarters were not nearly as comfortable. When they appeared on ships' deck plans at all, it was simply as a labeled room—there were no berths marked in, no wash basins, no closets or lockers, all of which suggests that the spaces were flexible (alternatively described as "impermanent") to the shifting needs and size of the crew. Temporary accommodations like folding cots or hammocks did not engender the same kind of morale that the Purser's or Chief Steward's private staterooms did. Unlike the

²⁹ "'Princess Kathleen' Cabin de Luxe," photo, nd [ca. 1925], folder 1, box 2, EMC.

³⁰ "'Princess Kathleen' Cabin de Luxe," photo, nd [ca. 1925], folder 1, box 2, EMC.

³¹ *Regulations*, 19.

³² J. W. Troup to H. W. Brodie, July 31, 1913, folder 2, box 3, EMC.

³³ See Chapter 1.

passengers, the crew did not have access to the ship's supply of stationary and were generally required to stay aboard at port calls even if they had wanted to send home a letter.³⁴

The Purser

While the Master was responsible for the ship as a whole, the man charged with maintaining impeccable customer service and looking after the company's business interests aboard was the Purser. Having "charge of all moneys and tickets collected, and be[ing] held responsible for a proper accounting of the same," the Purser's chief duty to the company was fiduciary.³⁵ As he was responsible for managing the entirety of the ship's revenue, it naturally followed that the Purser was also responsible to comply with periodic audits of the same.³⁶ In addition, BCCS regulations charged that pursers were accountable "to see that all the ship's papers, Bills of Health, Customs Documents, Way Bills for cargo, etc." were on board, that the Articles of Agreement seamen signed when joining the crew were followed, and for completing monthly payrolls.³⁷ The Articles of Agreement in particular were critical legal documents for the company. In most jurisdictions during the first decades of the twentieth century, sailors signed away their right to abandon their employment when they agreed to Articles.³⁸ The Purser's custody of these documents reflected his position as head of the company's financial affairs afloat. The public, however, most likely knew the purser first and foremost as their greeter, since he was responsible for the "collection of transportation," (i.e., fares).³⁹

³⁴ *Regulations*, 19 and 22.

³⁵ *Regulations*, 17.

³⁶ *Regulations*, 17. Emphasis "any" added.

³⁷ *Regulations*, 17-19.

³⁸ Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea* Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, from 1812 to the Present* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 93, Kindle.

³⁹ *Regulations*, 17.

Because of their customer-facing role, Pursers were some of the most recognizable crewmen aboard the ship besides the Captain and Officers. Their highly-visible position meant that they had a positive instruction that “whilst on duty[, Pursers] are expected to appear in uniform, neat and clean” and “are expected to be courteous to all passengers and to see that all members of their staff are likewise courteous.”⁴⁰ Not only responsible for their own staff, pursers were instructed to “at once investigate and report to the Captain *any* complaints which may be made to him by passengers; also any irregularities which may come under his notice, such as incivility on the part of the employees, want of cleanliness in the cabins, or bad and careless attendance.”⁴¹ This visibility and responsibility for the customer experience is borne out by American marine transportation mogul Joshua Green’s recollection that it was the “genial way your pursers and officers have met us at the gang plank” that impressed him the most.⁴² Note that the Pursers are mentioned first and is singled out for special praise; even the ship’s skipper is merged into the collective “and officers.”⁴³ To passengers, even one as intimately involved in the shipping industry as Joshua Green, the Purser stood out and the Officers faded into the backdrop, despite their higher rank and responsibility. It is perhaps unsurprising that customers would remember best the staff whose job it was to serve their needs directly, but memorable though he may have been, the Purser was but one of those staff.

⁴⁰ *Regulations*, 19.

⁴¹ *Regulations*, 18.

⁴² Joshua Green to J. W. Troup, July 26, 1927, CPR Corr. with J. W. Troup, box 29, Joshua Green papers, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.

⁴³ The Captain and Officers are discussed in Chapter One.

Chief Steward

The Purser's most important lieutenant was the Chief Steward. The list of spaces aboard ship for which he was responsible was a long one, including "all saloons, staterooms, second-class accommodations, storerooms, mess rooms, pantry, galley, bakery and furnishings."⁴⁴ As if that were not enough, responsibility for the food preparation areas also put him in charge of the "Victualling Stores," that is, the ship's food supply.⁴⁵ Part innkeeper, part maître d'hôtel, the Chief Steward's duties kept him occupied for the entire voyage. As passengers embarked, he assisted the purser in allotting berths and supervised the process of then getting guests to their staterooms.⁴⁶ Per regulations, "his attention to their comfort must be unceasing."⁴⁷ Part of that unceasing attention was the daily inspection of quarters to be completed with the Captain, in part to ensure their cleanliness, but also to verify "that heat, light, water, and ventilation [were] furnished in all portions of the ship."⁴⁸

While his responsibilities touched on "all portions of the ship," the Chief Steward's other main focus besides the staterooms was the dining saloon. While the Head Cook kept order within the kitchen and its crew in practice, officially, the Chief Steward was responsible for the vessel's mealtime operations. Regulation 106 ordered that "the Chief Steward will devote a portion of his time to the galleys, and see that nothing is wasted, that the Cooks take proper care of the cooking utensils, and that they keep the galleys, sculleries, etc., perfectly clean and tidy."⁴⁹ This oversight of the "proper care of the cooking utensils" was, perhaps, overreaching on the part of the company, since the utensils were furnished by the cooks themselves, as described below. The

⁴⁴ *Regulations*, 19.

⁴⁵ *Regulations*, 19.

⁴⁶ *Regulations*, 20.

⁴⁷ *Regulations*, 19.

⁴⁸ *Regulations*, 20 and 23.

⁴⁹ *Regulations*, 20.

Chief Steward was also responsible for coordinating mealtimes for the junior officers, even to the extent that he was in charge of their specific assigned seats.⁵⁰ Finally, the Chief Steward was to make a sweep of the vessel for lost items when calling at ports, delivering them to the agent ashore.⁵¹

Fine Dining

Dining aboard BCCS vessels was no mean affair, and it started with setting their tables. Typically sat at long tables that accommodated several parties at once, diners afloat would not want for any of the luxuries that were available at restaurants ashore. The silverware for the dining saloon aboard *Princess Patricia*, for instance, included electroplated table knives, cheese knives, fruit knives, fruit forks, table forks, dessert forks, pickle forks, dessert spoons, table spoons, tea spoons, egg spoons, coffee spoons, jam spades, butter knives, two sizes of bar spoons, ice tongs, sugar tongs, nutcrackers, mustard spoons, and cheese scoops. Accompanying this expanse of cutlery were oval cracker trays, cracker baskets, nut & raisin dishes, water pitchers, finger bowls (gold lined), bar pitcher, champagne tap, oval entrée dishes with covers and handles, cream ewers, sugar bowls, tea pots, sugar dredgers (for dusting extra powdered sugar on confections), champagne buckets, jam stands, syrup jugs, mustard pots, bread trays, fruit stands, and butter dishes with drainers. The “American Bar” got its own consignment of cocktail shakers, strainers, ice tools, bitters corks, sugar basin (and crushers), and a four-compartment stand for coffee beans. Even the Officers’ Mess mainly duplicated the dining saloon but with lessened quantities ordered and three notable additions: bottle cruets, vinegar

⁵⁰ *Regulations*, 23.

⁵¹ *Regulations*, 23.

bottles, and napkin rings.⁵² Polishing all of this silver, ironing the white tablecloths, and setting the saloons for service were the Stewards. This was not a line that accepted half measures when it came to luxury. The fully appointed dining saloon was equaled only by their menus.

One was spoiled for choice when dining aboard a *Princess* steamer. Each meal was a multi-course affair that would be similar to what was found ashore, and each course typically had at least two options for guests to choose between. Dinner service for October 2, 1912 on *Princess Sophia*, for instance, offered:

Hors d'Oeuvres
 Queen Olives. Salted Almonds.
Soup
 Mutton Broth.
Fish
 Boiled Cod & Parsley Sauce.
Entrees
 Haricot of Ox Tail. Princess Fritters & Sweet Sauce.
Hot Joints
 Roast Rib of Beef & Horseradish. Roast Leg of Pork & Apple Sauce.
 Boiled Ox Tongue & Vegetables.
Vegetables
 Stewed Carrots in Cream. Mashed & Boiled Potatoes.
Sweets
 Tapioca Pudding. Custard Pie.
 Apples. Oranges. Cheese. Pickles
 Tea. Coffee.⁵³

With six main courses to choose from accompanied by all the fixings, dinner on *Princess Sophia* was no beggar's feast. Lunch and breakfast menus were equally ambitious. One lunch gave the choice between fried halibut, loin steak with mushrooms, fricassee of chicken, macaroni au gratin, or veal cutlets for hot selections and roast beef, roast mutton, York ham, ox tongue, corned pork, corned beef, and chicken in aspic offered cold.⁵⁴ If one was not yet full, the same

⁵² Elkington & Co. invoice, December 19, 1911, folder 11, box 4, EMC.

⁵³ Dinner menu, October 2, 1912, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁵⁴ Lunch menu, July 30, no year [1912?], folder 2, box 5, EMC. Billed as "The 'Groceries' Picnic."

lunch provided coconut custard, blueberry pie, wine jelly with whipped cream, and lemon ice cream for dessert.⁵⁵ At breakfast, one could expect three to seven different preparations of fruit, three to five cereals, several cold fish and meat options, buckwheat cakes, hot cakes, toast, corn bread, and around a dozen hot cooked-to-order options with tea, coffee, or cocoa to drink.⁵⁶ All of these meals were prepared aboard in cramped galleys by the cooks, discussed in the section below.

Above and beyond the food they advertised, the menus themselves were attractive features of the meal service. Playbill-sized and appearing to be handwritten by members of the crew, each menu featured some kind of ornamentation or cartoon. Sometimes, the decorative features were predictable, such as clusters of holly leaves bordering the page for Christmas Dinner.⁵⁷ Other times, one found the a cartoon of a devilish figure looming over a corpulent, suited man with cigar in mouth and lower half in flames who declares: “Mein got! but vot a pot of money it must cost to heat this place.”⁵⁸ Other humorous items include a drawing of a chicken over the caption “if ‘the good die young’ why is it I am such an old HEN?” and a schoolmaster having just finished whipping the hindquarters of a cowlick-haired boy above the words “the little things we have to bare [sic].”⁵⁹ In a foray towards politics, one dinner menu showed a fez-wearing, nauseous-looking figure whose age is unclear—he has the proportions and size of a child but his mouth is lined and eyes bordered by wrinkles—who smokes from a hookah while seated cross-legged on a cushion. The caption reads: “Another rising in Turkey,” which may refer either to some news-of-the-day unrest in Asia Minor, or perhaps to the youth’s apparently

⁵⁵ Lunch menu, July 30, no year [1912?], folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁵⁶ Breakfast menu, July 7, 1912, folder 2, box 5, EMC; Breakfast menu, July 20, 1913, folder 2, box 5, EMC; and Breakfast menu, September 30, 1912, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁵⁷ Dinner menu, December 25, 1923, folder 2, box 3, EMC.

⁵⁸ Breakfast menu, September 30, 1912, folder 2, box 5, EMC. Phonetic spellings original.

⁵⁹ Dinner menu, October 2, 1912, folder 2, box 5, EMC; and Luncheon menu, July 20, [1913], folder 2, box 5, EMC.

rising lunch after too much smoke.⁶⁰ Children peeping through life rings seem to be a common theme in late July, with two separate cartoons of the same subject appearing around a year apart.⁶¹ While it is unclear precisely who among the crew was responsible for creating the menus and their cartoons, the varying hand in which they were written indicates it was likely a rotational duty. The menus seem also to have been a creative outlet for staff, a way to personalize their service and express themselves professionally—that is, if an apparently German capitalist residing, apparently, in the Christian Hell could be considered “professional.” Even so, the pushing of such professional boundaries also demonstrate that the crew was secure in their positions and comfortable with where limits could be safely expanded, even while maintaining a respectable environment for the elite.

