



The wonders of Seattle's waterfront

COURTESY MUSEUM OF HISTORY & INDUSTRY

THEN: Looking south from Schwabacher Wharf to Baker's Dock, along the Seattle waterfront, where the Scottish sailing ship Ecclefechan is moored. This photo was taken after the city's Great Fire of June 6, 1889, but before a November 1892 storm wiped out the dock.

WE MIGHT THANK Jean Sherrard, the weekly provider of our "now" photos, for finding and deciphering the name of the long ship posing here, the sizable four-masted Ecclefechan. The name is attached to the bow on the far right, where it hides behind the ship's anchor and its shadows. (To duplicate his sleuthing, you will need an enlarged print and a magnifying glass.)

The Ecclefechan was named for a Scottish village about 8 miles northwest of the border between Scotland and England and as close to the Irish Sea. The town modestly thrived for 200-plus years as a stop for stagecoaches on the six-day, 400-mile ride between Glasgow and London. (Now it takes four hours by train.)

On Feb. 5, 1881, when plans for the Ecclefechan were under way in a Port Glasgow shipyard, Thomas Carlyle, the favorite son of the village of Ecclefechan, died. As "the first man of English letters," Carlyle had been offered a burial at Westminster Abbey but declined, in favor of a gravesite beside his parents in the churchyard of the town where he was born in 1795. One description of the ship notes that a sculpted figurehead of Carlyle was fitted on its bow. It seems possible, or perhaps likely, that Thomas G. Guthrie, the ship's first owner, was an admirer of the author.

The Ecclefechan was short-lived. On Feb. 23, 1900, filled with 15,000 bales of Indian jute, the ship ran upon Skateraw Rocks about 50 miles short of Dundee, its port of call on the east coast of Scotland. Although the ship



JEAN SHERRARD

NOW: This also looks south, but from the Pike Street Wharf, and across the open water of Seattle's Waterfront Park and a twilight that reaches from the container cranes on Harbor Island, on the right, to the Smith Tower, on the left.

broke in half, its cargo was saved.

Our "then," but not our "now," looks south from the Schwabacher Wharf at the foot of Union Street. It was the only pier on Seattle's central waterfront to survive the Great Fire of 1889, and so was the gateway for shipped materials needed to rebuild the 30-some city blocks flattened by the fire. The photo was recorded sometime after the fire and before the November storm of 1892, when high and violent winds collapsed the next dock south of the Schwabacher, Baker's Dock at the foot of University Street. Here, Baker's Dock is standing, on the far side of the 290-foot-long, dark-green Ecclefechan, resting at what, since 1974, has been the south side of Waterfront Park.

After its 1892 collapse, Baker's Dock (it is written on photographer George H. Braas' negative, lower-right) was rebuilt, longer and stronger, as the Arlington Dock. About a dozen years later, it was replaced by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railway pier, which survives and now supports a Ferris wheel. Schwabacher Wharf hosted the sensational arrival of the S.S. Portland, the "ton of gold" steamer that in 1897 incited the hysteria surrounding the Yukon Gold Rush. Seventy years later, the old wharf was torn down by the Port of Seattle, in preparation, in turned out, for the open water of Seattle's Waterfront Park. 📍

Check out Paul Dorpat and Jean Sherrard's blog at pauldorpat.com.