

Crafting of an American Dream: The Skansie Shipbuilding Company

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By

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Abstract

The Skansie name is commonplace even today in Gig Harbor, Washington and the fishing communities of the Puget Sound, but it was once known from Southern California to Alaska. The Skansies departed the Dalmatian coast in a time of growing unrest with almost nothing and headed to America in search of only an opportunity to work for a better life. They were part of a mass wave of emigration out of Europe, spurred on in part by the introduction of the steamship. When the family settled as fishermen in the Puget Sound in 1903, Peter, Joseph, Mitchell, and Andrew Skansie were keenly aware of the limitations that existed in wooden fishing vessels at the time and became active participants in the resurgence of wooden shipbuilding in the Pacific Northwest. The wooden vessels they produced made the Skansie name synonymous with quality and craftsmanship. Over two-hundred wooden vessels would be launched to the sea from the ways of the Skansie shipyard, including launches, steamers, purse seiners, ferries, and pleasure craft. These vessels kept the harbor running, fisherman filling their holds, and people commuting through the Sound. The Skansies and the rest of the immigrant fishing community loved their new country and showed unmatched patriotism when needed. The lasting impacts of both the Skansie family and the Skansie Shipbuilding Company on the Puget Sound region are clearly represented in the historical record, yet academic scholarship has failed to recognize these contributions in any quantifiable way. This paper acts to fill that gap.

Introduction

The life of Peter Skansi and the story of the Skansie Shipbuilding Company is a story of an American dream crafted on the passion, perseverance, and patriotism of immigrants. It is an immigrant story. It is an American story. It is the story of a fisherman and the majestic wooden boats that changed fishing in the Puget Sound forever.

The Skansie¹ name is commonplace even today in Gig Harbor and the fishing communities of the Puget Sound, but it was once known from Southern California to Alaska. The Skansies departed the Dalmatian coast beginning in 1889, in a time of growing unrest with almost nothing and headed to America in search of only an opportunity to work for a better life. They were part of a mass wave of emigration out of Europe that was spurred on in part by the introduction of the steamship. When the family settled as fishermen in the Puget Sound in 1903, Peter, Joseph, Mitchell, and Andrew Skansie were keenly aware of the limitations that existed in wooden fishing vessels at the time and became active participants in the resurgence of wooden shipbuilding in the Pacific Northwest. The wooden vessels they produced made the Skansie name synonymous with quality and craftsmanship. Over two-hundred wooden vessels would be launched to the sea from the ways of the Skansie shipyard, including launches, steamers, purse seiners², ferries, and pleasure craft. These vessels kept the harbor running, fisherman filling their

1. Peter spells his last name as Skansi, while the other brothers as Skansie. The reason is unknown.

2. A seine is a net that extends typically at long lengths with the net standing vertically in the water column and is drawn out along a circular track by a boat until the catch is pulled in to the shore or on to a boat. The purse seine is a seine net that consists of a float line, lead line, and rings along the bottom for the purse line to run in order to close the bottom of the net, trapping the catch. A boat that uses a purse seine is a purse seiner; "Seine Nets," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed on October 31, 2018, <http://www.fao.org/fishery/geartype/102/en>; "Purse Seines," Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, accessed on October 31, 2018, <http://www.fao.org/fishery/geartype/249/en>.

holds, and people commuting through the Sound. The Skansies and the rest of the immigrant fishing community loved their new country and showed unmatched patriotism when needed.³ The lasting impacts of both the Skansie family and the Skansie Shipbuilding Company on the Puget Sound region are clearly represented in the historical record, yet academic scholarship has failed to recognize these contributions in any quantifiable way.

Methodology

My research into the Skansie Shipbuilding Company began while working on the “Salmon, Seiner’s and Life on the Sea” exhibit at the Harbor History Museum in Gig Harbor, Washington. It quickly became apparent that there were very few secondary works that mentioned the Skansie Shipbuilding Company to any meaningful extent and none of an academic or scholarly nature. The challenge then was to solicit scholarly opinion on a topic for which nothing has been published. The answer was found in the background. There were many scholarly secondary sources available that could provide background on topics pertaining to the Skansie family or the Skansie Shipbuilding Company. These sources did not provide direct arguments pertaining to the Skansie Shipbuilding Company, but they did provide a significant depth of understanding when evaluating primary source material.

Primary sources were extensively available on the Skansie family, their associates, and the Skansie Shipbuilding Company. Using secondary sources as background provided connectivity and context between primary sources, and at times improved or weakened their credibility. The Harbor History Museum holds the entirety of the Skansie collection, and this was at my disposal. The primary source document that was most significant to understanding Peter

3. *Tacoma Sunday Ledger* (Tacoma, Washington), October 13, 1918: 1, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington.

Skansi and the path he took to starting the Skansi Shipbuilding Company was his autobiographical sketch. It is currently held in collections at the Harbor History Museum, but copies are available on request. The primary sources that provided the most information of the longest span of time were the online newspaper archives for the *Seattle Daily Times*, *Tacoma Daily News*, and *Tacoma News Tribune*, as the Skansie family movements and their shipbuilding achievements were well documented from 1903 to 1959. The archives located within ancestry.com provided immigration, marriage, and census data in a centralized location that would have required extensive searching otherwise. Images used were obtained from the internet, Tacoma Public Library, Harbor History Museum, or my personal collection.⁴

Literature Review

Although secondary sources focused on the Skansie family are limited, a number of sources provided valuable background information and improved my overall understanding of the primary source materials. Secondary source material on wooden shipbuilding and early twentieth-century immigration were key. Having solid supporting information provided clarity and focus to my research and writing.