Elaborate as they were, meals aboard BCCS vessels remained competitively priced. Even as late as 1918, passengers were not charged more than a full dollar per meal for one of the most labor-intensive parts of the fleet’s service. The apparent strain this caused on the company’s balance sheet was commented on when Manager Troup wrote to General (i.e., Head) Passenger Agent H. W. Brodie that “the Vice-President [D. C. Coleman] is pressing me constantly. He points out that our revenue is not increasing in the same proportion as our expenditures” and recommended that the lunch charge be advanced to \$1.00 and dinner be \$1.25.⁶² In comparison to dining services offered on CPR trains and at their hotels, Troup felt that that the price “would not be excessive.”⁶³ Clearly, Coleman’s pressure worked as by June 1920 the prices had been set at \$1.00 for breakfast, \$1.25 for lunch, and \$1.50 for dinner, all even higher than what had been

⁶⁰ Dinner menu, July 21, no year, folder 2, box 5, EMC. There is not an immediately identifiable news item pertaining to unrest in Turkey around the publication of this menu, but naturally, not all of the newspapers that crews had access to were available to me during research for this project.

⁶¹ Lunch menu, July 30, no year [1912?], folder 2, box 5, EMC; and Breakfast menu, July 20, 1913, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁶² J. W. Troup to H. W. Brodie, April 10, 1918, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

⁶³ J. W. Troup to H. W. Brodie, April 10, 1918, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

requested two years earlier.⁶⁴ In 1920, however, it was CPR Vice President Grant Hall pushing for a \$0.25 increase to both the breakfast and dinner charges; after all, “our meals are very high class and nobody will criticize their quality.”⁶⁵ Our meals have always been a great advertisement for us,” wrote Troup in 1920 arguing that they were of greater value in generating business than generating additional revenue.⁶⁶

The company’s meals were also of use in deflecting unwanted attention at times. In 1914, Troup was forced to address upper management’s concerns over the number of free “meals” given out by the Coast Service. After investigating, Troup explained:

We find that the Chief Stewards have been over-zealous in reporting meals ... in order to make a showing for themselves, and in this way the statement of the number of free meals on board of the boats, is more or less of an exaggeration....

The Immigration Officers, who stand on the gangplanks at Vancouver at night, and who are there until 11:00 o’clock, have the privilege of going to the dining saloon and getting a cup of coffee, and possibly a little cold lunch. The Stewards report this as a meal.

At Seattle, there is an American Customs Officer who stands by the ship during the entire time she lies in port. He has been given his breakfast since we have been running to Seattle, and I have no doubt it has saved us many a complaint for some technical violation of the letter of the law.⁶⁷

While CPR lawyers may have cringed at the thought the company was effectively bribing customs officers with breakfast, it is difficult to disagree with Troup’s logic. American officials got an in-kind bonus from BCCS to supplement their government salaries and the company was extended professional courtesy to fix issues prior to a citation; the arrangement was a win-win. Some staff were also given access to free meals above and beyond their usual victualling as members of the crew. “The Night Ticket Taker at Victoria,” wrote Troup, “is allowed a cup of

⁶⁴ Grant Hall to D. C. Coleman, June 16, 1920, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

⁶⁵ Grant Hall to D. C. Coleman, June 16, 1920, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

⁶⁶ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 25, 1920, folder 3, box 8, EMC.

⁶⁷ J. W. Troup to J. Manson, May 21, 1914, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

coffee” and senior officers could “on occasion” bring aboard a guest who got meals gratis.⁶⁸ It is unclear precisely which member of the crew made the decision regarding who was given free food. It seems likely that the Chief Steward could have claimed responsibility if he wished—after all, it was he who reported the meals—but it also seems that once the practice was established for certain people, it was allowed to continue without question. Certainly, no member of the Steward’s Department was likely to have interfered with providing food to a guest of one of Officer’s rank; instead, as seems to have been done “over-zealously,” they simply reported the meal and informed their colleagues in the galley that another plate was needed.

Chinese Cooks

Cloistered in small, purpose-built galleys, the crew members responsible for these phenomenal meals were the cooks, all of whom were of Chinese descent if not first-generation Canadians themselves. “They are,” wrote Neroutsos to upper management, “a hard-working, loyal body of men, and are largely responsible for the good name that we hold for service on these steamers.”⁶⁹ The permanence of Chinese crewmen in the galley, and their tendency not to complain about their accommodations, was literally built into the design of the vessels. Across the globe—at least in the corners where the Union Jack held sway—quarters for Asian seamen were routinely more restricted than their white counterparts, and BCCS no different.⁷⁰ Captain Neroutsos reported that “the galleys in our vessels are considerably cramped compared with kitchen accommodation in hotels and restaurants.”⁷¹ They were so cramped, in fact, that white

⁶⁸ J. W. Troup to J. Manson, May 21, 1914, folder 2, box 8, EMC.

⁶⁹ C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, November 12, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷⁰ Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea*, 133, Kindle.

⁷¹ C. D. Neroutsos, “Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese with Canadians on Canadian Pacific Railway, B.C. Coast Service Steamships,” February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

crews unaccustomed to the tight spaces “would be considerably dissatisfied with [the] ships’ galleys, and would experience a great deal of difficulty in turning out proper meals.”⁷² While Neroutsos is likely right that white crews would be dissatisfied with the accommodations, that does not mean that Chinese crews necessarily *were* satisfied. He seems to conflate being accustomed with and accepting the situation with actually approving of it. He also ignores the fact that BCCS chose to design their ships with small kitchens in part because management banked on them being continually staffed with Chinese cooks.

The pay due to Chinese crewmembers was a perennial consideration for BCCS management. Because British Columbia had the largest total population of Asian immigrants, nearly 51,000 by 1931, it also had the greatest number of Asian workers in the labor force.⁷³ While their percentage share of the population actually fell from 1901 to 1931 despite nearly tripling in absolute numbers, they still constituted a significant demographic group within British Columbian society.⁷⁴ The economic dynamics this created sometimes needed explaining to upper management based in Winnipeg and Montreal. Responding to push back on his request to pay bonuses to the cooks, Troup wrote back “it seems like pretty high rates to be paying Chinese, but these proposed rates are not out of proportion with rates paid here generally to Chinese in other lines of work.”⁷⁵ He was successful in securing the “high rates” for his employees, and paying bonuses in lieu of raising regular wages became not only normal operating procedure for BCCS but one “the Chinese are quite proud of.”⁷⁶ Stable, comparatively reasonable pay such as what

⁷² C. D Neroutsos, “Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese with Canadians on Canadian Pacific Railway, B.C. Coast Service Steamships,” February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷³ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 429.

⁷⁴ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 429.

⁷⁵ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, July 26, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷⁶ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, April 14, 1921, folder 3, box 8, EMC. For additional explanation of why the company chose bonuses in lieu of pay raises, see Chapter Three.

was earned by Coast Service employees was undoubtedly welcome in the burgeoning Chinese communities of Victoria and Vancouver, and quite unlike the incomes available to them in other industries.⁷⁷

Their stability in employment was particularly valuable to Chinese crewmembers as flourishing “Chinatowns” in both Victoria and Vancouver consolidated and used their communities’ capital investments to create enclaves with, as historian Jean Barman puts it, “a comparable range of services to those enjoyed by others in the rest of the town.”⁷⁸ Since one of the benefits to serving in the coastwise fleet as opposed to a transoceanic service was the privilege of returning home regularly, if not nightly, the consistent influx of money was undoubtedly welcome. Even while supporting their segregated enclaves, Chinese cooks working for BCCS were, by the very nature of their integrated employment, forging relationships with their white coworkers and supervisors. As maritime labor historian Leon Fink rightly notes, “sea labor functioned through the decades ... as a forum for interethnic and interracial contact.”⁷⁹ These experiences started to change perspectives, especially the perspectives of BCCS managers, resulting in a level of respect for their Chinese employees that was surprising for the time, which in turn reinforced sustained intercommunal contacts.⁸⁰

Shore Agents

Just as crewmembers’ employment afloat affected their communities ashore, the passenger experience before ever stepping onto the gang plank was a critical part of BCCS operations. To elevate their shoreside service, the company invested in terminals and deployed

⁷⁷ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 142.

⁷⁸ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 145.

⁷⁹ Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea*, 132, Kindle.

⁸⁰ Managerial praise for Chinese employees is discussed in Chapter Three.

agents to certain key ports at which the Coast Service called. Agents would do everything from work the public counter to complete monthly reports to acquire customers.⁸¹ Juneau agent F. F. W. Lowle, for instance, expressed regret at the low passenger count coming from his port, indicating that these shoreside employees were also in charge of drumming up business, not merely responding to it.⁸² Because of their multifaceted role, agents could feel pulled in several directions at once. Lowle commented that in addition to Troup, agents in Alaska felt that they were also responsible to the Passenger Traffic and Freight Traffic department heads.⁸³ Of the three to whom agents reported, Troup was naturally the final say. Indeed, passing word to and implementing directions from Victoria—thereby giving the boss the ability to have his say—was one of the shore agent’s most important duties. This was particularly the case in emergencies.

In the era when rapid communication methods were still being developed, Victoria was often unable to respond to crises further afield. Agents’ physical locations meant that they were placed to coordinate emergency responses on behalf of the company. They were within wireless range of distressed vessels but could also make use of land-based telegraph systems to relay information back to headquarters and receive instructions from the same. For the CPR Agent in Juneau, F. F. W. Lowle, emergency management became a tragically large part of his duties in 1918.

Highlighting the shoreside agent’s role as a link in the chain of communication back to headquarters, Lowle’s unexpected duties as an emergency coordinator began in March. On March 9, 1918, the Pacific Steamship Company’s *Admiral Evans* ran aground in Hawk Inlet near Juneau. Lowle wasted no time in dispatching BCCS’s *Princess Sophia* to assist, doing so even

⁸¹ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 4, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC; and F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 18, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

⁸² F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 18, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

⁸³ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 18, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

before he had received any instructions from Troup.⁸⁴ While the decision to send *Princess Sophia* was commended, Lowle had waited until the next morning to cable back to Victoria that he had done so. “You should have wired us immediately [after] the arrangement was made,” Troup complained; “Everybody on the Coast had the information that the ‘Sophia’ had gone to the relief of the ‘Evans’ long before we had it.”⁸⁵ Happily for the crew and passengers of *Admiral Evans*, the worst that happened after its grounding was Troup’s frustration with Lowle. When *Princess Sophia* grounded later the same year in October, all initial indications were that the incident would have the same result. Instead, *Princess Sophia* became, and over a hundred years later remains, the worst maritime disaster along the Pacific coast of North America.

At 2:15 am on October 24, 1918, in blizzard conditions, *Princess Sophia* radioed “ashore Vanderbilt Reef send all possible help.”⁸⁶ Juneau Agent Lowle was aware less than two hours later, asking *Princess Sophia*’s Captain Locke via wireless: “Have you any instructions to give me?” Locke responded, simply: “None.”⁸⁷ Captain Locke’s answer was indicative of his calm reaction to the grounding. Locke believed “Sophia was perfectly safe,” and the skippers of vessels responding to the emergency (including USS *Cedar*, USS *Peterson*, and fishing vessel *King & Winge*) agreed that the ship was “seemingly solidly fastened” atop the reef and in no immediate danger.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Lowle and Locke communicated for the rest of the day to coordinate getting all available boats on scene to take the passengers off as soon as seas calmed.⁸⁹ Both men communicated with Troup throughout the day as well, but this was

⁸⁴ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, March 18, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁸⁵ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, April 6, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁸⁶ “Copies [of] Messages Received and Sent From and To Capt. Lock and From and To Capt. Troup,” folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁸⁷ “Copies [of] Messages Received and Sent From and To Capt. Lock and From and To Capt. Troup,” folder 2, box 5, EMC

⁸⁸ Thomas Riggs Jr., “Statement of Capt. J. Miller—King & Winge,” October 31, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁸⁹ “Copies [of] Messages Received and Sent From and To Capt. Lock and From and To Capt. Troup,” October 24-25, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC

hampered somewhat when a telegraph cable apparently broke during the ongoing storm and message traffic had to be rerouted via wireless stations.⁹⁰ The situation seemed optimistic enough that Lowle was able to take time between communicating with Locke and Troup to arrange accommodations for the passengers in Juneau (including at several private houses) where they could wait for *Princess Alice* to arrive and provide onward travel.⁹¹ Despite an unsuccessful attempt at 4:00 am to get the passengers transferred to USS *Cedar*, October 25 passed much the same as the day before. Lowle, Locke, and Troup messaged each other every few hours, a small fleet of vessels from Juneau stood by waiting for the water to calm enough to safely approach, and despite a broken steam main cutting power to the ship, everyone seemed in reasonable spirits.⁹² Lowle's evening message to Troup at 6:00 pm reported that *Princess Sophia* was still "resting easily" on the reef but they remained "unable to take off passengers [on] account [of] strong north wind." Troup, Neroutsos, Lowle, Locke, those aboard *Princess Sophia*, and the whole community of Juneau seem to have retired for the evening concerned but not overly anxious about the stranded vessel, ready for fresh attempts at rescue in the morning.

