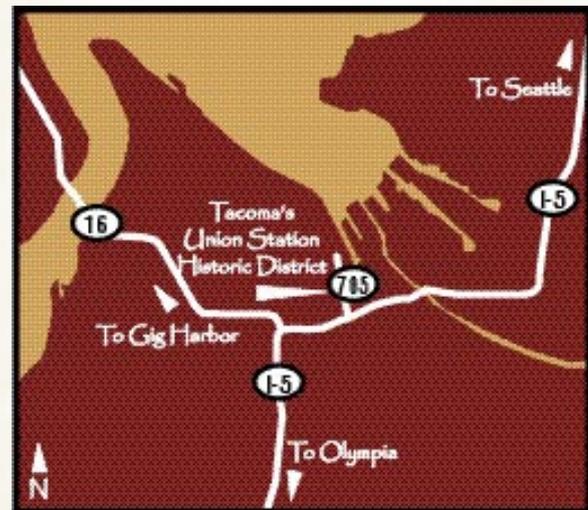


# Tacoma's Union Station Historic District



For information on additional  
historic sites in Tacoma contact:  
City of Tacoma  
Economic Development Department  
Culture and Tourism Division  
747 Market Street, Room 1036  
Tacoma, WA 98402  
(253) 591-5191



## Union Station

1717 Pacific Avenue (1911)

This tour begins with Union Station, the historic and architectural focal point of the district.

Tacoma's growth was fired by the announcement that the Northern Pacific Railroad would extend its rails to meet the ships of the Pacific here. The result was a boom in manufacturing, trade and housing. The Northern Pacific Railroad intended the station to represent its triumph of crossing the continent to the Pacific. By the time it was built, Great Northern and Union Pacific were also serving Tacoma and were partners in the Station. The building is an extraordinary example of the Beaux Arts neoclassical style with strict symmetry, rounded arches and a richly embellished copper dome.

This majestic structure was completed later than most of the surrounding warehouses and, ironically, as the dominance of the railroad passenger services began to wane. Even so, the station's rotunda served as the stage for departures and arrivals for three-quarters of a century. At its low point, Union Station was deserted and run down. The Union Pacific Railroad sold it for one dollar to the City of Tacoma. Its rebirth as a Federal courthouse initiated the redevelopment of the entire district as a vibrant urban center, which includes the Washington State History Museum and the University of Washington Tacoma campus, and will include the new Tacoma Art Museum and the International Glass Museum.



Enter the building (weekdays during business hours) to see both the award-winning restoration of the station, and the exhibition of Chihuly glass and paintings.

Out front, stand next to the bronze traveler (pictured on front cover) and survey Pacific Avenue with him. The warehouse district around Union Station paints a picture of Tacoma's past in cut stone, red brick, and heavy timber. In Tacoma's earliest years, clearing and construction barely kept pace with the population that seemed to pour from the railhead.



By the late 1880s, the city covered much of the hillside above Commencement Bay. Here, where the railroad arrived at the southern edge of the city, this tightly packed assemblage of warehouses was built to house goods coming in and to organize products being shipped out. The buildings you see have two faces: the street side which welcomed the public, and the rail spur side, where goods were handled. Tacoma's warehouse district, one of many such districts along the great rail lines of the West, has kept its historic character and is listed on the National and Tacoma Registers of Historic Places.

The Northern Pacific Railroad obtained land grants over most of Tacoma in the 1870s. Prompt construction was a condition of sale in the warehouse/jobbers' district. The district's Romanesque architecture is marked by massive buildings with semi-circular arches set off by contrasting colors and textures, rough stone surfaces, and decorative terra-cotta and cast iron. Many of the buildings have a triangular or flatiron shape because of the intersection of streets and rail lines.

Cross the street and begin your walk through history.

## West Coast Grocery Tacoma Grocery Co.

1736 Pacific Avenue (1891)

Workers in this building handled tons of foodstuffs on their way to the Klondike Gold Rush in the late 1800s. West Coast Grocery was still shipping goods from the building in the 1970s. One of the trademark brand names for the Grocery Company was the reversal "AMOCAT," still visible on a sign painted on the south side of the building. The building now forms part of the University of Washington, Tacoma campus.



## Russell T. Joy Building

1716-1730 Pacific Avenue (1892)

This flatiron with a rear loading dock onto the Prairie Line Railroad housed a variety of businesses over the years, including Studebaker Wagons, the Great Western Stove Company, a tea and coffee wholesaler, Wiegel Candy, Poole's Seed Co., and a manufacturer of cotton gloves. The Art Deco "Alt Heidelberg" sign painted on the upper north face of the building is one of the last remaining examples of the company's signature outdoor advertisements.

