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## **Guide to the Pacific Coast Steamship Company Records MS 72**

Finding aid prepared by Jennifer Ho

Collection processed as part of grant project supported by the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) with generous funding from The Andrew Mellon Foundation.

San Diego History Center Document Collection

1649 El Prado, Suite 3

San Diego, CA, 92101

619-232-6203

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**Title:** Pacific Coast Steamship Company Records

**Identifier/Call Number:** MS 72

**Contributing Institution:** San Diego History Center Document Collection

**Language of Material:** English

**Physical Description:** 0.25 Linear feet(1 box)

**Date (inclusive):** 1879-1938

**Abstract:** The collection consists of business documents and other printed materials of the Pacific Coast Steamship Company, a San Francisco-based passenger and freight company founded in 1882, as well as items pertaining to S. T. Johnson, the company's San Diego agent.

**creator:** Pacific Coast Steamship Company.

**Biographical / Historical Notes**

The Pacific Coast Steamship Company (PCSC) was founded in September 1882 under the name Pacific Steamship Company. This passenger and freight company was based in San Francisco. They shipped a variety of cargo such as vegetables, grain, lumber, coal and iron, and boasted modern, luxurious facilities for their passengers. In the early 1890s, the name Pacific Coast Steamship Company gained permanent resonance, until the demise of the company in 1936. The company travelled routes from Alaska to San Diego, and included stops in many ports along the west coast of the United States, Canada and Mexico. This was a large company that employed over two dozen ships.

S. T. Johnson, was the San Diego Agent for PCSC. He was born in San Francisco on April 22, 1864 and was the youngest of twelve siblings. His father, Sivert Johnson, was a seafaring man who was known as a pioneer of the shipbuilding trade in San Francisco. S. T. Johnson's mother gave each of her children a few drops of saltwater at their birth to prevent drowning at sea. It proved to be a lucky break for Johnson, who was shipwrecked five times in his 54 years with PCSC. Johnson began working for the company in 1882 in San Francisco, and was sent to San Diego as an agent in 1894 due to his ailing health. He continued his service in San Diego for another 42 years, until the company went out of business in 1936. After the PCSC's demise, Johnson worked on the San Diego docks for various other ocean liners. In addition to his career as "one of the best known characters on the waterfront," Johnson also served as the president of fire commissioners under Mayor Forward, two terms on the Board of Education, President of the Board of Alderman, and was even acting mayor for three months in 1907 when Mayor Frank Frary was out of town on business. S. T. Johnson died at 95 years of age, in his home at 1861 Montecito Way, in December 1959.

**Scope and Content**

This collection pertains to the Pacific Coast Steamship Company and the company's San Diego agent, S.T. Johnson. Company documents include business policies, financial reports, freight information, licenses, certificates, correspondence, menus, and brochures. Documents of S.T. Johnson include personal and business correspondence regarding his position at Pacific Coast Steamship Company and a biography, of unknown origin.

**Arrangement**

The items in this collection are arranged by subject.

**Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements**

Oversized shipping cargo manifest chart is very fragile and access is restricted to copy of original only. (May 18, 2011)

**Conditions Governing Access**

This collection is open for research.

Access to oversized shipping cargo manifest chart is restricted to copy of original.

**Conditions Governing Use**

The San Diego History Center (SDHC) holds the copyright to any unpublished materials. SDHC Library regulations do apply.

**Processing Information**

Collection processed by Jennifer Ho on May 18, 2011.

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**Preferred Citation**

Pacific Coast Steamship Company Records, MS 72, San Diego History Center Document Collection, San Diego, CA.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Admiral Dewey (Ship).

Admiral Farragut (Ship).

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Admiral Line.  
Admiral Peoples (Ship).  
Admiral Schley (Ship).  
Alexander, H.F.  
City of Puebla (Ship).  
City of Topeka (Ship).  
Congress (Ship).  
Corona (Ship).  
Emma Alexander (Ship).  
Eureka (Ship).  
George W. Elder (Ship).  
Goodall, C.M.  
Goodall, Edwin  
Goodall, H.W.  
Goodall, Perkins, & Co.  
Governor (Ship).  
Harvard (Ship).  
Higbee, G.H.  
Johnson, S.T.  
Louise (Ship).  
Mexico (Ship).  
Oregon (Battleship).  
Oregon Improvement Co.  
Pacific Coast Steamship Company.  
Pacific Steamship Company.  
Pacific-Alaska Navigation Co.  
Perkins, Geo. C.  
Pomona (Ship).  
President (Ship).  
Queen (Ship).  
Ruth Alexander.  
Santa Rosa (Ship).  
Spokane (Ship).  
St. Paul (Ship).  
State of California (Ship).  
Umatilla (Ship).  
Walla Walla (Ship).  
Ward, E.C.  
Willamette Valley (Ship).  
Bills of health (Maritime law)  
Cargo ships -- Passenger traffic  
*Ocean Wireless News*  
Passenger ships  
San Diego (Calif.)  
San Francisco (Calif.)  
Shipping  
Shipping companies (Marine transportation)  
Steamboats

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Box-folder 1:1	<p><b>Business and financial records, 1879-1916</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <p>Records related to Company's business policies, transactions and financial information.  Accounts of S.S. Mexico, voyage 105, October 9, 1888 (in Oversize Collections D1).  Shipping cargo manifest chart, 1895-1902 (copy) (original in Oversize Collections D1).</p>
Box-folder 1:2	<p><b>Official documents, 1885-1902</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <p>Business licenses and clearances  Military headquarters pass  Health certificate from Canada</p>
Box-folder 1:3	<p><b>Check book, 1889 June 17-September 20</b></p>
Box-folder 1:4	<p><b>Company correspondence, 1880-1923</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <p>Newspaper clipping (attached to correspondence) detailing position appointments after merger of Pacific Coast Steamship Company with Pacific Alaska Navigation Company, October 14, 1916.  Correspondence from S.T. Johnson reporting on Company history, May 4, 1923.</p>
Box-folder 1:5	<p><b>Guest brochures, 1895-1917</b></p>
Box-folder 1:6	<p><b>Menus for employees and guests, 1912-1931</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <p>Menus from S. S. Spokane, S. S. Harvard, New Washington Hotel, S. S. Admiral Peoples, S. S. Ruth Alexander and S. S. Emma Alexander.</p>
Box-folder 1:7	<p><b>S.T. Johnson, 1902-1938</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <p>Personal and Company correspondence regarding his employment.  Biography (unknown origin)  Railway passes, San Diego Chamber of Commerce membership card, Western Union card.</p>
Box-folder 1:8	<p><b>Miscellanea, 1913-1938</b></p> <p><b>Includes:</b></p> <p>Event programs and invitations  Ocean Wireless News</p>