There is a sudden and terrible finality to certain unexpected telegrams. The cable that came to Bremerton Navy Yard in the early morning hours of October 26th and relayed to BCCS headquarters in Victoria immediately after was one such message:

"Princess Sophia" driven across reef last night. No survivors. Had two hundred sixty-eight passengers, seventy-five crew. Everything possible done here to help. Nothing could be done owing [to] terrible rough weather. Report follows [as] soon as possible. Radio, Juneau.⁹³

⁹⁰ "Certified Copy [of messages between Captain Locke, F. F. W. Lowle, J. W. Troup, and C. D. Neroutsos]," October 24-26, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹¹ "Copies [of] Messages Received and Sent From and To Capt. Lock and From and To Capt. Troup," folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹² "Copies [of] Messages Received and Sent From and To Capt. Lock and From and To Capt. Troup," folder 2, box 5, EMC; "Certified Copy [of messages between Captain Locke, F. F. W. Lowle, J. W. Troup, and C. D. Neroutsos]," October 24-26, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹³ Juneau Radio to Bremerton Navy Yard, telegram, October 26, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

In light of all the other responsibilities Lowle suddenly found himself bearing, it is perhaps merciful that he did not have the burden of informing Victoria of the loss. Nor did he own the actions (and inactions) of *Princess Sophia's* Captain Locke, *Princess Alice's* Captain Slater, the crew of USS *Cedar*, or any other of the vessels involved. Nonetheless, as the representative of Canadian Pacific Railway, Lowle's position required him to coordinate recovery efforts, answer the inquiries of 347 sets of passengers' family and friends, and preserve evidence for the inevitable legal ramifications of the loss.⁹⁴

The task of returning bodies to shore began quickly. By October 28, Lowle had multiple actors involved. He reported to Troup that he had "organized with assistance of [the] governor [a] regular fleet for search and shore patrol."⁹⁵ Even by early morning, the fleet and their shoreside partners had met with grim success, recovering fifty bodies and identifying a majority of them.⁹⁶ By evening, that number had grown to one hundred seventy five recovered and "nearly all" identified.⁹⁷ The finalized list of passengers was sent to Victoria (and personally transported to Juneau) by the Skagway agent on October 29.⁹⁸ Again, mercifully for Agent Lowle, it was his Skagway counterpart who needed to formally report that four infants in arms, too young even to be charged a fare, had been aboard.⁹⁹ *Princess Alice*, dispatched to collect the passengers from *Princess Sophia*, was still steaming north after a day-long delay in Ketchikan but its mission was now unclear.¹⁰⁰ Troup told Lowle from Victoria that it was "impossible at this distance to decide on best use to be made of the 'Alice'; must therefore leave it to your

⁹⁴ The passenger number was later revised upwards from what was initially reported by telegram. [Skagway agent], "Passengers on 'Princess Sophia' when lost on Vanderbilt Reef," October 29, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹⁵ F. F. W. Lowle quoted in J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹⁶ F. F. W. Lowle quoted in J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹⁷ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹⁸ [Skagway agent] to J. W. Troup, October 29, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

⁹⁹ [Skagway agent] to J. W. Troup, October 29, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰⁰ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

judgment.”¹⁰¹ Ultimately, it was decided that *Princess Sophia*'s passengers would still return home aboard *Princess Alice*, only in coffins instead of cabins.¹⁰²

Acquiring sufficient coffins, too, was a logistical challenge. It would have been difficult enough to furnish over three hundred caskets at once on short notice under normal conditions. Sadly, 1918 and its attendant influenza pandemic meant that stocks were “practically exhausted.”¹⁰³ Telegrams sent to Troup within minutes of each other on October 28 conflict on whether Undertaker Butterworth in Seattle would be sending one hundred, one hundred fifty, or two hundred caskets, but they agree that the shipment would proceed north to Vancouver aboard *City of Seattle* the next day.¹⁰⁴ All three estimates were wrong; Butterworth sent “two expert embalmers” to accompany two hundred seventy five coffins and necessary supplies.¹⁰⁵

At the same time as Lowle was coordinating recovery efforts, anxious messages were arriving both in Juneau and Victoria. Even recognizing that telegrams frequently omitted punctuation and often did not differentiate lower- and upper-case letters, it is impossible to read Mrs. F. L. Walsh's cable with anything less than panic. At 5:43 pm on October 26, remarkably quickly as news of the ship's peril was just becoming known, she sent: “PLEASE WIRE IMMEDIATELY COLLECT LATEST EXACT REPORT STEAMSHIP PRINCESS SOPHIA ARE PASSENGERS SAFE.”¹⁰⁶ Either Mr. Walsh missed his boat or Mrs. Walsh was concerned for someone else as no one by that last name appears on the passenger roster.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, telegram, October 27, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰² J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰³ E. E. Penn to J. W. Troup, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰⁴ E. E. Penn to J. W. Troup, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC; A. F. Haines to J. W. Troup, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰⁵ E. H. Cuddy to J. W. Troup, telegram, October 29, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰⁶ Mrs. F. L. Walsh to “Canadian Steamship Co” [BCCS], 17:43hrs, October 26, 1918.

¹⁰⁷ [Skagway agent], “Passengers on ‘Princess Sophia’ when lost on Vanderbilt Reef,” October 29, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

Throughout this crisis, Lowle was again and again expected to make independent decisions on behalf of the company. *Princess Alice* was sent to Juneau with the understanding that the ship would receive further orders from Lowle personally when they arrived on scene.¹⁰⁸ Troup told Lowle that he would “rely on your good judgement” in determining what expenses were necessary for the recovery effort and authorized him effective *carte blanche*, saying that Lowle would “be fully protected” for his financial decisions.¹⁰⁹

The strain of these decisions, protected or not, was felt by Lowle. As early as the 28th he was requesting “some official help” since he found himself “working night and day and taking grave responsibility.”¹¹⁰ This was confirmed by the Deputy US Marshall in Juneau, who wrote a three-page letter to General Agent Brodie in Vancouver, Lowle’s immediate superior, praising Lowle’s actions:

Mr. Lowle never left the office for several days, going without sleep and without his meals....

Mr. Lowle immediately sent out a number of additional boats to search for bodies ... During the short time intervening between the receipt of the news and the actual finding of the first bodies, Mr. Lowle had accomplished wonders in organizing identification crews from volunteers ... It is hard for anyone who was not on the ground to realize the vast amount of work that had fallen overnight on Mr. Lowle’s shoulders, and it still harder to tell of how that work was handled. I must also add that while all of the people of Juneau who aided in this work, did so voluntarily, a great deal of it was accomplished through the popularity of Mr. Lowle.¹¹¹

While such praise as this shows that Lowle was clearly completely dedicated to the task at hand and the recipient of the community’s unreserved support, such herculean efforts were not without their emotional costs.

¹⁰⁸ “Copies [of] Messages Received and Sent From and To Capt. Lock and From and To Capt. Troup,” folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹⁰⁹ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁰ F. F. W. Lowle quoted in J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, telegram, October 28, 1918, folder 2, box 5, EMC.

¹¹¹ Harry Morton to H. W. Brodie, November 29, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

Almost two months after the wreck, and still dealing with the aftermath, Lowle's stress finally reached a breaking point. He wrote to Troup: "I do not feel I am being treated as I should be" and complained he was still arriving at the office early, leaving late, and even working Sundays.¹¹² He was handling financial matters and coordinating with local boatmen.¹¹³ He was "attending to scores of mailed enquiries from relatives" of those lost in the disaster.¹¹⁴ These extra duties all while continuing to manage "all the trivial office work" that was a normal part of the position.¹¹⁵ Troup wrote back promptly with "surprise" at having received such an impassioned letter.¹¹⁶ "First of all," consoled the old Captain, "I wish to say that the Company appreciates the good work you have done in the North, and the particularly trying time you had following this recent disaster."¹¹⁷ Troup understood the tremendous hours that Lowle was putting in and told his Juneau agent that he was "authorized to get any help that you may need to assist you ... at such rate of pay as you may find it necessary to give."¹¹⁸ In order to secure Lowle a "definite holiday," Troup even suggested a temporary office closure and to have business matters handled by ships' pursers "the same as any other way port."¹¹⁹ After this extraordinary offer came extraordinary praise. The relatively reserved Troup who allowed compliments in trickles only told Lowle "I want to assure you that the idea you have formed that your services are not properly appreciated, is entirely erroneous. The writer has had the highest personal regard for you."¹²⁰ F. F. W. Lowle, stationed in lonely Juneau to represent the expansive Canadian Pacific, a customer service worker turned emergency manager, was held in greatest esteem by one of the

¹¹² F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 4, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹³ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 4, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁴ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 4, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁵ F. F. W. Lowle to J. W. Troup, December 4, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁶ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, December 13, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁷ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, December 13, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁸ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, December 13, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹¹⁹ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, December 13, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

¹²⁰ J. W. Troup to F. F. W. Lowle, December 13, 1918, folder 3, box 5, EMC.

most prominent men in BC's capital. There are times, it seems, that unexpected duties beget unexpected praise.

Serving the Customer

While Lowle's efforts surrounding the *Princess Sophia* disaster were notably intense, the various crews of the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service consistently worked hard to serve their customers. Some of their duties included getting raw lumber stowed on a luxurious passenger vessel without delaying it too severely. Others were responsible for announcing breakfast via gong. More than a few crewmen exhausted themselves in a cramped kitchen to produce sumptuous meals. Even those who stayed ashore could not entirely divorce themselves from the sometimes hard realities of working for a steamship company that operated in dangerous waters. Whatever their particular niche within the corporate ecosystem of BCCS, crewmen were rarely alone. Their comradery with each other and long weeks at sea gave rise to understanding that they could work together in more ways than just those the company paid them for. While their work of serving the customer would always be *work*, perhaps it could be made better through collective action.

Chapter Three

Working Together

“If the members of your Union are not satisfied with the wages and conditions on our boats they are not compelled to work for us, and we see no reason why we should be compelled to employ them.”

– E. H. Beazley

Two strikes—one in 1918, the other a year later—show a full range of industrial complexities facing the workers and management of the British Columbia Coast Service as they endeavored to work together. The ships’ Officers refused their duties in 1918 to win managerial recognition for their union, the Canadian Merchant Service Guild. The Seamen’s strike of 1919 was *almost* initiated over perennial questions of working conditions and pay, but instead resulted from the call to a general sympathetic strike supporting workers in Winnipeg. The process of starting to resolve these issues of recognition, pay, and loyalty was compressed into two short years.

The decision by companies on whether to recognize the officers’ union or not precipitated a sea change in management-labor relations throughout all the local steamship lines, not just BCCS. While steamship line managers—including James Troup and Cyril Neroutsos of BCCS—could coordinate and share intelligence to control the dynamic at first, they were unable to maintain their advantages once their employees demonstrated that they could collectively act. The success of the Masters and Mates’ action catalyzed relationships with other fledgling unions. Despite managerial dissuasion, workers joined these newly-recognized unions and capital found that it could no longer even attempt to ignore labor groups. The strike of 1919 illustrates the increasingly complex dynamics of working together in the Coast Service brought about by union acceptance. Even though management negotiated in relatively good faith with their employees’

unions and labor had, in turn, accepted partial defeats on certain issues, the strike went forward anyway, standing in sympathy with their union brothers in Winnipeg. At stake for all sides were the intertwined questions of identity and loyalty: were crews company men or union men?