## Pagni & Lenti Grocery

New Country Grocery

1702-1708 Pacific Avenue (1890)

This small triangular building is wedged into the junction of Pacific Avenue and the main Prairie Railroad Line, a portrayal of the city's early purpose and sense of place. An Italian grocery store operated for decades here as a neighborhood institution. Imagine the windows announcing fruit, candy, cigars and tobacco; bins holding different pastas; and shelves lined with bottles of wine and canned goods imported all the way from Italy.



## Teamsters and Chauffeurs Hall

1701 Commerce Street (1894)

This triangular brick building was constructed in 1894 on the site of Tacoma's first railroad passenger station, which had been moved to the site of today's Union Station. The building's name recalls the Union hiring hall, which operated on the third floor for half a century.



## Carlton Hotel

1552 Jefferson Avenue (1909)

Anton Huth, owner of the Pacific Brewery, built the Carlton Hotel in anticipation of the construction of Union Station. The local newspapers heralded the gala opening. Its elegant exterior beckoned new arrivals, who entered a lavish lobby decorated with marble, tile, wrought iron, terra-cotta, chandeliers and polished wood. The rooms were furnished in rosewood and oak, and offered all the latest conveniences, such as telephones and electricity. Thirty-two of the 120 rooms even had private baths. One of the district's earliest restoration projects, the building now provides elegant office space.



## Massasoit Hotel/ Pinkerton Block

1702 Broadway (1889)

Walk in the steps of arriving passengers from the site of the original depot across the street to Colonel Pinkerton's hotel. Lodging at the Massasoit cost as little as twenty-five cents a night or \$1.25 a week. The Italianate exterior displays decorative cast iron and terra-cotta panels.

## Dougan Block

1721 & 1725 Jefferson Avenue (1891)

This building, one of the elders of the district, housed a broad spectrum of the area's businesses: a saloon, a bottling plant, a coffee merchant, a flour wholesaler, a storage and shipping company, and even an Odd Fellows Hall. The building is being refitted for classroom and office use by the University of Washington.

## Swiss Hall

1902 Jefferson Avenue (1913)

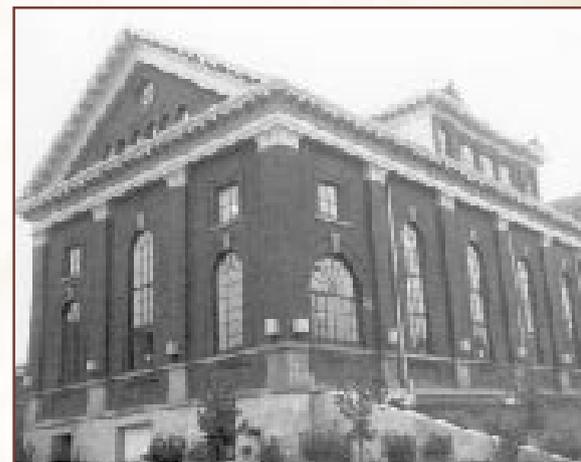
The Swiss Society built their half-timbered hall between the jobbers' district and the ethnic neighborhoods above Market Street. The hall's distinctive tower once marked the southern edge of Tacoma's open-air markets. Japanese grocers and merchants lined Market Street to the north. Scandinavian, Italian, German, and Southern European immigrants settled in the wood frame houses up the hill. Warehousemen, wagon drivers, and shipping clerks worked in the warehouse district just below. To the south, there were several of the Northwest's best breweries.

The following 5 buildings, along with the West Coast Grocery Building, have been integrated into the new University of Washington, Tacoma campus. The award-winning design reclaimed and expanded the industrial buildings to create classrooms, a library, and administrative offices while honoring their industrial construction and history.

## Snoqualmie Falls Power Company Transformer House

250 South 19th Street (1902)

Tacoma was a pioneer in public power, creating a Public Utility District in 1893. The Snoqualmie Falls Power Company constructed this brick transformer house with neoclassical proportions reminiscent of a Greek temple. Inside, transformers reduced the voltage arriving from the hydroelectric plant at Snoqualmie Falls for distribution to the city. The structure is now the reading room of the UWT library. Go inside to see the remaining industrial fittings built with old growth timber.



## Garretson, Woodruff, and Pratt Company 1754 Pacific Avenue (1891)

This massive Romanesque brick structure was built as a warehouse for a thriving dry goods wholesaler named Garretson Woodruff and is a testimony to optimism and the rapid growth of commerce. The company expanded into Oregon, Idaho and Alaska, but collapsed in the depression of the mid-1890s. Look to the left at the two adjacent Birmingham buildings (see below), and the West Coast Grocery Building, which have been interconnected with this one to serve the University. The west entrances recreate the loading docks facing the rail spur now marked in the paving of the plaza, and the interiors have a decidedly industrial feel. The more elegant office entrance on Pacific Avenue boasts substantial columns and ornate terra-cotta detailing. Artist Buster Simpson's installation at the roofline echoes historic signage while providing food for thought.