In *How Wooden Ships Are Built*, H. Cole Estep argues that “wooden shipbuilding was a lost art which the gods of war decreed must be revived,” and that books such as this one would be a significant tool in facilitating this lost art’s return to greatness.⁵ The Skansies were a part of a resurgence in wooden shipbuilding prior to World War I but experienced their greatest business expansion in the immediate post-war years. Estep’s detailed text provides an in-depth

4. All these sources are listed in the bibliography.

5. H. Cole Estep, *How Wooden Ships Are Built: A Practical Treatise on Modern American Wooden Ship Construction, with a Supplement on Laying off Wooden Vessels* (Cleveland, OH: Penton, 1918), 1.

explanation of the shipbuilding process including basic concepts and intricate procedures, as well as the requirements for establishing a shipyard. Although Estep mentions several shipbuilding locations around the United States, the book focuses on wooden shipbuilding in the Pacific Northwest.⁶

Estep starts his discussion with methods of construction and shifts to operating wooden ships under engine power, both topics that closely mirrored the early days of Skansie innovation. Timber was of great importance and Estep devotes an entire chapter to wood alone, noting that Douglas fir, harvested primarily in the Pacific Northwest, was a preferred choice for building wooden ships.⁷ Estep argues that there are specific factors that must be considered when deciding on a shipyard location and that organization is the key to efficiency.⁸ The Skansies chose a prime location for their shipyard near Douglas fir resources, deep water, and ample workers. Estep's work proved invaluable for analysis of the Skansie shipyard and their practices, making this a relevant source to my research.

Susan Cott Watkins' *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census* provides an in-depth look at the lives of the immigrant populations in the United States through the lens of the 1910 Federal Census, providing detailed examinations of both the forms and the process used to collect the data.⁹ Watkins argues that the 1910 Federal Census data provides the clearest image of immigrant populations in the United States at the time, many of whom entered

6. Ibid., 31.

7. Ibid., 7.

8. Ibid., 15.

9. Susan Cotts Watkins, *Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1994), 11-34.

through the Ellis Island Immigration Station, as records of immigrants who arrived just before and after were either destroyed or inadequate.¹⁰ This analysis was insightful as records show that the Skansies all passed through either Castle Garden or Ellis Island on their way to Gig Harbor, Washington.¹¹ In addition, Watkins examines the link between ethnicity, education, and social class, noting that some immigrant populations left their native homelands with skills that set them up for immediate success upon their arrival in America.¹² This is an interesting concept to consider as many of the Skansies or their associates arrived with marketable skills. This book challenged me to evaluate census data with the idea that each number or data point represents someone or an important aspect of their life. As census data was evaluated often during my research, keeping This human perspective allowed me to examine the Skansie’s immigrant

10. Ibid., 3.

11. “Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi,” Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington; Naturalization Records for the Superior Court for King, Pierce, Thurston, and Snohomish Counties, Washington, 1850-1974, M1543, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 – 2009, 21, The National Archives, Washington DC, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 31, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2531&h=390199&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN1013&_phstart=successSource; Naturalization Records for the Superior Court for King, Pierce, Thurston, and Snohomish Counties, Washington, 1850-1974, M1543, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685-2009, 21, The National Archives, Washington DC, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 31, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2531&h=390200&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN1026&_phstart=successSource; Naturalization Records for the Superior Court for King, Pierce, Thurston, and Snohomish Counties, Washington, 1850-1974, M1543, Records of District Courts of the United States, 1685 – 2009, 21, The National Archives, Washington DC, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 31, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2531&h=390201&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN1032&_phstart=successSource.

12. Watkins, *After Ellis Island: Newcomers and Natives in the 1910 Census*, 211.

history, as they moved from Dalmatia to the Pacific Northwest, with an analytical but empathetic eye.

Exodus from a Troubled Homeland

The Kingdom of Dalmatia encompassed what is now the southern region of Croatia on the west coast of the Adriatic Sea. In 1868 the Hungaro-Croatian Compromise was reached between the newly named Kingdom of Austria-Hungary and the Kingdom of Croatia, Dalmatia, and Slavonia, aligning these kingdoms under a single crown and military.¹³ The imposition of military conscription by the Austro-Hungarian Empire ignited a rebellion in the southern region of Dalmatia in May 1869, and a second insurrection followed in nearby Hercegovina to the east in 1881 in response to the continued demand that the region supply troops in support of an empire under which they had no desire to be ruled.¹⁴ Military conscription may have been a motivator behind the departure of young men from the area, but the most significant driving forces behind mass emigration from the region were a lack of food, falloffs in the industries of wooden shipbuilding, fishing, and winemaking, and a disadvantageously shifting political environment.¹⁵

Peter Skansi was born to Clementina Dorotich and Vincenzo Skansi on April 22, 1870, in the Kingdom of Dalmatia, then part of Cisleithanian Austria-Hungary, and clearly into a climate of change and unrest. Peter had three younger brothers Andrew, Mitchell and Joseph, and three

13. Emilio Pallua, "A Survey of the Constitutional History of the Kingdom of Dalmatia, Croatia, and Slavonia," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 24, no. 2 (1990): 147-149.

14. John Schindler, "Defeating Balkan Insurgency: The Austro-Hungarian Army in Bosnia-Hercegovina, 1878-82," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 27, no. 3 (2004): 541.

15. Ivan Čizmić, "Emigration and Emigrants from Croatia between 1880 and 1980," *GeoJournal* 38, no. 4 (1996): 431.

younger sisters, Antonia, Tomazina, and Marija. Ultimately it was likely a combination of factors, including the threat of military conscription and lack of economic opportunity, that led Peter Skansi to depart from Brač, Dalmatia on July 4, 1889, later stating that “I never know then that 4th of July was such glorias [sic] day.”¹⁶ The date, insignificant to Peter at the time, proved to be a fitting moment of origin for his journey.

Peter arrived in New York Harbor on or around July 16, 1889.¹⁷ Peter was one of eight million immigrants to be processed by New York state through the Castle Garden station between 1855 and 1890 before immigration came under federal control and construction of the Ellis Island station started.¹⁸ The Ellis Island station opened on January 1, 1892, but built from pine, a fire burned the building and its immigration records – dating from 1855 – to the ground shortly thereafter.¹⁹ The rebuilt Ellis Island station was required to have fireproof buildings in order to safeguard future immigration records and reopened on December 17, 1900.²⁰

16. “Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi.”