This chapter treats the strikes of 1918 and 1919 not as case studies per se but as showcases for the many-layered economic and identity questions workers on both sides of the management/labor divide were grappling with in the late 1910s. Therefore, after dispensing briefly with the chronology of the two events, treating the summers of 1918 and 1919 as a blended period of labor unrest allows the issues they raised become the organizational focus. This blending is possible because of their temporal proximity and connected questions. Union recognition, pay and working hours, and class/company identity each contributed more significantly to the narrative of the strikes than the timeline itself. Both strikes also occurred in the context of Canada's involvement in, and the immediate aftermath of, the First World War which reduced the supply of labor and heightened tensions. Even as the Dominion helped fuel the Empire's war effort, there were still local economies to be maintained, and shutting down transportation between Vancouver Island and the mainland was a serious threat that impelled labor and management to negotiate new understandings for emerging issues.

Walking Out

When the ultimatum finally came down from the assembled Officers of British Columbia's local vessels, it gave management only forty-eight hours until the morning of Friday, August 23, 1918 to recognize the Canadian Merchant Service Guild or face "the biggest tie-up in the history of coastwise shipping in British Columbia."¹ Management refused, and the Guild

¹ "Masters and Mates Threaten to Tie Up Coast Shipping," *Vancouver Daily World*, August 21, 1918, newspapers.com.

followed through on its threat to walk out. For BCCS, just one of the steamship lines affected, services shut down in phases. The first to go were *Princess Victoria* and *Princess Mary*, which completed their service days on the 23rd and then let their boilers grow cold. *Princess Charlotte* and *Princess Alice* darkened their decks on the 24th. Then CPR tugs *Nitinat*, *Nanoose*, and *Qualicum* all quit in Vancouver and the Strait of Georgia went quiet.² Hundreds of passengers found themselves without transportation and literal tons of freight sat idle at dockside warehouses for want of ships to move them.

Two days later, unwilling to allow the continued separation of British Columbia's mainland from its capital, the Prime Minister himself was involved in resolving the strike. "Sir Robert Borden yesterday took a hand in the shipping difficulties on this coast," reported the *Vancouver Sun*.³ Borden urged the striking officers to return to their ships and promising that the government would enforce the "assurances from the companies" it had received to recognize the union.⁴ Two days of federal pressure and the fleet was moving again, having convinced Troup and his fellow managers to accept the reality that they must deal with their employees collectively.⁵ In return, the Masters and Mates agreed to resume service, ending the strike.⁶

Just under a year later on June 2nd, 1919, relations with the Masters and Mates having returned to normalcy, the managers and owners of the local steamship companies went to meet with a different group workers. Prominent among the former group were J. W. Troup of BCCS and E. H. Beazley of the Union Steamship Company. The latter were comprised of their collected wheelmen, quarterdeckmen, deckhands, paint scrubbers, firemen, oilers, and

² "Steamers are Now Tying Up," *The Province* (Vancouver), August 23, 1918, newspapers.com.

³ "Premier Borden Urges Skippers to Resume Work," *The Vancouver Daily Sun*, August 26, 1918, newspapers.com.

⁴ "Premier Borden Urges Skippers to Resume Work," *The Vancouver Daily Sun*, August 26, 1918, newspapers.com.

⁵ "Coast Vessels Running Again," *The Vancouver Daily World*, August 28, 1918, newspapers.com.

⁶ "Coast Vessels Running Again," *The Vancouver Daily World*, August 28, 1918, newspapers.com.

stewards.⁷ Negotiations were to resume when on the morning of June 3, the crew of *Princess Beatrice* landed at the CPR Wharf in Vancouver, secured the vessel, and the skipper signaled “finished with engines” to the engineers. Then, at eleven o’clock, it was the Officers (along with the engineers, porters, and cooks) who watched as everyone else walked ashore, not to return. Back at his office in Victoria, Captain Troup received the news of the strike’s commencement. It was not unexpected, even despite the meeting the day before and expectation of continued talks, but in his view, it was entirely unwarranted since they had achieved agreement in principle on the actual issues of concern to his employees, such as pay and working hours. Troup could not, however, counter his worker’s growing sense of union identity. Union loyalty towards the striking workers in Winnipeg and growing working-class polarization during the war years won out over managerial concessions, and as each successive vessel landed, they too left work, grinding service to nearly halt for the second time in as many years.⁸

For just over a week that June, the strike severely disrupted the transportation system, but did not entirely eliminate it. BCCS continued to operate the minimum necessary to maintain connection between Victoria and Vancouver. Victoria to Seattle was handled solely by the Puget Sound Navigation Company (PSNC), owned by Troup’s one-time rival turned good friend Joshua Green, operating both *Sol Duc*—which ran the route normally for PSNC, albeit with more intermediate stops than BCCS patrons were accustomed to—and *Indianapolis* (as a relief vessel). The run from Seattle to Vancouver was the only one temporarily abandoned by all companies in order to focus on more critical links. It was even expected that *Princess Adelaide* would restore that final leg of the triangle on June 10th, but service-substitution was determined unnecessary

⁷ “Seamen’s Strike will Tie-Up Coast Shipping,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 2, 1919, newspapers.com.

⁸ Jean Barman, *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 234.

before it could be implemented.⁹ “The continuance of steamship service,” even at a minimum level, had already “done much to offset the effectiveness of the seamen’s strike” reported the *Victoria Daily Times* on the tenth, and the paper’s front-page headline declared that the “strike in Vancouver has Passed its High-Water Mark.”¹⁰ While the high-water mark may have been reached on the tenth, it took until July 3 for the strike to recede completely, management having successfully waited their workers out while maintaining services.¹¹ The continuance of coastwise shipping was necessary for management not only from a tactical perspective in order to demonstrate to employees that striking could not tie up the fleet, but also to uphold their obligations.

Steaming Through the Strikes

No obligations were more pressing than those to their regular customers and the Crown itself. Contracts for the carriage of His Majesty’s mails were indifferent to labor disputes. Letters were to be delivered on time, as specified, or else risk contracts worth tens of thousands of dollars.¹² Disappointing His Majesty’s postmasters was one thing, frustrating His Majesty’s subjects was quite another. BCCS ferry service was the most critical link between Vancouver Island and mainland BC, despite the presence of other companies in the area. For instance, Union Steamship Company’s vessels were small and focused more on the hard-to-reach nooks and crannies of the Salish Sea’s fjords.¹³ Canadian National connected primarily to their own rail

⁹ “Princess Adelaide Sailing To-Night,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 9, 1919, newspapers.com.

¹⁰ “Strike in Vancouver has Passed its High-Water Mark and Now is Ebbing,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 10, 1919, newspapers.com.

¹¹ “Seamen Returning to Work on Coast Boats,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, July 3, 1919, newspapers.com.

¹² H. J. May to C. D. Neroutsos, April 12, 1929, folder 2, box 9, Earl Marsh Collection (PR-2362), British Columbia Archives, Victoria (hereafter cited “EMC”).

¹³ Gerald A. Rushton, *Whistle Up the Inlet: The Union Steamships Story* (North Vancouver, BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 1974) 69-70.

terminus in Prince Rupert, much farther to the north.¹⁴ Even if the Coast Service had been willing to accept the royal mail penalties, sever the connection between British Columbia's two most important population centers, and forego passengers' fares, they would still be obliged to uphold the reputation of the mighty Canadian Pacific Railway. BCCS had no real choice: the ships must go out for King, customer, and company.

The most preferable option during both strikes was simply to run the boats short-staffed, but this greatly depended on who had walked out. For the 1919 Seamen's Strike, the company actually had a relatively easy time of it. "We have been carrying on without them," wrote Troup to CPR Vice President D. C. Coleman.¹⁵ He continued at length:

The Masters and Mates have given us fair support, not whole-hearted support. Their Organization [the Canadian Merchant Service Guild] agrees to carry on their own duties, notwithstanding the labor disturbances, and they undertake to navigate their ships by doubling up, do the steering, handle the lines, and also handle the mails, but not any baggage, freight, or express....

The general office staff ... have responded nobly, and handled all the baggage over the Victoria Wharf since the strike started....

... [The Engineers] have hesitated a little about going on some of the routes that could hardly be considered as vital, but they have done very well, and I have kept in close personal touch with them. The Engineers doubled up on the boats, and took care of the fires....

... The Chief Stewards and Second Stewards have proven most loyal, and have worked very hard indeed, in carrying on their departments....

The Chinese Cooks and Porters have also staid [sic] to a man, notwithstanding efforts made to get them off, so that taken as a whole, we have not done too badly.¹⁶

By using the groups of employees who stayed aboard, cross-strait services could be maintained.

The one area of service that was degraded during the strike were meals. While the galleys

¹⁴ Norman R. Hacking and W. Kaye Lamb, *The Princess Story: A Century and a Half of West Coast Shipping* (Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1974), 223. CNR would eventually compete with BCCS in southern waters, but not until August of 1930, about eighteen months after Troup retired as BCCS Manager. Robert Turner, *The Pacific Princesses: An Illustrated History of Canadian Pacific Railway's Princess Fleet on the Northwest Coast* (Victoria: Sono Nis, 1977), 156.

¹⁵ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, MS-3254, EMC.

¹⁶ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

remained fully crewed and ready to serve their guests, the Chief and Second Stewards could not wait on the entire dining room themselves without their subordinates. While afternoon tea and light refreshments could still be provided, BCCS had a reputation to uphold.¹⁷ This led the company to seek replacements.

In 1918, Troup had predicted that a future strike would require replacement workers and he formulated a novel solution: replace striking men with women.¹⁸ He followed through on this plan when the opportunity to test it arose during the strike of 1919. “C.P.R. Will Use Women In Stewards Department to Replace the Strikers,” read the *Victoria Daily Times* headline on June 4. The article emphasized that the ladies would be “Properly Chaperoned and Neatly Uniformed” and Troup assured the public that they would be supervised by an experienced stewardess at all times who would help them “soon find their sea legs.”¹⁹ Women in 1910s and 1920s British Columbia were still severely limited in career fields, should they choose to seek paid employment, typically pursuing the “respectable” jobs of teaching, nursing, or typing.²⁰ It is unsurprising then that young women job-seekers responded enthusiastically to the new opportunity, and barely two days later “the innovation” of having stewardesses instead of stewards was already “proving a complete success.”²¹ In truth, Troup’s action was more of an expansion than an innovation as women had previously served aboard BCCS vessels in a limited capacity, which is why “experienced” stewardesses existed. Nonetheless, this was the first time that women were employed by the company in great numbers as evidenced by crew rosters, and

¹⁷ “C.P.R. Will Use Women In Stewards Department to Replace the Strikers,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 4, 1919, newspapers.com. The company’s reputation for impressive meal services is discussed in Chapter Two.

¹⁸ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, July 10, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁹ “C.P.R. Will Use Women In Stewards Department to Replace the Strikers,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 4, 1919, newspapers.com.

²⁰ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 245.

²¹ “Another C. P. R. Boat Put in Commission,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 6, 1919, newspapers.com.

the first time they were used to break a strike.²² Another group traditionally marginalized from the labor force was also recruited to meet the company's need. Troup reported satisfaction that he had "succeeded in getting Indian [i.e., Indigenous] deckhands" for two of their vessels.²³

Replacements were also found indirectly by hiring already fully-crewed outside boats. The simplest of these arrangements was the maintenance of railcar barge service, accomplished by hiring an extra tug or two when they were available.²⁴ For other services, BCCS turned to its competitors for help, most notably, PSNC. "We would have been unable to carry on to Seattle but for the Puget Sound Navigation Company," Troup wrote, adding that because of PSNC help "we have not lost a mail run to or from Seattle."²⁵ PSNC had come to the rescue of BCCS in 1918 as well, adjusting the sailings of the *Indianapolis* on the Victoria-Seattle run to allow for connection with CPR service. The *Indianapolis* and its crew could only do so much, however, and was unable to complete the other legs of the triangle. Troup, ever the problem-solver, took stock of his fleet and noticed that the boats were still there, the Deckhands, Stewards, and Engineers all remained aboard, and all that was missing were Officers. Fortunately, he knew two very able mariners already in the company's employ who had not gone on strike and dispatched them immediately. Captains Troup and Neroutsos walked aboard *Princess Patricia* and put themselves back, literally, at the helm for the first time in years.