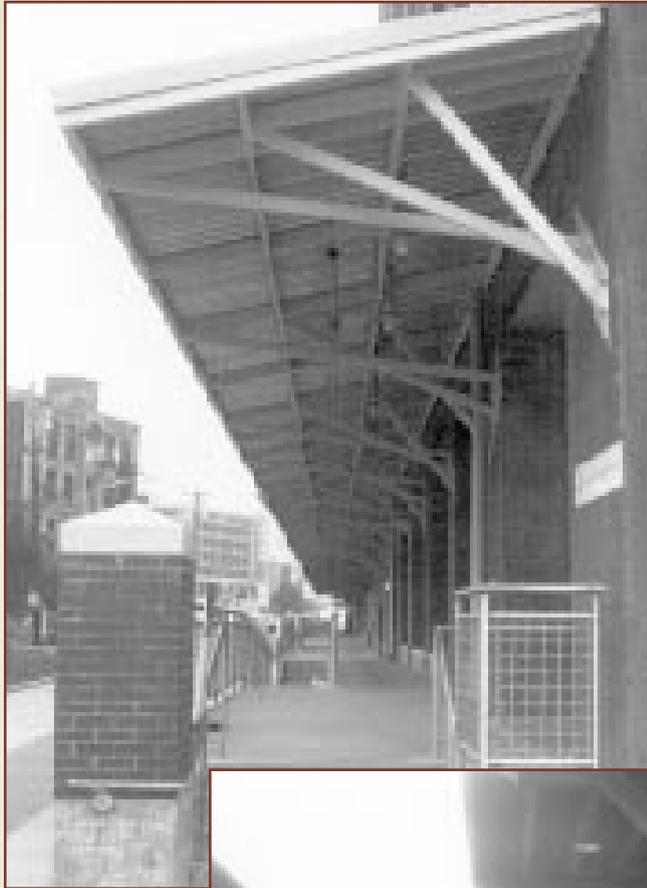


PHOTO: WASHINGTON STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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## Birmingham Block/Caldwell Brothers 1746-1748 Pacific Avenue (1893)

## Birmingham Hay and Seed Company 1740-1742 Pacific Avenue (1903)

William Birmingham constructed this block for wholesaling hay, flour, and grains. As the business grew, he built a second brick building. In 1917, West Coast Grocery bought and expanded into the Hay and Seed building.



## Walsh and Gardner Building 1908 Pacific Avenue (1912)

This large-windowed warehouse, to the right as you continue down the stairs, once carried pipe valves and fittings. Now, along with its modern wings, the sturdy Walsh and Gardner Building serves the UWT.

## Wiegel Candy Company 1922 Pacific Avenue (1904)

Three brothers—Andrew, Walter, and Rudolph Wiegel—constructed this building as a home for their burgeoning candy company. The confectioners were Dutch immigrants and pioneers in an industry that is still important in Tacoma. The smell of chocolate lingered in the building long after the candy business left. The faint remains of the Wiegel signs can still be seen on the facade.

## Davies Building / John Campbell & Co. 1926 Pacific Avenue

## Reese, Crandall, & Redman Company 1928-1930 Pacific Avenue

## McDonald and Smith / Bradley, Morely & Co. 1932 & 1936 Pacific Avenue (ca. 1890-1896)

The three distinct buildings of this railroad block are unified by their similar proportions and the ornamental cast iron at the street level, but differ in window design and roofline detail. John G. Campbell's company Anchor Coffee and Spice Mills processed coffee, tea imported from China and Japan, spices and extracts, baking powder, and bluing. Reese, Crandall, and Redman was a wholesale grocery company. E.A. McDonald and F.C. Smith were in the wholesale hay, grain and feed business. The building was later used by the Younglove Grocery Company.

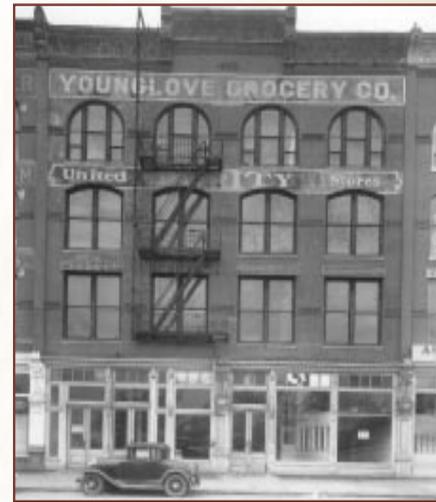


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## F.S. Harmon Furniture Manufacturing Co.