17. Ibid.

18. “Ellis Island History,” The Statue of Liberty – Ellis Island Foundation, accessed October 30, 2018, <https://libertyellisfoundation.org/ellis-island-history#Policy>.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid.

Shortly after his arrival in New York, Peter traveled to Norfolk, Virginia on a transfer ship, and then from there to San Jose, California along the Southern Pacific Railroad.²¹ The Southern Pacific Railroad, founded in 1865, ran in California from San Francisco to San Diego, and by 1883 reached into New Orleans, Louisiana and from there connected to other rail lines.²²

Peter found work in San Jose as a seasonal harvest worker at the rate of one dollar a day

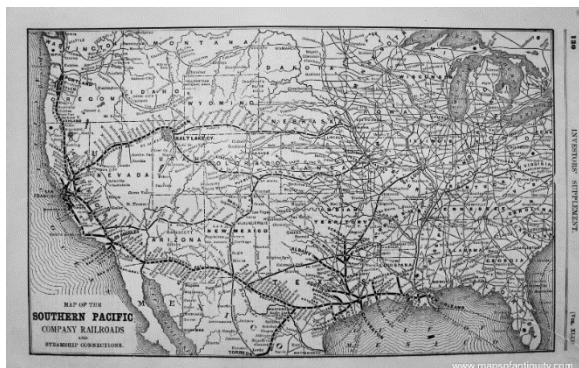


Figure 1. *Map of the Southern Pacific Company Railroads and Steamship Connections, 1889*, <http://www.mapsofantiquity.com>.

until the harvest season ended and his financial situation became unsustainable, prompting him to move north from California into the Washington Territory.²³ The move to the Washington Territory quickly paid off as Peter was able to acquire work at the rate of two to two-dollars and fifty-cents a day through a Tacoma, Washington employment office at a brickyard on Wollochet Bay near Gig Harbor,

Washington.²⁴ Although there were numerous small brickyards that operated in the area around

21. "Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi;" *Map of the Southern Pacific Company Railroads and Steamship Connections*, 1889, map, Maps of Antiquity, accessed on October 30, 2018, http://www.mapsofantiquity.com/store/Antique_Transportation_Maps_%26_Books/Railroad_Maps/Map_of_the_Southern_Pacific_Company_Railroads_and_Steamship_Connections/inventory.pl?id=USA219#.W9gfI_ZFxEY.

22. "Southern Pacific Railroad," Union Pacific, accessed on October 30, 2018, https://www.up.com/aboutup/special_trains/heritage/southern_pacific/index.htm.

23. "Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi."

24. Ibid.

1900, Fox Island Clay Works, founded in 1884 as the Fox Island Brick Manufacturing Company, experienced the most success and notability.²⁵

While working at the Wollochet brickyard, Peter discovered that men from his homeland of Dalmatia, most importantly Samuel Jerisich and his sons, John and Mike, were living in Gig Harbor.²⁷ Sam Jerisich, one of the founders of Gig Harbor, first arrived there by rowboat from Vancouver Island, British Columbia, in 1867.²⁸ Peter left the brickyard for a job at the Gig Harbor Mill for a short time before moving to the mill in Tacoma, Washington, where he recalls, the one-dollar and twenty-five cent wages were “small wages [for] hard work.”²⁹ This may have influenced his next decision which changed not only the course of his own life but that of his family and Gig Harbor. Peter returned to Gig Harbor to commercially fish with Samuel Jerisich

25. “Fox Island Brickyard,” Harbor History Museum, accessed on October 30, 2018, <http://harborhistorymuseum.blogspot.com/2014/04/fox-island-brickyard.html>.

26. In Seattle, Washington, on June 6, 1889, not long before Peter’s arrival into the Washington Territory, an exceptionally dry summer and poorly designed hydrant system were contributing factors to the catastrophic fire that began in a carpenter’s shop and resulted in the destruction of twenty-five city blocks, loss of five-thousand jobs, an estimated twenty-million dollars in total damages. Perhaps surprisingly, there were no recorded deaths. Brick, tile and ceramic pipe manufacturing, as a result, became a booming business as Seattle initiated new metropolitan building and sewer construction projects; “The Great Seattle Fire,” University of Washington, accessed on October 30, 2018, <https://content.lib.washington.edu/extras/seattle-fire.html>; *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), July 15, 1889: 3, *NewsBank*, accessed on October 30, 2018, <https://infoweb.newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-14D30B33A518A37E@2411199-14D11FB538E87B55@2-14D11FB538E87B55@>.

27. “Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi.”

28. “Gig Harbor’s Heritage,” Harbor History Museum, accessed on October 30, 2018, <http://harborhistorymuseum.blogspot.com/2014/09/gig-harbors-heritage.html>.

29. “Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi.”

and his sons. Although he did not experience an immediate surge of wealth, this change in career path would open the door to lifelong dividends.³⁰

Casting Deep Nets in a New Sea



Figure 2. Front cover of passenger list, CGT French Line, La Bretagne, 1887, <https://www.gjenvick.com>.

After finding Gig Harbor to be safe and prosperous, Peter summoned his three brothers to leave their lives behind in Dalmatia, and fish with him there. He continued to establish roots in Gig Harbor and deepen his relationship with Samuel Jerisich and his family. On December 25, 1897, Peter married Sam's daughter Melissa, who died shortly after giving birth to a daughter named Julia on June 23, 1901.³¹

Peter's brothers benefitted from safer, lower-cost and more routine trans-Atlantic crossings

30. Ibid.

31. Marriage Certificate, Peter Skansi to Melissa Jerisich, December 25, 1897, *prcmc-vol-2_337-DA2*, Washington State Archives, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 30, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2378&h=3449222&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN926&_phstart=successSource; Social Security Death Index, Julia Babich, Washington, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 30, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=3693&h=2178482&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN944&_phstart=successSource.