"We succeeded in furnishing a service today," chuffed Captain Troup on August 24, 1918, "from Victoria to Vancouver with the 'Princess Patricia' handled by Captain Neroutsos and myself."²⁶ While he lamented that there would be no service to Nanaimo for the time being,

²² "B. C. Coast SS Service – List of Employees," August 1905, folder 8, box 10, EMC.

²³ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

²⁴ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

²⁵ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

²⁶ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 24, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

the freshly-returned-to-the-pilot-house old skipper seemed in high spirits.²⁷ Contributing to his good humor was the Ministry of Labour's instruction to the striking officers to return to work until the Royal Commission, authorized under the 1907 Industrial Disputes Investigation Act, had made its findings (even if the instruction had not yet been heeded), and the news that *Princess Adelaide* would complete one last night service before tying up.²⁸ Troup was also glad to find that despite reports that the engineers would refuse to go out under the command of a non-guild member, the Engineers had agreed to "remain neutral and carry on with Capt. Neroutsos or myself."²⁹ In total, while Troup asserted "the Princess Patricia is handling passengers, mail, and baggage, between Victoria and Vancouver very satisfactorily," there was clear relief when the strike ended and BCCS could resume normal service.³⁰ While the Coast Service found it could afford to put its Manager and Marine Superintendent on a boat for short periods during a strike, it was also clear that, ultimately, they could not refuse to treat with organized labor any longer, despite their campaign to the contrary.

(Not) Recognizing the Unions

Over the course of the two strikes, steamship company managers realized two guiding truths when dealing with their employees' unions. Firstly, decisions are made by the people at the table; by controlling who is sitting at the table, one can influence the decision before negotiations even start. Second, the strength of the union is its collective cohesion. Thus, companies would need to divide the unions to control them. From these points, management of

²⁷ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 24, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

²⁸ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 24, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 231.

²⁹ "Engineers to Support Guild in Ship Tie-Up," *The Vancouver Daily World*, August 24, 1918, newspapers.com; and J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

³⁰ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

all four coastwise steamer companies—BCCS, Union Steamships, Canadian National Railway (CNR), and Puget Sound Navigation Company (PSNC)—launched a coordinated effort to deny recognition and power to their employees’ collective bargaining units. The reason for such coordination was simple: while labor trouble could start in any of the steamer lines, it would quickly expand to all of them.³¹ Province-wide, the labor movement was being received with hostility from the professional classes, from as high as the Legislative Assembly refusing to extend the right of public assembly to Company Towns all the way to small measures such as town postmasters destroying pro-labor newsletters.³² Despite the companies’ collecting and sharing intelligence on the unions, their cardinal strategy for combating organized labor was to insist that each company’s business was its own business.

In their correspondence with the Canadian Merchant Service Guild, managers repeatedly retreated to the argument that their employees could talk to them directly and that union supervision was both unneeded and impertinent. “Our Engineers had no difficulty in making an arrangement for dealing with their own Company,” Troup wrote to the Guild in response to their insistence that members of the union’s executive be present at negotiations, even though “they were members of an organization similar to yours, and I feel quite sure that we will be able to maintain just as pleasant relations with our Masters and Deck Officers.”³³ Union Steamships’ Beazley, ever the proverbial “bad cop” to Troup’s more polite presentation, made half-intimidating observations about the same, noting “that action of this sort tends more to disrupt the pleasant relations which have hitherto existed between this Company and its employees, rather than improve wages or working conditions”³⁴ Company officials had a double purpose in

³¹ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, May 9, 1916, file 11, box 10, EMC.

³² Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 212.

³³ J. W. Troup to Andrew Goodlad, May 23, 1918, file 12, box 10, EMC.

³⁴ E. H. Beazley to Andrew Goodlad, May 2, 1918, file 11, box 10, EMC.

trying to keep their negotiations away from the direct influence of union leaders. First, in the same way as collective action gains its strength from large numbers of united workers, keeping bargaining groups small made them more manageable by management. More insidiously, however, managers could use their personal relationships with, and knowledge of, their employees to their advantage.

Personal politics were a potent tool in the steamship industry. While the province had achieved twelve percent union membership by 1911, half a decade before the coastal labor troubles, most of these gains had been in “depersonalized” resource-extracting industries.³⁵ Playing off of this, it was their industry’s continued personal nature that shipping executives emphasized, citing the “pleasant relations” they had previously enjoyed.³⁶ “I have only to repeat,” Beazley wrote, “that if any of our officers are not satisfied with the wages to which we have recently advanced them, they can come and discuss the matter with me personally, but” he critically added, “I distinctly decline to discuss the matter with outside persons.”³⁷ Troup expanded on management’s position of refusing to deal with union executives. Writing back to the Merchant Service Guild after “accepting” a meeting between executives, BCCS guild members, and BCCS management at the Guild office in Vancouver, Troup corrected the record:

Evidently you misunderstood my letter of May 6th. It was our intention to convey the idea that we were prepared to meet a committee of men employed by this Company. A large number of employees have earned their livelihood under me, in the Canadian Pacific Service, for from five to seventeen years, and it would appear to be unnecessary that outsiders should serve on a committee for the purpose of discussing betterments in their wage scale; and furthermore, the proper place for such a meeting is in this office[, in Victoria].³⁸

³⁵ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 227.

³⁶ J. W. Troup to Andrew Goodlad, May 23, 1918, file 12, box 10, EMC.

³⁷ E. H. Beazley to Andrew Goodlad, May 2, 1918, file 11, box 10, EMC.

³⁸ J. W. Troup to C. A. Batchelor, May 10, 1918, file 11, box 10, EMC.

Troup's explanation reveals more about management's strategic intent than he likely anticipated, however. While his demand to exclude anyone not employed by the company may seem like a reasonable enough request on its face, he goes on to reveal that part of his rationale for meeting exclusively with his own employees is that the officers in question have served with him for a half-decade or more. Troup knows these men intimately. Officers, especially ships' Masters, were in very close liaison with the manager; after all, they were the face of the company to the public and responsible for vessels representing tremendous investment, so management had to trust them completely.³⁹ Troup also subtly reminds the union that they are not simply dealing with a ferry service on a single coast in a single province—they are facing the entire weight of the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Finally, he closes with a symbolic show of authority, demanding that workers must come to him, not the other way around.

There were also outright efforts by management to dissuade workers from uniting. Troup made visits to various departments along with certain trusted senior employees such as Mr. Rowlands, the Port Steward, to enhance the trust between labor and management by showing face and being personable.⁴⁰ Neroutsos wrote to disgruntled Third Officers that their new pay scale "would in all probability have been in effect now if had not been for the mischievous interference of the officers of the Canadian Merchant Service Guild," attempting to blame union executives for the delay and imply that it was company management that *really* had workers' best interests at heart.⁴¹ At the same time as managers tried to schmooze their employees, they also retaliated against labor organizers. One of these attacks was aimed at the Merchant Service Guild President, Captain Batchelor, who was a pilot under the auspices of the Vancouver

³⁹ The role of ships' Masters and their access to privileged business information is discussed in Chapter One.

⁴⁰ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, June 23, 1919, file 12, box 10, EMC.

⁴¹ C. D. Neroutsos to [Third Officers], May 3, 1918, file 11, box 10, EMC.

Pilotage Commission. Technically, this made him a public employee. The chief of Union Steamships, E. H. Beazley, wrote to the Commission demanding that Batchelor's activities be "curbed" due to the perceived conflict of interest.⁴² The Commission evidently declined to do so as Batchelor remained President of the local and led the Masters and Mates to strike a month later.

Despite the words placed in their ears by management and the threats made against union leaders, employees were not to be dissuaded. Workers *did* join unions, and those who joined up wanted to get results. In the face of management that constantly wanted to separate them, the Merchant Service Guild's membership were reported to be 99% in favor of being represented by their executives.⁴³ Guild President Batchelor wrote that management's "refusal to open a discussion" with union leaders "would leave us no alternative" than to picket.⁴⁴ With such a strong mandate of support and a clear statement of consequences bolstering labor's position, Guild Secretary Goodlad informed the steamship companies that "it will be a very great mistake on the part of the Owners" to continue to stonewall the union.⁴⁵ Goodlad's confidence was likely bolstered by conciliatory sentiments developing in maritime unionism.

The wartime demand for seamen had demonstrated that cooperation between capital and labor was more advantageous than their competition. This call to cooperation is on display in a full page advertisement showing a suited and cuff-linked man with immaculate hair and a mustache alongside a clean-shaven worker wearing overalls and an apron (but otherwise shirtless) both pulling a wagon in which is a globe bearing the words "world's trade." "This is not a one-man job," reads the ad's copy, "neither capital nor labor, acting without the help of the

⁴² E. H. Beazley to C. Gardner Johnson/Vancouver Pilotage Commissioners, May 6, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁴³ Andrew Goodlad to J. W. Troup, June 5, 1918, file 12, box 10, EMC.

⁴⁴ B. A. Batchelor to J. W. Troup, May 1, 1918, file 11, box 10, EMC.

⁴⁵ Andrew Goodlad to J. W. Troup, June 5, 1918, file 12, box 10, EMC.

other, can pull this load. Together they do it with ease ... Cooperation is the big thing needed now.”⁴⁶ This propagandic depiction of working together, while still decidedly pro-capitalism, was echoed by government action. Canada was still profoundly tied to the Imperial Government in London, and so Britain’s establishment of a National Maritime Board to oversee a “centralized ... industry-wide union shop” was surely of great concern to BC steamship line officials.⁴⁷

Perhaps noting these sea-changes, Troup realized he had mis-timed his responses if he wanted to beat the average outcome. While he was not opposed to suffering a strike—he was confident that the public would take management’s side in the dispute—Troup lamented that “if we were going to have a strike of any kind we should, of course, have brought it about right in the very start.”⁴⁸ Now that the company had “shown a disposition to meet” with their unionized employees however, he privately recommended to headquarters that BCCS “should enter into this arrangement for the coming year at least.”⁴⁹

Even when management *did* work with the unions, results were frequently disappointing from the company’s perspective. Unions, it seemed to BCCS leadership, were very good at disrupting the normal flow of operations but rather poor at recruiting and maintaining a stable body of skilled workers for the companies to draw from. A frustrated Captain Troup vented about this to his superiors in Winnipeg, stating that the Seamen’s Union “has not in any way secured us men, and in fact ... we have never had so much difficulty in getting them as we are having at the present time.”⁵⁰ Whether this was truly a failing of the Union or more a symptom of the ongoing war in Europe was left unasked by BCCS’ Manager.

⁴⁶ Canada First Publicity Association, “This is Not a One Man Job” ad, June 2, 1919, *The Victoria Daily Times*, newspapers.com.

⁴⁷ Leon Fink, *Sweatshops at Sea*, 139, Kindle.

⁴⁸ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, April 9, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁴⁹ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, April 9, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁵⁰ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, July 10, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

In reality, the BC labor market during World War I was dismal for industries requiring young men. British Columbians, influenced both by the province's "uneven sex ratio" and residual "British character" as argued by historian Jean Barman, joined wholeheartedly with former Prime Minister Wilfred Laurier's declaration that "when the call comes our answer goes at once...: 'Ready, aye, ready.'"⁵¹ With fully nine percent of the province's population answering "ready" and deploying away from the local economy, BCCS was in some ways lucky to escape the fate of the closely related sternwheeler services plying BC's rivers and lakes which effectively crumbled during the war.⁵² Nonetheless, Troup's labor pool was severely diminished even as soldiers began returning home, regardless of union cooperation.

Cooperation was not guaranteed, however, and the greatest irritant for BCCS management in working with organized labor was capriciousness. Prior to the strike in 1919, management conceded rather more than they wanted "as a last effort to prevent" a tie up and secured agreement in principle from the Union.⁵³ After the Seamen went back on their tentative agreement by heeding the call to a sympathetic strike, an indignant Troup considered all bets to be off. "These men," he wrote, "without any grievance whatever, went out on a sympathetic strike, put the Steamship Companies to untold expense, and they should now go back to work under the old conditions or not at all."⁵⁴ Ultimately, this was merely bluster from the Manager. He recognized that the negotiating process could not be wholly undone now that it had been started, and after resolving the immediate labor tensions, began to renew relationships with his employees.