1938 & 1946 Pacific Avenue (1909)

There was a time when Tacoma produced more furniture and doors than any other city in the United States. A giant in that industry was the F.S. Harmon Company, which operated out of a complex of buildings centered on this eight-story giant. The ghost of the Harmon Company sign can still be seen on the south wall. The industrial strength of this warehouse structure has allowed its revitalization as a brewpub, apartments and parking garage. Enter the lobby to see the old safe tucked under the stairway.

## West Coast Wagon Works Building

1950 Pacific Avenue (1906)

This building once housed the wagon-making business of Tacoma's colorful populist mayor, Angelo Fawcett. "Fighting Fawcett," as he became known, is credited with finally breaking the railroad's political control in Tacoma, and legend has it that much of the early conniving was done from this building just under the nose of Union Station. An upper story was lost to fire in November of 1972, but the building was rehabilitated in the 1980s.

Turn down Commerce Street to view the working facades of the buildings.

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## Lindstrom-Berg Cabinet Works

1953 South C Street (1908)

This factory was the city's largest producer of hardwood interior fixtures. Curiously, the alley between this building and the wagon works was the point of origin for the district's only two large fires: the first destroyed the cabinet works in October of 1907, and the second gutted the wagon works.

## F.S. Harmon Furniture Manufacturing Co.

1949 South C Street (1912)

This flatiron factory building sits behind the main Harmon building and is connected to it by an unusual elevated bridge.

To conclude the tour, (carefully) cross Pacific Avenue to Pugnetti Park. The Rails to Sails Monument at the far side of the park is

a fitting spot from which to survey the port and the rail lines which played a major role in Tacoma's development and remain its heart today.



## This booklet was produced by

City of Tacoma  
Economic Development Department  
Culture and Tourism Division  
747 Market Street, Room 1036  
Tacoma WA 98402  
(253) 591-5191

Thérèse Marie Mirande  
research and text

Elizabeth Anderson  
Historic Preservation Officer  
City of Tacoma  
Editing

## For their contributions, thanks to

Michael Sullivan  
Artifacts Architectural Consulting

Bronwyn Pughe  
Writing Center  
University of Washington, Tacoma

Elaine Miller  
Washington State  
Historical Society Research Center

Staff of the Northwest Room  
Tacoma Public Library

Angela McGeachy  
Graphic Designer  
City of Tacoma

Anna Joly Murray

## Photographs provided by

Washington State Historical Society

Tacoma Public Library – historic photos

Elizabeth Anderson – contemporary photos

**TACOMA**  
— THE —  
**Western Terminus of the Northern Pacific R. R.**  
— — —  
**IF YOU WANT**  
**A Home or an Investment**  
**IN THE NORTHWEST**  
**GO TO TACOMA.**  
— — —  
**BECAUSE:**

1. **Tacoma** is the Western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the greatest of the transcontinental roads.
2. **Tacoma** is at the head of navigation on Puget Sound, the "Maritime Gateway of America," where Port of Entry vessels and steam power shipping lines use that of Entry to the United States, except New York and San Francisco.
3. **Tacoma** will be the shipping port for all the wheat raised in Eastern Washington, and for much of that raised in Oregon.
4. **Tacoma** ships some lumber and coal, thus saving other ports on Puget Sound, and has extensive facilities for the export of coal—the best in the Pacific Northwest—and is at the head of the Short Line to the world.
5. **Tacoma** is situated, from its location, to be the great distributing point for Eastern Washington, Idaho, and a great part of Oregon.
6. **Tacoma** has never been "boomtown," but has steadily grown since 1890, when the population (by census) was 125, to the present time, when the population is about 11,000.
7. **Tacoma's** climate is excellent, the average temperature in winter being 41 degrees above zero, and in summer about 65 degrees. The summer climate is mild, dry and refreshing; the sea fall is in winter, which is well as beneficial as the summer.

For lots in Tacoma, or information, apply or write to:  
**ISAAC W. ANDERSON,**  
General Manager Tacoma Land Co.,  
Corner 19th and C Streets, TACOMA, W. T.

# Key to District Map

1. Union Station
2. West Coast Grocery/Tacoma Grocery Co.
3. Russell T. Joy Building
4. Pagni & Lenti Grocery/New Country Grocery
5. Teamsters and Chauffeurs Hall
6. Carlton Hotel
7. Massasoit Hotel/Pinkerton Block
8. Dougan Block
9. Swiss Hall
10. Snoqualmie Falls Power Company Transformer House
11. Garretson, Woodruff, and Pratt Company
12. Birmingham Block/Caldwell Brothers
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14. Walsh and Gardner Building
15. Wiegel Candy Company
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17. Reese, Crandall, & Redman Company
18. McDonald and Smith/Bradley, Morely & Co.
19. F.S. Harmon Furniture Manufacturing Co.
20. West Coast Wagon Works Building
21. Lindstrom-Berg Cabinet Works
22. F.S. Harmon Furniture Manufacturing Co.
23. Pugnetti Park