32. Peter married his second wife, Katie Boroevic on June 17, 1903, and they went on to have three children, Vincent W., Marie, and Antone; Marriage Certificate, Peter Skansi to Katie Boroevic, June 17, 1903, *prcmc_v3_0587*, Washington State Archives, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 30, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=2378&h=3818376&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN946&_phstart=successSource; Front Cover - Passenger List, CGT French Line, La Bretagne, 1887, illustration, Gjenvick-Gjenvik Archives, accessed on October 31, 2018, https://www.gjenvick.com/PassengerLists/BrowseByPortCity/LeHavreFrance-PassengerLists.html.pl?id=USA219#.W9gfI_ZFxEY.

following the introduction and subsequent expansion in the use of steamships. This led to a drastic increase in emigration out of Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century.³³ Agents for the shipping companies worked diligently through advertising and recruiting campaigns to sell the hope of a better life in America to these potential emigrants to ensure full passenger lists, high profits for the company, and a steady flow of workers for American businesses.³⁴

Peter's brother Mitchell departed Europe on December 6, 1899, through the port of Havre, France aboard the steamer *La Cascogne* and arrived in New York Harbor on December 15, 1899.³⁵ Just as Peter had, Mitchell quickly made ties to the local community and married Amanda Dorotich, a young woman from another local fishing family, on January 20, 1904. They went on to have four children, Clementine, William J., Mitchell V., and Carolyn.³⁶

Brothers Joseph and Andrew were not far behind. Joseph retraced Mitchell's path through France and arrived in New York Harbor on May 15, 1900, followed by Andrew on June

33. Torsten Feys, Lewis R. Fischer, Stéphane Hoste, and Stephan Vanfraechem, *Maritime Transport and Migration: The Connections between Maritime and Migration Networks* (Liverpool University Press, 2007), 3-4.

34. Ibid.

35. Naturalization Records for the Superior Court for King, Pierce, Thurston, and Snohomish Counties, Washington.

36. Marriage Certificate, Michael Skansie to Amanda Dorotich, January 20, 1904, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 30, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=60226&h=473503&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN1018&_phstart=successSource.



Figure 3. Skansie home and net shed, 2017.020.024, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington.

2, 1903, by way of South Hampton, England onboard the steamer *Saint Paul*.³⁷ Joseph married his sister-in-law, Annie Dorotich, on February 12, 1907, and they went on to have five children, Caroline, Katherine, twins Anna and Antionette, and Joseph V.³⁸ Andrew traveled to the homeland to be married and returned to Gig Harbor on October 5, 1907, with his wife Bertha and his mother

Clementina.³⁹ Andrew and Bertha went on to have five children, Clementine, Jeroma, Vincent A., Antone, and Peter B.

In the spring of 1908, Andrew, an accomplished stone mason by trade, started construction on the Skansie family home, a brick house located on the west side of the harbor just up from the future location of the family net shed.⁴⁰ The struggles of Dalmatia were far behind the Skansie brothers, and in their new home of Gig Harbor, their futures would be built.

37. Naturalization Records for the Superior Court for King, Pierce, Thurston, and Snohomish Counties, Washington.

38. Marriage Certificate, Joseph Skansie to Annie Dorotich, February 12, 1907, digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on October 31, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=60226&h=468351&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN1085&_phstart=successSource.

39. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), October 6, 1907: 37, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-12871ACB924418C4@2417855-12870E7223104049@36-12870E7223104049@>.

The Winds of Change

When Peter first began fishing with Samuel Jerisich, all fishing vessels were oar-powered and commercial fishing was a rewarding but laborious job.⁴¹ Around 1900, Peter heard that George Shears and Fred Prussy of Ballard, Washington made a technological leap to install a gas engine onto one of their boats, yet he had his doubts and decided to continue using his oars for the coming season.⁴² In 1902, however, the Skansies started to install small cabins on their boats as well as conduct major retrofitting by sawing a boat in half, extending its length by eight feet, and installing a seven-horsepower standard gas engine.⁴³ The Skansies enlisted the help of a master carpenter, and fellow countryman, John Martinolich with their first full construction, the building of a thirty-three-foot gasoline steamer called *Nightingale* in 1907.⁴⁴ Over the next several years, Peter, Joe, and Andrew continued to modify fishing boats for themselves and others, and Mitchell was employed at the Sunset Engine and Boat Company in

40. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), April 4, 1908: 15, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-168A3244899F4891@2418036-168A23B9CB1D0952@14-168A23B9CB1D0952@; Skansie home and net shed, 017.020.024, photograph, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington>.

41. "Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi."

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

44. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), May 12, 1907: 54, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-128473BBA0AE3497@2417708-12822CBB3045292E@53-12822CBB3045292E@>.

Ballard, where he likely further developed his engine mechanic skills.⁴⁵ Upon Mitchell's return in 1910, the brothers built completed two launches, the *Aeroplane* and *Fair Play*, each with manual seines and engines “with all modern improvements.”⁴⁶ These boats were not only the envy of the local fishing fleet, but they were the stepping stones that led the Skansies to found the Skansie Ship Building Company.

Full Speed Ahead

The Skansie Ship Building Company, 1912, was founded on the heels of the family’s early successes in boat building and provided a legitimate platform from which they could push the boundaries of innovation in both the construction and capabilities of wooden vessels. Committed to excellence from the very beginning, they hired Sam Kazulin to be the company’s lead designer.⁴⁷ Kazulin was family, in need of work, and more importantly, an experienced shipwright in Dalmatia.⁴⁸ Kazulin departed Europe through the port of Havre, France aboard the

45. “Autobiographical Sketch by Peter Skansi;” *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), July 3, 1909: 15, *NewsBank*, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-169148FA5DE3B8E5@2418491-169140D99935B318@14-169140D99935B318@>; Katie Chase, “Skansie Shipbuilding Company,” October 24, 2016, *HistoryLink.org*, accessed on November 1, 2018, <http://www.historylink.org/File/20170>.

46. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), June 18, 1910: 15, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-1691663ECD1A4467@2418841-169163859BC6CE92@14-169163859BC6CE92@>.

47. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), May 21, 1912: 3, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-168E07D180516AD8@2419544-168DFE0B53191C72@2-168DFE0B53191C72@>.

48. Priscilla Lisicich, “Slavonian Hall: Celebrating Old Town’s Croatian Heritage,” ed. by Mary Bowlby, Job Carr Cabin Museum, accessed on November 1, 2018, <https://www.jobcarmuseum.org/blog/slavonian-hall-celebrating-old-town-s-croatian-heritage>.

steamer *Chicago* and arrived in New York Harbor on April 14, 1910.⁴⁹ Kazulin returned home periodically to see his family and would work for the Skansies on three occasions.⁵⁰

The introduction of powered machinery and gasoline engines into the industry of shipbuilding, as in other mechanized industries, created more dangerous work environments, and the Skansies were not immune. Mitchell was hurt badly in March 1911, when an engine fell while he was removing it from a launch, crushing his foot.⁵¹ A more modern shipyard was needed if the business was going to safely expand. In April 1911, construction began on an open-air structure designed for large vessels and located just down from Andrew's net shed.⁵² The

49. Naturalization Records of the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington, 1890-1957, 121, M1542, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C., digital image, Ancestry.com, accessed on November 1, 2018, https://search.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/sse.dll?indiv=1&dbid=1193&h=2632646&tid=&pid=&usePUB=true&_phsrc=oIN1143&_phstart=successSource.

50. Lisicich, "Slavonian Hall: Celebrating Old Town's Croatian Heritage."

51. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), March 11, 1911: 10, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-16916D98018D0D41@2419107-16912FF159114C9F@9-16912FF159114C9F@>.

52. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), April 22, 1911: 11, *NewsBank*, accessed on October 31, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-16916E0426D1AEF9@2419149-169162FAE9C8270B@10-169162FAE9C8270B@>.

Skansies chose an ideal location for a Pacific Northwest shipyard in terms of labor supply, land cost, and water depth.⁵³



Figure 4. Skansie Shipbuilding Company with the Ferry *City of Steilacoom*, Marvin D. Boland, 1926, Marvin D. Boland Collection G37.1-164, Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Washington.

In March 1912, the ways were completed at the shipyard and the Skansie brothers planned to immediately lay the first keel.⁵⁴ In a bold show of skill and ingenuity, the shipyard launched its first vessel, the *Oceania*, on Saturday, May 4, 1912.⁵⁵ The launch was well covered in the media, although the spelling of the name varied between

53. H. Cole Estep, 15; Skansie Shipbuilding Company with Ferry *City of Steilacoom* Under Construction, Marvin D. Boland, November 19, 1926, photograph, Marvin D. Boland Collection G37.1-164, Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Washington, accessed on November 2, 2018, <http://cdm17061.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p17061coll21/id/15072/rec/11>.

54. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), March 2, 1912: 8, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-168E03CFC25EC7C7@2419464-168DCDD650368E22@7-168DCDD650368E22@>; Ways are parallel timbers sloping from the ship construction sight, one on each side of the ship, that allow it to be moved to the water once construction is complete. The keel is the long foundation timber located at the very bottom of the ship, running fore to aft; “Shipbuilding Terms,” *Wooden Ships of River John*, accessed on November 26, 2018, <http://www.parl.ns.ca/woodenships/terms.htm>.

55. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), May 4, 1912: 13, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-168E07B291E1869D@2419527-168DF940E0B4B6ED@12-168DF940E0B4B6ED@>.

Oceania, Oceana, or Oceano.⁵⁶ The *Oceania*, powered with a fifty-horsepower standard engine, was the largest purse seiner on the Puget Sound at sixty-five feet and was the “center of attraction” when it made a stop in the Seattle Harbor in August 1912.⁵⁷ Shortly after launching the *Oceania*, the shipyard delivered boats to both Lee Makovich and Sam Kazulin, the first of a steady three-year cycle of fishing and building.⁵⁹ By February 1915, there were fifty new modern purse seiners being constructed throughout the Puget Sound, eight of them at the Skansi Shipbuilding company, all equipped with forty-horsepower Frisco standard engines.⁶⁰ The Skansie business continued to thrive in Gig Harbor, however, their Dalmatian extended family and homeland was becoming entangled in heated disputes in Europe. These conflicts, culminating in World War I, would challenge the Skansie’s American identity.

The All-American Fishermen

The World War I began on July 28, 1914, a month after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and concluded on November 11, 1918, with Germany’s signing of the armistice.

56. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), April 25, 1912: 16, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-12A0C51B442E166C@2419518-12A075BB2AC312C7@15-12A075BB2AC312C7@>; *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), May 15, 1912: 16, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-128BA5E8737BED2C@2419538-12822CF6513184F6@15-12822CF6513184F6@>; *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), May 4, 1912: 13.

57. *Ibid.*

58. As of 2013, the *Oceania*, renamed *W.R. Lord*, was moored in Victoria, B.C.

59. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), May 21, 1912: 3.

60. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), February 5, 1915: 22, *NewsBank*, accessed on November 1, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-12923AE524939B3F@2420534-12822D255355FD6D@21-12822D255355FD6D@>.

The United States entered the conflict in April 1917. In April 1918, as the Great War was raging to a fever pitch in Europe, Peter Skansie and his fellow Gig Harbor fishermen raised \$12,850 in support of the war effort.⁶¹ It was of great importance for the families that immigrated from the Austro-Hungarian Empire to show their neighbors they were one-hundred-percent American patriots as ethnic German immigrants became the targets of American suspicion and prejudice. Lee Makovich, a prominent Gig Harbor fisherman and friend of the Skansies stated to the local paper that, “Everybody down here at Gig Harbor is just plain American and is working for the common cause. We don’t belong to any other nation anymore. We’re Americans.”⁶² Gig Harbor fishermen’s efforts to support the war went a long way to reassure the American public that their neighbors and friends had not suddenly become an estranged enemy. The district chairmen of the Liberty Loan committee testified to Peter’s loyalty, “There is a man born in Austria who is more of an American at heart and has the understanding of the ideals of this country and appreciates our country more than many of our native-born.”⁶³ Despite the tensions of their European origins and horror of the war, the Skansies proved their patriotism and their family name remained synonymous with class, quality, and craftsmanship during and after the war.⁶⁴

61. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), April 12, 1918: 1, *NewsBank*, accessed on November 2, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-169805B97388FA4E@2421696-1697FD4D8A9BE5AF@14>.