⁵¹ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 213; and Wilfred Laurier, *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 12th Parliament, 4th Sess., 1914, vol. CXVIII, 10.

⁵² Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 213.

⁵³ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁵⁴ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

After the conclusion of the 1918 and 1919 strikes—and the World War—labor began to normalize. Management accepted the fate of collective bargaining and unions began to become more flexible in their dealings with the companies. By as early as October 1919, Troup noted a return to some of the “pleasant relations” management had formerly enjoyed: he met with a group of officers composed solely of BCCS employees and entirely without Merchant Service Guild leaders present, one of his original, unfulfilled, demands.⁵⁵ Two years later, Troup was even taking the initiative to reach out. He telegraphed Goodlad of the Officers’ union asking that the union leaders draw up a committee in preparation to discuss the details of an upcoming pay cut that higher headquarters in Winnipeg had decided to implement.⁵⁶ While notable, and perhaps even commendable, that the tenured old manager was finally working with organized labor, unions were decidedly unenthusiastic about wage reductions. Normally, they negotiated for quite the opposite.

More Pay for Less Work

Before ultimately walking out in sympathy with Winnipegger workers, the Seamen’s Union was negotiating hard for concessions that steamship owners were unwilling to make. Chief among their demands was more pay for less work. Specifically, the Union was asking for the institution of an eight-hour day and a general pay raise from \$65.00 to \$75.00 per month.⁵⁷ While management viewed the pay request as merely noisome, they perceived the eight-hour day as flatly untenable.

⁵⁵ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 22, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁵⁶ J. W. Troup to Andrew Goodlad, August 1, 1921, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁵⁷ “Seamen’s Strike will Tie-Up Coast Shipping,” *The Victoria Daily Times*, June 2, 1919, newspapers.com.

Agitation for a three-watch system and the eight-hour workday it provided had been going on for several years. It seems that the quartermasters were the first to request it, as an aghast Troup wrote to Winnipeg reporting that they had asked for “three” watches, but that he and Neroutsos has “managed to stave that off.”⁵⁸ Members of the Seamen’s Union, as noted, requested it by June of the next year. Just months after the 1919 strike concluded, the officers added their voice to the chorus, and Troup finally decided to take it under consideration.⁵⁹ The officers did not stop there, as they also asked for one day off a week *and* holidays.⁶⁰ BCCS management could stomach giving their officers a day off each week, but granting holidays too was “nonsense, and... would simply amount to graft.”⁶¹ Competing coastwise line Union Steamships took an even harder line when the same request was made to them, responding that “four days shore leave every twenty-eight days is quite impossible on our vessels as a rule.”⁶² Within a decade of the strikes, though, weekly time off was a settled question. By 1926, the only group left without a guaranteed day off were the Stewards.⁶³

Pay increases were viewed more reasonably by management that requests for time off. The ten dollar per month pay raise desired was, in fact, entirely in line with other requests from the past two years. The seamen had demanded the very same increase in 1918 and been partially successful, securing the higher rate for the most senior among them.⁶⁴ Carpenters and joiners had also asked the company in 1918 to level the \$1.80 per day difference between working for BCCS directly and working for local shipyards.⁶⁵ Troup allowed an increase for only the amount

⁵⁸ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, April 9, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC. Emphasis “three” original.

⁵⁹ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 22, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁶⁰ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 22, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁶¹ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 22, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁶² H. W. Beazley to W. R. Field, March 31, 1931, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁶³ [Chief Stewards] to W. H. Rowlands, February 20, 1926, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁶⁴ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, April 9, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁶⁵ [Carpenters and Joiners] to J. W. Troup, April 24, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

after the decimal point.⁶⁶ Unions tended to favor these kinds of flat-rate increases. When the officers requested a \$25 flat increase instead of a 25% increase, they explained that “the low man needed a larger proportion of help than the better paid man,” and raising pay by a fixed amount helped to accomplish this.⁶⁷ Troup was torn on questions on pay raises in the late 1910s because on the one hand, he thought it was hard to “see what justification there is ... [when] the cost of living is coming down and so are the earnings of our boats,” but on the other he recognized that “you almost wonder why we get any men at all” when there was better money to be made elsewhere.⁶⁸ It is unclear why Troup believed that the cost of living was decreasing; historians have found an increase of from eight to eighteen percent over the course of the war.⁶⁹ Nonetheless, perception is reality, and conflicted though he was, Troup ended up bowing to market pressures in a tight labor market and sought pay increases for his employees on a number of occasions.

Troup and Neroutsos were particularly sensitive to pay differentials between different classes of employees within the service and between BCCS and its labor-force competitors. The social hierarchy aboard ship was maintained in part by pay rates. When Quartermasters’ pay eclipsed that of Third Officers, a situation unacceptable to the Officers given their higher status, Neroutsos was obliged to publish a circular letter to them acknowledging that management was aware of the issue and working on a solution. The same day as the circular went out, Troup wrote to CPR Vice President Grant Hall via his assistant C. E. Stockdill in Winnipeg asking for permission to give the increases.⁷⁰ Approval was quick in coming: a scrawled endorsement from

⁶⁶ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, May 4, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁶⁷ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 22, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁶⁸ J. W. Troup to R. F. Field, March 31, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, April 9, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁶⁹ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 234.

⁷⁰ C. D. Neroutsos to Third Officers, May 3, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

Stockdill on the back of Troup's letter was all the boss needed. Four letters—"OK GH"—gave the officers their raise.⁷¹ Learning from this experience, Troup and Neroutsos moved cautiously when increasing compensation for other groups with lower social status aboard. Management turned to bonuses not only as a way to "head off a monthly increase in wages," but also to concede increased pay without it *appearing* as though they were doing so, maintaining their own strategic interests in future negotiations with their employees.⁷² While pay differentials internal to BCCS could cause labor unrest, differentials with competitors could cause labor shortage. As noted previously, company management authorized a pay increase for Carpenters and Joiners to prevent them leaving for shipyards, a very real threat as the shipbuilding industry in the Pacific Northwest increased due to plentiful, local resources, government subsidies, and wartime demand for new naval facilities.⁷³ Management could also use the inverse: a negative pay differential to screen out unreliable and temperamental white cooks (who generally preferred to be working ashore at logging camps) in favor of crews made up by dedicated and highly skilled Chinese immigrants.⁷⁴

Chinese Organization

In other industries, Chinese and Japanese workers were routinely brought in as strike-breakers, but BCCS already had a dedicated corps of Chinese workers aboard.⁷⁵ Indeed, Chinese cooks were the one group among all those who worked for the Princess Fleet never went out on strike. They were considered completely loyal, dependable, and highly trained. While Captain

⁷¹ Verso of J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, May 3, 1918, folder 11, box 10, EMC.

⁷² C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, May 7, 1926, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷³ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 213-214.

⁷⁴ C. D. Neroutsos to J. W. Troup, December 18, 1926, folder 12, box 10, EMC; C. D. Neroutsos, "Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese with Canadians on Canadian Pacific Railway, B.C. Coast Service Steamships," February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷⁵ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 229-230.

Troup made a point praising Chinese crewmembers to higher headquarters, and Captain Neroutsos would do the same once he took over as Manager. Though praised for their forbearance by successive Managers, the Chinese galley staff members were nonetheless savvy to the power of collective bargaining and their position aboard. Like every other department aboard, they requested periodic increases in pay, undertook union activities, and struck a delicate balance between advancing their own interests and keeping the Company happy.

Chief among the factors the Company saw as beneficial to retaining their Chinese cooks was the extent to which they could control them. Chinese immigrants to Canada at the turn of the century had few options for good employment, but the ferry service was one of the few. Management was fully aware that working for BCCS was stable and offered a reasonably competitive rate of pay, unlike other opportunities available to this group. Additionally, keeping their Chinese employees confined to the galley for long hours limited their ability to interact and organize with other departments. Cowed by the experience of Seamen's Union sympathetic strike, Troup remarked that "if we can control the Chinese and keep them out of the Stewards' Union, we have the control then in our hands absolutely."⁷⁶ The key to maintaining this control was each boat's Chief Cook. "[The Chief Cook] is more or less responsible for and holds his crew," remarked Troup. In 1919, the Company learned that "the Chief Cooks are the controlling factor" for keeping the galley in order, so much so that management took the position that "if he is perfectly satisfied, [the rest of the galley crew] will be contented as well."⁷⁷ A bonus program was instituted to maintain the perfect satisfaction of the cooks. While the method of distribution—providing a single check to the Chief Cook—allowed the possibility of the Chief

⁷⁶ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, July 26, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷⁷ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, July 26, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 14, 1925, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

taking “perhaps the lion’s share” of a bonus payment meant to be distributed to the entire kitchen staff, it also only cost \$200 per ship per year.⁷⁸ Compared to the \$5.00 to \$10.00 per month increases that white stewards got the same month, these bonuses paid out to the Chief Cook were a bargain.⁷⁹

Bonus payments in lieu of official wage increases were typical of all the coastwise steamship operators in British Columbia, not merely BCCS. Nor was BCCS the first to implement it. For instance, when seeking reauthorization for the scheme, Troup pointed to the example of Canadian National (also called the Grand Trunk) which used the same model.⁸⁰ Troup and Neroutsos repeatedly warned their superiors that “it is extremely undesirable that [bonuses] should show on the payroll” lest the Stewards get ideas of their own about increased pay.⁸¹ This indicates that not only did management believe the cooks would keep silent about their pay bump, but that they were socially insulated enough from the rest of the ship’s crew that silence was plausible. Management was not just concerned about putting an idea of bonuses in the heads of their employees, they were concerned also about retaliation for paying Chinese workers more than whites.

In the aftermath of the 1919 strike, Troup and Neroutsos had “intended to recommend [a pay increase to] \$100.00 per month for the Chief Cooks on the larger boats” as a reward for outstanding performance by keeping their galleys in order. Instead, the BCCS top two decided to intentionally keep their pay below the level of the most junior officer.⁸² Chinese immigrants were frequently excluded from respectable work altogether in British Columbia, so the use of

⁷⁸ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 14, 1925, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, November 12, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁷⁹ C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, November 12, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸⁰ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 14, 1925, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸¹ C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, November 12, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, May 7, 1926, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸² J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, July 26, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

pay rates to reinforce the province's social hierarchy aboard BCCS vessels was not unexpected.⁸³ Their choice to pay Chinese Chief Cooks less than what both Troup and Neroutsos agreed they deserved stands in strange contrast to Troup's assertion later in the same letter that the Company is "morally bound to do something for" the galley crews.⁸⁴

The company's moral obligation to support their Chinese employees better in the face of racialized social constraints continued to grow. By 1924 the cooks had organized beyond their individual galleys affiliated the Chinese Seamen's Institute and requested a "revision upwards" in their pay.⁸⁵ In line with the demands of White unions, the cooks argued a pay raise was deserved due to the longevity of their service to the Company—ten or fifteen years in some cases.⁸⁶ Demonstrating the business savvy, however, they also advised the company that Chief Cooks were "finding it increasingly difficult to obtain qualified assistance" because of the "generally too low" pay rates together with "registration regulations."⁸⁷ By noting an external factor that made coastwise service more onerous in general for Chinese-Canadians—the registration requirements—they created pressure on the company to affect increase since it was the factor the Company could actually control. In 1926, Neroutsos, acting on behalf of BCCS management, endorsed a pay raise in a letter back to Winnipeg. Cooks on the large vessels *Princess Kathleen* and *Princess Marguerite* were authorized raises of between \$10.00 to \$15.00 per month. Ominously, and accurately, Neroutsos added in the letter, "I am not satisfied this will be the end of it."⁸⁸

⁸³ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 141.

