A guide to the Trans-Pacific Westbound Rate Agreement records, 1920 Oct 21-1979 Jan 1

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Abstract: The collection includes minutes, cargo statistics and traffic circulars of TWRA, a consortium of West Coast shipping companies. The collection was received in little apparent order, except that meeting minutes were generally grouped together by the name of the body meeting. Meeting minutes are the most important, revealing, and complete part of the collection. The Joint Agreement was divided into several "conferences" that organized and re-organized many times over the years, met in many different cities, and involved many different steamship companies. These steamship companies themselves came in and out of business, changed names, reorganized, and consolidated often as the years passed. The collection has relevance to the history of the West Coast shipping industry in general, and to the individual corporate histories of Pacific and Far East shipping companies. The collection is also relevant to the legal and political history of anti-trust law exemptions and industry specific self-regulatory bodies. The researcher wishing an overview of this collection would do well to look at contract memos, rules and regulations, legal cases, and a representative sample of minutes from each conference, especially those early and late in the conference's existence. For access to individual steamship companies within the collection, decide upon a range of dates, consult the sequential arrangement of dates for appropriate minutes, and see the beginning of those minutes for a list of the companies and their representatives.

Physical Location: San Francisco Maritime NHP, Historic Documents Department
Language(s): In English.
Access
This collection is open for use unless otherwise noted.

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Processing Note
The descriptions in this collection guide were compiled using the best available sources of information. Such sources include the creator's annotations or descriptions, collection accession files, primary and secondary source material and subject matter experts. While every effort was made to provide accurate information, in the event that you find any errors in this guide please contact the reference staff in order for us to evaluate and make corrections to this guide.

Preferred Citation
[Item description], [Location within collection organization identified by Collection Number/Series Number/File Unit Number/Item Number], HDC0321 (SAFR 17423), Trans-Pacific Westbound Rate Agreement records, San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Acquisition Information
SAFR-00001

Transferred from Golden Gate National Recreation Area to San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park in 1988.

Historical or Biographical Note
The Trans-Pacific Westbound Rate Agreement (TWRA) is a consortium of shipping lines that are exempt from anti-trust legislation and that meet to set rates for the shipment of westbound cargo across the Pacific Ocean. The group was created in 1920, and included at various time most of the major shipping lines of the Pacific Basin. In 1934 the TWRA answered a complaint brought against them before the United States Shipping Board of the Federal Maritime Commission by the City of Oakland, California and the Oakland Chamber of Commerce. In that statement, the TWRA justified their formation in 1920 by noting that "prior to the formation unbridled competition existed between all carriers at all [terminals] on the Pacific Coast for the transportation of cargoes to the Orient." The 1934 statement noted that the TWRA was organized with the approval of the United States Shipping Board for the purposes of "preventing ruinous competition" between carriers, "affording fair opportunities to ports," and "promoting certainty in transportation conditions among merchants." It did so by stabilizing rate structures and eliminating unfair competition between and discrimination among its members. The TWRA argued that tariff and industry self-regulation measures were designed to "protect the shipping public" while simultaneously permitting "sufficient latitude in competition" between member carriers and participating terminals, in an effort to avoid "unreasonable conditions in respect to the shippers [and] unstable conditions among themselves." (See Series 5, folders 342-347 for documents relating to Oakland v. TWRA).

Collection Scope and Content

The collection includes minutes, cargo statistics and traffic circulars of TWRA, a consortium of West Coast shipping companies. The collection was received in little apparent order, except that meeting minutes were generally grouped together by the name of the body meeting. Meeting minutes are the most important, revealing, and complete part of the collection. The Joint Agreement was divided into several "conferences" that organized and re-organized many times over the years, met in many different cities, and involved many different steamship companies. These steamship companies themselves came in and out of business, changed names, reorganized, and consolidated often as the years passed. The collection has relevance to the history of the West Coast shipping industry in general, and to the individual corporate histories of Pacific and Far East shipping companies. The collection is also relevant to the legal and political history of anti-trust law exemptions and industry specific self-regulatory bodies. The researcher wishing an overview of this collection would do well to look at contract memos, rules and regulations, legal cases, and a representative sample of minutes from each conference, especially those early and late in the conference's existence. For access to individual steamship companies within the collection, decide upon a range of dates, consult the sequential arrangement of dates for appropriate minutes, and see the beginning of those minutes for a list of the companies and their representatives.

Collection Arrangement

Organized into 6 series:

Series 1, Minutes, organized into nine sub-series according the regional or functional group represented within each sub-series. Within each sub-series, files are arranged chronologically: 1.01, General meeting minutes, 1922-1955; 1.02, Northern District meeting minutes, 1922-1955; 1.03, Seattle minutes, 1956-1958; 1.04, P.W.C. meetings, 1956-1966; 1.05, Southern District meetings, 1920-1954, with gaps; 1.06, Joint Far East meetings, 1923-1956, with gaps; 1.07, Joint North Atlantic meetings, 18 May 1921; 1.08, Owners meetings, 1958-1979; 1.09, Trans Pacific Operators meetings minutes, 1925-1934.

Series 1.01: files 1-51 (boxes 1-6).
Series 1.02: files 52-171 (boxes 6-18).
Series 1.03: files 172-180 (boxes 18-19).
Series 1.04: files 181-217 (boxes 19-23).
Series 1.05: files 218-239 (boxes 23-25).
Series 1.06: files 240-256 (boxes 25-27).
Series 1.07: file 257 (box 27).
Series 1.08: files 258-262 (box 27).
Series 1.09: file 263 (box 27).

Series 2: Memoranda, correspondence, and related material, including information regarding the Joint Far East meetings, the Joint Contract System memos and correspondences, Pacific Coast Committee minutes, Joint Agreement memoranda and bulletins, and California-Japan Cotton Pool memorandum.
Series 2: files 264-283 (boxes 27-29).

Series 3: Rate and tariff circulars for the following Conferences of the TWRA: Joint Agreement, Pacific Straits Conference, Pacific Coast Committee, Pacific Westbound Conference, and Far East Conference.

Series 4: Local and overland cargo statistics of the Pacific Westbound Conference.
Series 4: files 312-341 (boxes 32-35).
Series 5: Legal actions and documents of the Pacific Westbound Conference.
Series 5: files 342-353 (boxes 35-36).
Series 6: Miscellaneous material, including Malaysia Pacific Rate agreements and requests, Pacific Westbound Conference rules and regulations, commodity index forms, and miscellaneous form material.
Series 6: files 354-360 (boxes 36-37).