62. *Ibid.*, 15.

63. *Tacoma Sunday Ledger* (Tacoma, Washington), October 13, 1918: 1, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington.

64. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), June 4, 1918: 12, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-169805F8E3725F13@2421749-1697DBB0D68A1238@11-1697DBB0D68A1238@>.

The Best Years

By the first week of April 1919, the Skansie shipyard delivered *Buddie*, a seventy-five-foot cannery tender equipped with an eighty-horsepower Union engine to Alaska Pacific Fisheries. Experts noted *Buddie* was the latest and greatest of cannery tenders.⁶⁵ Business at the beginning of 1920 was so good that resource shortages were the only limiting factor to the company's growth.⁶⁶ In February of that year ten boats were being built at the Skansie shipyard, but another twenty-seven orders, many from California, were declined due to shortages of workers and building materials.⁶⁷ In response to the increased demand and tempo, the Skansie brothers doubled the size of the shipyard and expanded the ways in order to build vessels up to two-hundred feet and conduct ferry work.⁶⁸ Mitchell and Andrew also saw an opportunity in transportation and incorporated the Skansie Ferry Company in October 1924 with thirty-thousand dollars in capital stock.⁶⁹ In July 1926 the Pierce County commissioners voted unanimously to take the county out of the ferry business and allow the Skansie brothers to

65. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), April 7, 1919: 14, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-129A1FC7E2CA9314@2422056-1285B21D8F4526BD@13-1285B21D8F4526BD@>.

66. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), February 12, 1920: 3, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-14D407E20AB217A6@2422367-14D4017975CBED13@2-14D4017975CBED13@>.

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), October 15, 1924: 20, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-128E58D1CD0B0F9B@2424074-128E54B721E92441@19-128E54B721E92441@>.



Figure 5. Ferries *Defiance* and *Skansonia* moored next to the *Avalon*, 1998.039.006, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington.

purchase the existing ferries and operate them with the agreement that the county would be given five-percent of the earnings.⁷⁰ The Skansies were already in the business of building ferries, but now they would be building them to supply their own transportation company.

Mitchell and Joseph incorporated the Washington Navigation Company in

December 1926 with a capital stock of \$250 thousand.⁷¹ The ferry business was good for the boatbuilding business, and a drydock was constructed next to the boat shed primarily for maintenance of the ferries run by the Washington Navigation Company.⁷² The ferry *Defiance* was launched on January 16, 1927, as the first ferry built for the Washington Navigation

70. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), July 14, 1926: 1, *NewsBank*, accessed November 1, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-14D5476A233C78CC@2424711-14D4140F47978FE0@0-14D4140F47978FE0@>.

71. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), December 13, 1926: 17, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-128EEF85C9DE74A9@2424863-128EEA5D0B9DAA94@16-128EEA5D0B9DAA94@>.

72. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), September 8, 1927: 10, *NewsBank*, accessed June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-14D40389D235D765@2425132-14D353D6085C8109@>; Ferries *Defiance* and *Skansonia* moored next to the *Avalon*, 1998.039.006, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington.

Company followed only two years later by the ferry *Skansonia* on August 23, 1929.⁷³

Other shipbuilding ventures continued: In the spring of 1925, the shipyard delivered the *Shenandoah* to Pasco Dorotich and later laid the keel for the *Veteran*.⁷⁴ Although the boatbuilding business had begun to slow down, the Skansies continued to reap the benefits of quality and craftsmanship they had sown for so many years. Even with the stock market crash leading to the Great Depression the Skansies completed the *Avalon* in winter 1929-1930.⁷⁵ Responding to the difficult economic environment, however, the shipyard changed course and became primarily a ship repair and maintenance facility.

Troubled Waters

The Skansies' ferry business, the Washington Navigation Company, continued operating in the Puget Sound until the opening of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, although not without controversy. In 1935, a decision was upheld by the Washington Supreme Court that Pierce County had been illegally paying the Washington Navigation Company a subsidy of forty-two thousand dollars a year for maintenance of docks and landings, and the company was ordered to

73. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), January 17, 1927: 15, *NewsBank*, accessed on November 1, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-14D458A2615C9A88@2424898-14D4557810A0F432@14-14D4557810A0F432@;SeattleDailyTimes> (Seattle, Washington), August 25, 1929: 22, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-12924C9BB7BA6F9D@2425849-128C02510B860C6D@21-128C02510B860C6D@>.

74. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), April 4, 1925: 11, *NewsBank*, accessed on October 31, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-169AB6F1B6EBE719@2424245-169AABD10F567EBD@10-169AABD10F567EBD@>.

75. "The *Avalon*," February 13, 2014, Harbor History Museum, accessed November 2, 2018, <http://harborhistorymuseum.blogspot.com/2014/02/the-avalon.html>.

pay the county twenty-five thousand dollars and cease accepting the subsidy.⁷⁶ This was a significant loss to the company. In 1938, Pierce County was required to buy the Washington Navigation Company out of their ferry operations for three-hundred-thousand dollars in order to



Figure 6. New Tacoma Narrows center span crashes into Puget Sound, November 7, 1940, www.seattlepi.com

secure the final loans for the building of the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, although the company would maintain operations until the completion of the bridge.⁷⁷ By 1939, Mitchell had passed away but his son William J., who was running what remained of the Washington Navigation Company, restarted the Gig Harbor to Tacoma ferry run with their remaining ferries and signed a fourteen-thousand dollar monthly contract on

76. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), September 30, 1937: 23, *NewsBank*, accessed on November 2, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-169BF799C91BCD5B@2428807-169BF2DACC46493A@22-169BF2DACC46493A@>.

77. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), November 21, 1938: 1, *NewsBank*, accessed on November 2, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-1655492888A48BC0@2429224-165546FF4E9E1CBD@0-165546FF4E9E1CBD@>; The first Tacoma Narrows Bridge opened on July 1, 1940, and was the third longest suspension bridge in the world until a windstorm on November 7, 1940, caused the bridge to oscillate and collapse into the Puget Sound, earning it the beloved title, “Galloping Gertie.” The bridge collapse became a sudden transportation nightmare for Pierce County and the State; “1940 Tacoma Narrows Bridge,” Washington State Department of Transportation, accessed November 2, 2018, <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/TNBhistory/#2>; New Tacoma Narrows center span crashes into Puget Sound, 1 of 85, November 7, 1940, digital image, accessed November 2, 2018, <https://www.seattlepi.com/science/article/A-Tacoma-Narrows-Galloping-Gertie-bridge-6617030.php>.

December 31, 1940.⁷⁸ In April 1941, however, the Puget Sound Navigation Company, known as the Black Ball Line, purchased the run from the Washington Navigation Company, and the Skansies were officially out of the ferry operations business.⁷⁹

World War II Marks the End of an Era

As in the Great War, the Puget Sound and its fishing fleet would be there to support the war effort. In April 1941 the U.S. Navy purchased nine purse seiners from the Pacific Northwest fishing fleet to be retrofitted as patrol boats, with extra berthing and the addition of armaments.⁸⁰ In October 1941, the Skansie Shipyard was leased to Leslie Comyn and the Harbor Shipbuilding Corporation for a period of three years to build minesweepers and crash boats in support of war operations.⁸¹ Industry changed during the war, as it often does, making wooden construction seem costly compared to metal construction and the Skansie shipyard remained primarily a

78. Mitchell Skansie, Tacoma-Pierce County Obituary Index, Tacoma Public Library, accessed on November 26, 2018, <http://cdm17061.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p17061coll3/id/237439/rec/1>; *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), January 1, 1941: 1, *NewsBank*, accessed on October 31, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-1657978BCE967A45@2429996-165470FF8D5A7576@0-165470FF8D5A7576@>.

79. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), April 7, 1941: 12, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-129ED1D74EF47935@2430092-12904B91E24CAF87@11-12904B91E24CAF87@>.

80. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), April 9, 1941: 26, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-129ED1D91A4F0FFA@2430094-12904B91EEF08D0E@25-12904B91EEF08D0E@>.

81. *Seattle Daily Times* (Seattle, Washington), October 8, 1941: 17, *NewsBank*, accessed on June 10, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:127D718D1E33F961@WHNPX-129EC41CBAB72151@2430276-12904B90DE125333@16-2904B90DE125333@>.

maintenance facility until it produced its first seiner since 1930. In April 1949, the second *Oceania*, designed by J.A. Martinolich, was launched and marked a short-lived revival of the Skansie Shipbuilding Company.⁸² Present at the launch was John Cosulich, the yard foremen for the Skansie Shipbuilding Company since its founding in 1912.⁸³ After his father's passing, the retirement of his uncle Joseph, and exit of his brother from the shipyard in 1953, William J. sold the Skansie shipyard to Gig Harbor Marina Incorporated and closed the cover on the Skansie Shipbuilding Company.⁸⁴ Although the company closed down, its legacy as a leader in Puget Sound fishing and shipbuilding would remain an important part of Gig Harbor and Pacific Northwest History. Today, that history is being rediscovered and renovated.

82. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), April 19, 1949: 14, *NewsBank*, accessed on October 31, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-1654CC0470FDEEBA@2433026-16544C46933CC49E@13-16544C46933CC49E@>.

83. *Ibid.*

84. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), September 6, 1959: 32, *NewsBank*, accessed on October 31, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=image/v2:10FE6ECC036402F0@WHNPX-165DB4B5395ED642@2436818-165C420F129218AA@31-165C420F129218AA@>.

The *Shenandoah*

The *Shenandoah*, built for Pasco Dorotich of Gig Harbor, Washington, was launched as a cannery tender from the Skansie ways on April 3, 1925.⁸⁵ Today, the *Shenandoah* is being restored as a key artifact of Pacific Northwest industry and ingenuity. Powered by an Atlas-



Figure 7. *Shenandoah*, Marvin D. Boland, 1925, Marvin D. Boland Collection B12220, Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Washington.

Imperial diesel engine, the *Shenandoah* would undergo engine upgrades on two separate occasions during its lifespan.⁸⁶ In addition to these upgrades, a number of structural modifications were made to the vessel including a new pilothouse in 1948.⁸⁷ Initially operated as a cannery tender in Alaska, the *Shenandoah* was converted to a Purse Seiner and operated off the San Juan Islands in Washington State for much of its time as an active fishing vessel.⁸⁸ The *Shenandoah* was captained by Pasco

85. *Tacoma Daily News* (Tacoma, Washington), April 4, 1925: 11; *Shenandoah*, Marvin D. Boland, 1925, Marvin D. Boland Collection B12220, Tacoma Public Library, Tacoma, Washington, accessed on November 26, 2018, <http://cdm17061.contentdm.oclc.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/p17061coll21/id/20647/rec/7>.

86. “*Shenandoah*, Our Fishing History on Display,” Harbor History Museum, accessed on November 26, 2018, <http://harborhistorymuseum.blogspot.com/2016/04/shenandoah-our-fishing-history-on.html>.

87. Historic American Engineering Record, Purse Seiner *Shenandoah*, HAER No. WA-178, Library of Congress, accessed on November 26, 2018, <http://cdn.loc.gov/master/npn/habshaer/wa/wa0700/wa0757/data/wa0757data.pdf>.