⁸⁴ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, July 26, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸⁵ Chinese Seamen's Institute to CPR, March 17, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸⁶ Chinese Seamen's Institute to CPR, March 17, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸⁷ Chinese Seamen's Institute to CPR, March 17, 1924, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁸⁸ C. D. Neroutsos to C. E. Stockdill, May 7, 1926, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

By 1933, Chinese galley crewmen had achieved near-equality in pay with similarly qualified whites, a feat that would have been unthinkable a few decades earlier.⁸⁹ A crew of seven Chinese Canadians earned \$394.35 while a White crew of the same size would get \$399.07.⁹⁰ This parity in absolute pay, however, was misleading. Nearly a decade of organizing had not relieved the cooks of the burden of providing and keeping up their own uniforms or kitchen tools, costing the employees at least \$5,990.00 annually for the tools alone.⁹¹ Nor had it won them shorter hours, rather, the sixty-four Chinese employees across the fleet would require one hundred and nineteen whites to replace them because white crews would refuse to work the same length of shift or cross-train on multiple positions in the galley.⁹² By the Company's own estimate, it would cost an extra \$69,119.88 per year to employ exclusively White cooks.⁹³ More importantly to the disruption-averse BCCS, "white galley crews are prone to intemperance whereas Chinese crews are thoroughly reliable."⁹⁴ This combination of reliability and exploitability made for a winning proposition in the eyes of management. Chinese cooks tolerated it, it would seem, because reliability to the company translated to stability of employment for themselves.

Ultimately, the Company viewed their Chinese employees as integral to the fleet. "From my long experience with the B. C. Coast Service," wrote Captain Neroutsos almost five years after taking over as manager, "I am satisfied that if the right of the Company to employ Oriental labour in the kitchens on these boats is restricted, the Company will be seriously embarrassed in

⁸⁹ Barman, *The West Beyond the West*, 141-143.

⁹⁰ C. D Neroutsos, "Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese with Canadians on Canadian Pacific Railway, B.C. Coast Service Steamships," February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹¹ C. D Neroutsos, "Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese," February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹² C. D Neroutsos, "Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese," February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹³ C. D Neroutsos, "Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese," February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹⁴ C. D Neroutsos, "Memorandum Re Replacing Chinese," February 13, 1935, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

its operations.”⁹⁵ Not hindered, not disadvantaged, not less profitable, but “embarrassed.” Well-trained, loyal crewmen who were responsible for a key feature of BCCS customer service and accepted the Company’s terms with little dissent were ideal employees.⁹⁶ They were “Company men.”

Company Men

What it meant to be a “Company man” was being defined for the BC Coast Service in the Troup Era. Undoubtedly, tenure with the company was a key component, as was ability, but in order to receive the appellation, fidelity to management was the defining factor. This explicitly barred union organizers and those who were taken in by them. Management recognized, of course, that there were more shades to their employees’ loyalty than “Company man” and “trouble” but took action to conspicuously reward the former category to show what behavior was desired.

BCCS management praised staff who refused to strike with the rest of the men. In some cases, such as with the cooks, this praise was given to entire departments. The wharf-side Baggage Department responded loyally, too, giving “practically all [the help] we could ask.”⁹⁷ The Engineers were particularly commended, for despite being “pressed very hard by the organizations round about” they continued to undertake their duties citing the public necessity that ferry service represented.⁹⁸ In each of these cases, Troup cited the most tenured among the departments as the deciding factor. For the engineers, it was “the senior men among them [who] held them in line;” with the cooks, it was each boat’s Chief Cook; the baggage handlers were led

⁹⁵ C. D. Neroutsos to Minister of Trade and Commerce, February 21, 1933, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹⁶ See Chapter Two for further discussion of customer service aboard BCCS vessels.

⁹⁷ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

⁹⁸ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

to work by their own head-of-department, one Mr. Mulliner.⁹⁹ Individual union defectors were also recognized, such as Mr. McLeod, the foreman of the wharf-side freight checkers, who defied the rest of his crew and “worked right through [the strike] along with the office staff” to ensure goods were loaded onto the ships for service across the gulf.¹⁰⁰

Refusing organization altogether was an even higher order of loyalty to the company. “The Stewards’ Union did their very best to get the Second Stewards into their organization,” reported Captain Troup shortly after the 1919 Strike ended. Their loyalty was maintained intact, however, “by the efforts of Mr. Rowlands, the Port Steward” and the manager himself.¹⁰¹ For this Troup called them, in as many words, “Company men.”¹⁰² By contrast, workers who chose to organize and defy management were cast out of the glow of Troup’s praise. The old captain bitterly remarked that “the freight office staff, headed by ... the Local Wharf Agent, did not respond in any way [to the request to keep working during the sympathetic strikes], and are evidently organized, and not any longer loyal Company men.”¹⁰³ The simplicity of this binary which equated unorganized to good and organized to bad can give a false impression that Captain Troup lacked nuance in appraising his employees. While it is certainly the case that Troup saw company loyalty as mutually exclusive with union activities, he also recognized that a significant portion of his workforce was young, inexperienced, and not fully culpable when disloyalty was inspired by their elders. He described them as “mere boys ... not old enough to understand anything but that they had to leave the boats when they were told to” by union leaders.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, while he absolves them in part of wrongdoing in the eyes of CPR, his

⁹⁹ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, July 26, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁰ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰¹ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, June 23, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰² J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, June 23, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰³ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁴ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, June 20, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

disappointment can be felt through his choice of language. “Mere boys” were certainly not “Company *men*.”

Pensions, the “Gift of the Company”

Rewarding long-serving employees and loyal “Company men” was accomplished by CPR’s pension scheme. For workers preparing to end their strikes and return to the boats, the question of what would happen to their pensions was forefront in their minds. “The crux of the whole case is now coming just as I expected,” wrote Troup on the last day of the Masters and Mates’ Strike in 1918.¹⁰⁵ Having been informed that their previously-earned pensions would not be honored, the officers were “holding out” for their restoration before agreeing to formally end the walk out.¹⁰⁶ “We can agree re [sic] no discrimination,” in reassigning the striking employees to their posts, CPR Vice President Grant Hall cabled back to Troup, “but it has been understood pension privileges [would be] cancelled” in all cases, even when the company had “sometimes allowed [other past privileges] when employees have returned after strike.”¹⁰⁷ The pension was, Hall stated, a “gift of the company which can be withdrawn at any time.”¹⁰⁸

Management, both in Victoria and Winnipeg, agreed that the line must be held, and an example made of those who joined the strike. “On this point we cannot give way,” came Hall’s fiat, and pensions were cancelled.¹⁰⁹ Troup readily agreed, answering that “if the Company should, in this settlement” currently being negotiated with the Merchant Service Guild, “waive the cancelling of pensions for the men who went on strike” then the departments that stayed out

¹⁰⁵ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁶ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁷ Grant Hall to J. W. Troup (b), no date [August 27, 1918?], folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁸ Grant Hall to J. W. Troup (a), August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹⁰⁹ Grant Hall to J. W. Troup (a), August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

of fear of repercussion “will give us the ‘horse laugh’ and the dignity of the Company, and control, will be lost.”¹¹⁰ This reveals that it was not out of a sense of action-and-consequence or even financial considerations that the pensions were cancelled, but ultimately that it was method of control, pure and simple. Management’s need to punish the disloyal and maintain control through fear created a lingering resentment that festered into a perennial problem.

The officers kept requesting the restoration of their pensions. They felt it was not a “gift” but an earned part of their total compensation and threatened to press their case. Troup told them in no uncertain terms when they continued to agitate for a resolution half a year after their strike that CPR was “not prepared to agree to any compromise on the pension question,” a question which he had already been advised by Hall was “not subject to arbitration.”¹¹¹ “The Company would never consent to the abandonment of their pension rules,” he continued, and “would throw over the whole pension system first.”¹¹² Almost a year later still, Troup repeated the company’s position nearly verbatim to how it had been expressed before:

I informed [Captain Slater] that there could be no deviation from the Company’s rule; that he and the others had been warned before the strike, of what the result would be, and that my instructions from the Company were, in effect, that there would be absolutely no deviation from the rule in this case, and that it was useless to discuss the matter. That the Company would abolish the whole pension system before they would make an exception in favor of the B.C. Coast Service.¹¹³

The example made of the Officers was only useful as long as it was followed through on. Regardless of the fact that the group being punished was the highest-ranking aboard the ships in the Coast Service, perhaps even because of it, the Company needed to demonstrate to *all* its employees that striking would have life-long economic consequences.

¹¹⁰ J. W. Troup to Grant Hall, August 28, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹¹¹ J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, January 6, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC; and Grant Hall to J. W. Troup (a), August 27, 1918, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹¹² J. W. Troup to D. C. Coleman, January 6, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹¹³ J. W. Troup to C. E. Stockdill, October 22, 1919, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

By 1945, Troup, Neroutsos, Hall, Coleman, and all the other senior managers in CPR who had made the decision to hold fast to their pension plan's rules had long since retired or even passed away. The pension question, however, was not yet dead itself. O. J. Williams, the new manager of BCCS, received an inquiry one morning from the federal Department of Labor requesting his "viewpoint on the whole matter" before a Royal Commission be appointed to investigate.¹¹⁴ The Merchant Service Guild had apparently appealed all the way to Prime Minister Mackenzie King to get the retirement money they felt they were owed.¹¹⁵ Political wrangling persisted for the next several years until finally, in 1949, the House of Commons voted 38-105 *against* appointing the commission.¹¹⁶ There was no longer a strike to break. There was no more control to maintain. CPR had even instituted an entirely new pension system by mid-century.¹¹⁷ Nonetheless, the company stood by its decision to impose a lingering punishment on its former employees who had chosen to work collectively, and the pensions were not reinstated.

Working Together

Nearing the end of Troup's tenure as Manager, Neroutsos (now promoted officially to Assistant Manager) remarked to the Captain that "it would appear that we are now on the eve of a general application for a revision, not only in wages, but in the working scale on our B.C. Coast Steamers."¹¹⁸ Troup could have easily added that it was the nature of work altogether that was changing. James Troup had the dubious honor of presiding over an era of rapid change in

¹¹⁴ H. S. Johnstone to O. J. Williams, September 12, 1945, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹¹⁵ H. S. Johnstone to O. J. Williams, September 12, 1945, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

¹¹⁶ "Move to Probe CPR Pension Case Is Defeated in House of Commons," *The Gazette* (Montreal), October 4, 1949, newspapers.com.

¹¹⁷ "Move to Probe CPR Pension Case Is Defeated in House of Commons," *The Gazette* (Montreal), October 4, 1949, newspapers.com.

¹¹⁸ C. D. Neroutsos to J. W. Troup, December 18, 1926, folder 12, box 10, EMC.

industrial relations for the BC Coast Service. None of these years were more challenging than 1918 and 1919. Troup, Neroutsos, Batchelor, Stockdill, their constituents, and their superiors were all called upon to negotiate how they would work together, and the strikes of these two years reveal many of their answers.

Labor and management first established to each other that they were both powerful and not to be ignored. Managers discovered they could no longer rely upon leveraging their intimate knowledge of their employees to resolve disputes. Nor could labor expect their employers to concede every issue, no matter how much pressure was applied to them, and certain issues simply would not budge. Both sides accepted that there would always be inequities in wages. Different groups of workers tried to get ahead of the others at different times, other groups (and individuals) attempted to impress with their loyalty to win company favor, and management orchestrated their various pay increases carefully to maintain a delicate balance of socio-economic power. Working together in BCCS was, at times, a difficult task. Nonetheless, the employees of CPR's coastwise marine branch managed to do so, for stretches of time at least.

Conclusion

All The Princesses' Men

The *Princesses* of Canadian Pacific Railway's British Columbia Coast Steamship Service (BCCS) commanded Captains, Officers, Engineers, Firemen, Oilers, Coal Passers, Able Bodies, Quartermasters, Lookouts, Watchmen, Managers, Superintendents, Freight Handlers, Pursers, Stewards, Cooks, and Shore Agents. Although their duties were numerous, their unions various, and work undoubtedly laborious, the employees of BCCS nevertheless managed to serve the people of British Columbia together. Navigating ships along and across the Strait of Georgia and its connecting waters required hundreds of worker hours to complete safely; doing so while passengers enjoyed the journey in luxury required hundreds more.