88. *Ibid.*

until the 1930s when it passed to his son, John Dorotich, who captained the boat until his death



Figure 8. *Shenandoah* restoration at Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington, 2018, <http://waterdogsite.com>.

in 1966.⁸⁹ It was then sold by John Dorotich's sister, Lena Bez, to Tony Janovich in 1967, and he operated it until his retirement and subsequent gifting of the vessel to the Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, Washington in 2000.⁹⁰ On February 15, 2003, the *Shenandoah* was moved across town on specialized heavy moving equipment from the waterfront to the museum, where it is currently housed in the covered open-

air Maritime Gallery and has been in various stages of restoration and conservation since its arrival.⁹¹ The project depended primarily on volunteers from the community until Spring 2018 when a full-time shipwright was hired to provide expertise and skill in the art of wooden shipbuilding. Completion of the *Shenandoah* restoration and conservation project is planned for 2025 to coincide with the enclosure and remodel of the Maritime Gallery.⁹²

89. "Shenandoah, Our Fishing History on Display."

90. Ibid.

91. Duncan Livingston, "Cruising into history," *The News Tribune*, February 16, 2003: B01, *NewsBank*, accessed on November 28, 2018, <https://infoweb-newsbank-com.offcampus.lib.washington.edu/apps/news/document-view?p=WORLDNEWS&docref=news/0F9417512C834FA1>; *Shenandoah* being rebuilt at back of museum, "Seattle To Gig Harbor Anchorage June 13-14, 2018," Water Dog Site, accessed on November 26, 2018, <http://waterdogsite.com/2018/06/13/bainbridge-island-to-gig-harbor-anchor-june-13-14-2018/>.

92. Maritime Gallery Capital Campaign Proposal, 2018, Harbor History Museum, Gig Harbor, WA.

The Avalon



Figure 9. A historical photo of the *Avalon* before it was declared derelict, 2015, <https://www.thenewstribune.com>.

In 1930, when Andrew’s newest boat was completed, he turned to his most trusted associates, his five children, to christen the vessel.⁹³ There was a deadlock between the names “Saratoga,” a battleship, and “Avalon,” a song, so the children went to Andrew and requested his opinion, to which he responded, “Hmmm, “Avalon” is

better. It is shorter, easier to paint.”⁹⁴ The *Avalon* was launched that winter and it became one of the most iconic Skansie built seiners to leave the ways of the shipyard.⁹⁵ Today, it too serves as historical artifacts, evidence of Puget Sound maritime history and the Skansie family’s contributions to the region.

Skipped by Andrew from 1929 until his retirement in 1934, the *Avalon* continued its run, captained by trusted local community members until Andrew’s son Antone took the boat in 1940, and with the help of his brothers, Vincent and Peter, fished it until they retired in 1987.⁹⁶

93. Lee Makovich, “The Avalon: A Family History,” *The Fisherman’s News*, February 1995, 21.

94. Ibid.

95. “The Avalon,” February 13, 2014.

96. Makovich, “The *Avalon*: A Family History”; A historical photo of the *Avalon* before it was declared derelict, 2015, digital image, The News Tribune, accessed on November 2, 2018, <https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/local/community/gateway/article211355679.html>.



Figure 10. The derelict 1929 *Avalon* raised from Hood River canal, Oct 28, 2014, <https://seatosummitnet.wordpress.com>.



Figure 11. “Salmon, Seiners, and Life on the Sea” Exhibit at the Harbor History Museum, May 2018, Nathan Patrick, Gig Harbor, Washington, May 2018.

The Skansies sold the *Avalon* in 1990 and it changed ownership a number of times until 1995, after which it went off the radar until 2014 when the Department of Natural Resources discovered her sunk in the Hood Canal.⁹⁷ When the *Avalon*'s last owner was unable to handle the cost of the extensive salvage operations, a state archeologist worked with the Gig Harbor BoatShop to evaluate the vessel's historic significance.⁹⁸ It was determined that the vessel was historically significant, and despite high restoration costs, was towed to Port Townsend, where the Gig Harbor BoatShop in conjunction with the Port Townsend Shipwrights Co-op worked to dismantle and document the vessel.⁹⁹ The wheelhouse and other significant items were salvaged by the BoatShop and in May 2018, with assistance from the Harbor History Museum, the

97. Charlee Glock-Jackson, “Historic fishing boat *Avalon* documented by Gig Harbor BoatShop,” Gig Harbor Life, *Kitsap Sun*, March 12, 2015, accessed on November 2, 2018, <http://archive.kitsapsun.com/news/local/gig-harbor/historic-fishing-boat-avalon-documented-by-gig-harbor-boatshop-ep-986977274-354859421.html>.

98. Ibid.; The derelict 1929 *Avalon* raised from Hood River canal, Oct 28, 2014, digital image, accessed on November 2, 2018, <https://seatosummitnet.wordpress.com>.

99. Ibid.; “Salmon, Seiners, and Life on the Sea” Exhibit at the Harbor History Museum, May 2018, Nathan Patrick, Gig Harbor, Washington, May 2018.

wheelhouse and other salvaged parts were restored or preserved and placed on display in the “Salmon, Seiners, and Life on the Sea” exhibit for the benefit of the community at large.

Conclusion

The success of the Skansie Ship Building Company is a testament to hard work, human ingenuity, and community. The Skansie brothers made incredible impacts on Gig Harbor and the Puget Sound as fishermen, boat builders, ferry operators, and pillars of the community. The influence of the Skansie family can still be felt along the Gig Harbor waterfront nearly sixty-years after the closing of the shipyard. Two Skansie Purse Seiners remain, the *Veteran*, seaworthy and maintained by the Gig Harbor BoatShop, and the *Shenandoah*, currently undergoing restoration at the Harbor History Museum. The Skansie Net Shed is on Gig Harbor’s Historic Structures Inventory, has been recently restored, and is open to the public. The shipyard’s main shed structure remains and is still being used as a vessel maintenance and repair facility by the Gig Harbor Marina. These structures are constant reminders of the Skansie brothers, their Shipbuilding Company, and the crafting of their American dream in the Pacific Northwest.

101. “Salmon, Seiners, and Life on the Sea” Exhibit at the Harbor History Museum in Gig Harbor, Washington, Nathan Patrick, May 2018.

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