Nevertheless, the general tenor of the crew's attitude is found nowhere better than in the jokes they recorded for each other. Composed for what one assumes must have been an evening of staff follies, five stewardesses of the *Princess Alice* created a satirical Last Will and Testament bequeathing a number of nonsense items to their crewmates:

First

Unto our beloved Captain S. H. Ormiston, we will, give, devise and bequeath the privilege of playing the Victrola.

Second

Unto our highly esteemed friend First Officer Mr. Palmer, we will, give devise and bequeath the privilege of challenging all newcomers for the championship of the shuffleboard.

Third

Unto our friend Second Officer Mr. Hughes, we will, give, devise and bequeath the privilege of seeing that all children between the ages of sixteen and sixty are in their staterooms by midnight.

Fourth

Unto our witty and entertaining friend Third Officer Mr. McGraw we will, give, devise and bequeath the title of “Heartbreaker” because of his winning ways, divine dancing and general good line.

Fifth

Unto Purser Mr. McDonald, we will, give, devise and bequeath the privilege of being in charge of the foolish-question bureau and of finding and returning all lost gum, toothpicks and hairpins.

Sixth

Unto Mr. T. Brown, our worthy Chief Steward, we will, give, devise and bequeath the responsibility of emptying all buckets of steam daily.

Seventh

Unto our handsome Romeo of the Wireless, Mr. Sparks, we will, give, devise and bequeath the privilege of blowing out all lights nightly.

Eighth

Unto the Crew in general, we will, give, devise and bequeath the privilege of ironing out the waves, dusting the clouds and changing the scenery.

Ninth

Unto the Passengers in general, we will, give, devise and bequeath the privilege of forgetting all responsibilities, feeding the fish and putting on the dog at all times.

Lastly

Having full confidence in the honesty and full integrity of the ship’s cat, we hereby nominate and appoint the said ship’s cat as executor of this our last will and testament with full power to act under the provisions of this will.¹

The Will was witnessed by “Amos Quito” and “Ella Vator,” whose names should be said out loud for full effect.² The entire story of working for BCCS is in this document. Five women, only employed in any kind of numbers as a result of the strike of 1919, were socially established enough within the crew to poke fun not only at their superiors, but at the passengers too. The Officers are given gentile bequests—playing the victrola (a type of phonograph) and

¹ Mary Lotto, Eunice Kane, Signe Engstrand, Ida Anderson, and Eve Anderson, “Last Will and Testament,” June 17, 1923, folder 4, box 7, EMC.

² Mary Lotto et al., “Last Will and Testament,” June 17, 1923, folder 4, box 7, EMC.

commanding the shuffleboard—that also acknowledge their social responsibilities within the crew. Their direct supervisors, the Chief Steward and Purser, are given pointless and impossible tasks that nevertheless touch on their areas of responsibility. The “Crew in general” was asked to provide a magical and fairy tale-esque experience for the passengers—who in turn were mocked for seasickness even while attempting to act glamorously. The women even comment on the good looks of two of the men aboard (“general good line,” as in the “lines,” or contours, of the ship, and “handsome Romeo of the wireless”). This was a group that felt comfortable around each other, knew each other well, and developed their own shipboard work culture. Notably absent, however, are the engine room staff and the cooks.

Engineers and Cooks had their own, independent companionship within their own groups. Both of these crews within the crew were physically segregated from the rest of the ship’s operations—the Cooks in the galley, the Engineers in the engine room. They were further divided by race and culture on the part of the Cooks or technical knowledge and grime on the part of the engine room staff. Even insulated as they were, both groups were still parts of the fuller crew. The engine room staff printed New Year’s cards to give out, complete with poetry by Kipling celebrating the machines they operated: “... sing the Song o Steam ... True beat, full power, the clanging chorus goes / Clear to the tunnel where they sit, the purring, Dynamoes.”³ When a head cook retired, the entire Steward’s Department and even the Captain crossed racial lines to attend the party and celebrate his service to the customers, the crew, and the company.⁴

At its core, the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service was, as its name foreshadows, a part of the service industry. Working for it, therefore, was in many ways like any other service

³ *Princess Victoria* Engine-room Staff, “New Years Greeting” card, n.d., folder 14, box 6, EMC. The poem quoted on the card is an imperfectly-transcribed selection from Rudyard Kipling’s “McAndrew’s Hymn.”

⁴ “Retirement [of] Chief Cook Choy Gaow,” photograph, n.d., folder 2, box 7, EMC.

industry job. There were customers to be waited upon, facilities to be maintained, and appearances to be upkept. The same delineations between “back of house” and “front of house” were present on BCCS vessels just as they were at shoreside restaurants and hotels. Those producing the service being consumed—such as cooks in a restaurant, housekeeping in a hotel, or firemen on a steamer—were hidden away from public view allowing the clean and polished “front of house” staff to deliver those services while keeping a veneer of effortless glamor over the operations. Just as with any other service industry, the activities of labor organizations ebbed and flowed, at times boiling over in a strike action, often simply something to be worked through. Like many other service jobs, the stories of the crews have been largely untold.

The employees of BCCS were responsible for providing a reliable, safe, and critical transportation link between the growing population and industrial centers of British Columbia. Canneries were appearing to process rich harvests of salmon and lumber camps operated at full capacity, requiring ways to move workers in and goods out. BC experienced an influx of migrants from the eastern parts of the transcontinental country (and transatlantic empire) it had joined only decades before and also from the west as Asian immigrants of many nationalities tried their luck in North America. Both kinds of newcomer used BCCS vessels to pursue opportunities, and both groups at times even found those opportunities aboard the boats, too. Working for the BC Coast Steamship Service was a job. For many, it was an unglamorous and laborious one. For some, it was even a career. Service job though it was, working for BCCS was also stable employment that came with comradery and contributing to facilitating the province’s development. There were worse jobs.

Bibliography

Barman, Jean. *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. 3rd ed. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007.

Christenson, Earle. *Trips 1953-1956*. 1953. Film. Personal collection of John Christenson.

Christenson, Neil. "Esquimalt Harbor." *Island Histories*. December 6, 2021.

<http://islandhistories.com/items/show/141>.

Earl Marsh Collection (PR-2362). British Columbia Archives, Victoria.

Fink, Leon. *Sweatshops at Sea: Merchant Seamen in the World's First Globalized Industry, From 1812 to the Present*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011. Kindle.

The Gazette (Montreal). Newspapers.com.

Hacking, Norman R. and W. Kaye Lamb. *The Princess Story: A Century and a Half of West Coast Shipping*. Vancouver: Mitchell Press, 1974.

Joshua Green Papers. University of Washington Libraries Special Collections, University of Washington, Seattle.

Newell, Gordon ed. *The H. W. McCurdy Marine History of the Pacific Northwest*. Seattle:
Superior Publishing, 1966.

Parliament of the Dominion of Canada. *Official Report of the Debates of the House of Commons
of the Dominion of Canada*. 12th Parliament, 4th Sess., 1914. Vol. CXVIII.

Rushton, Gerald A. *Whistle Up the Inlet: The Union Steamships Story*. North Vancouver, BC:
Douglas & McIntyre, 1974.

Sager, Eric W. *Ships and Memories: Merchant Seafarers in Canada's Age of Steam*.

Turner, Robert. *The Pacific Princesses: An Illustrated History of Canadian Pacific Railway's
Princess Fleet on the Northwest Coast*. Victoria: Sono Nis, 1977.

----- . *Those Beautiful Coastal Liners: The Canadian Pacific's Princesses*. Victoria: Sono Nis,
2001.

W. Kaye Lamb Collection. Vancouver Maritime Museum, Vancouver

Vancouver Daily World. Newspapers.com.

Vancouver Daily Sun. Newspapers.com.

Victoria Daily Times. Newspapers.com.

Vouri, Mike. *The Pig War: Standoff at Griffin Bay*. Seattle: Discover Your Northwest, 2016.

Curriculum Vitae

Neil H. Christenson

Cheney, WA | Hometowns: Ferndale, WA and Tumwater, WA
NeilChristenson.com | @NeilChrisHist

Professional Experience

Library & Archives Paraprofessional 4 [Law Librarian] (April 2022 – Present)
Washington State Department of Corrections | Airway Heights, WA

Public Benefits Specialist 1-3 (September 2016 – April 2022)
Washington State Department of Social and Health Services | Tacoma, WA

Park Ranger 1 (May 2016 – August 2016)
Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission | Winlock, WA

Naturalist (August 2015 – April 2016)
Camp Seymour, YMCA of Pierce and Kitsap Counties | Gig Harbor, WA

Challenge Course Co-Director and Cabin Counselor (June 2015 – August 2015)
Camp Hayo-Went-Ha, State YMCA of Michigan | Central Lake, MI

Professional Outdoor Instructor (March 2015 – June 2015)
Bradford Woods, Indiana University | Martinsville, IN

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Experience

Flotilla Commander (January 2022-Present)
Flotilla 130-03-03 | Tacoma, WA

District Staff Officer – Secretary and Records (September 2016 – Present)
District 13 | 13th Coast Guard District (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana)

Division Staff Officer – Secretary and Records (January 2016 – Present)
Division 130-03 | 13th Coast Guard District, 3rd Division (South Puget Sound region, WA)

Branch Chief – Leadership Training Outreach (October 2017 – October 2020)
National Staff | United States Coast Guard Auxiliary

Flotilla Commander (January 2020-December 2020)
Flotilla 130-03-02 | Des Moines, WA

Flotilla Vice Commander (January 2019 – June 2019)
Flotilla 130-03-03 | Tacoma, WA

Education & Training

Master of Arts, History (September 2020 – Present, expected graduation June 2022)
 Eastern Washington University | Cheney, WA
Thesis titled All the Princesses' Men: Working for the British Columbia Coast Steamship Service 1901-1928. Curriculum includes Public History, historical publishing and editing, and subject expertise courses.

Bachelor of Arts, History (September 2012 – December 2014)
 Western Washington University | Bellingham, WA
Capstone paper titled "An Honest Government with Nothing to Hide:" The 1955 Albertan Provincial Election. History major, significant additional study in Elementary Education and classical Latin.

Associate of Arts (September 2010 – June 2012)
 South Puget Sound Community College | Olympia, WA
Concurrent with High School Diploma from A.G. West Black Hills High School through the Running Start program.

Foundations of Leadership I-VI (June 2019 – November 2019)
 Department of Social and Health Services | Olympia, WA and Lakewood, WA
Sequence of classes designed to give new managers the tools to effectively lead their teams.

Auxiliary Leadership and Management School (August 2017)
 US Coast Guard Auxiliary | Seattle, WA
Covers skills, tools, and principles for managing teams of volunteers as a first-level leader. Emphasis on the appropriate use of personal power (influence) versus position power.

Auxiliary Mid-Level Officers Course (April 2019)
 US Coast Guard Auxiliary | Little Rock, AR
Further development of team leadership skills, with an emphasis on communication styles and effective use of influence and coaching.

Publications

Christenson, Neil H. "English Camp Blacksmith's Shop." *Island Histories*. December 6, 2020.
<http://islandhistories.com/items/show/138>.

----- "Esquimalt Harbour." *Island Histories*. December 7, 2020.
<http://islandhistories.com/items/show/141>.

----- "Fort Bellingham." *Island Histories*. November 19, 2020.
<http://islandhistories.com/items/show/116>.

Editorial Experience

Editor-in-chief, *Occam's Razor* (June 2014 – February 2015)
Western Washington University | Bellingham, WA

Corresponding editor, *Occam's Razor* (February 2015 – June 2015)
Western Washington University | Bellingham, WA

President and Business Director, *Occam's Razor* (March 2014 – June 2014)
Western Washington University | Bellingham, WA

Chairperson, *Safety Newsletter* (January 2020 – April 2022)
Pierce South CSO, Dept. of Social and Health Services | Tacoma, WA

Awards and Honors

Raymond Schultz Graduate Award for Best Master's Project (June 2022)
Eastern Washington University | Cheney Washington

Individual Performance Award (July 2019)
Pierce South CSO, Dept. of Social and Health Services | Tacoma, WA

Auxiliarist of the Month (March 2017)
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary | 13th Coast Guard District

Sustained Service Ribbon (February 2019)
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary | Flotilla 130-03-02