In the fall of 1912 a group of hopeful port administrators traveled to New York City by train, trolley, and horseless carriage to discuss the prospect of forming an association for mutual benefit. It was clear to these founders that the complex business of running a public seaport could be improved by sharing information and by collaboration with other such enterprises. That philosophy has served the seaport industry well, and the organization has flourished.

Not many organizations survive to the century mark, and none without continually evolving to meet changing industry challenges and needs. Since its inception, AAPA and its members have adapted to world wars, to economic turmoil, to burgeoning and shifting international commerce, and exponential growth in communications and technology. Through these changing times, member ports have shared their best practices and pulled together for the good of the industry and the communities and nations they serve. We are proud to celebrate the dedication and resilience of this remarkable alliance of seaports of the western hemisphere. We hope you will enjoy reading this history of AAPA’s first 100 years.

Kurt J. Nagle
CEO & President
AAPA’s beginnings can be traced to the fall of 1912 when an invitation was extended to public port officials throughout the country to attend a conference of U.S. port authorities in New York the following December. The purpose, said the letter, would be to “exchange ideas relative to port organization, to promote the exchange of information and the development of uniform methods of administration and possibly to provide for some permanent organization between the principal port authorities.”

Inspiration for the meeting came from Calvin Tomkins, New York City’s Commissioner of Docks. Mr. Tomkins was one of the co-signers of the invitation letter along with George W. Norris, Director of the Philadelphia Department of Wharves, Docks and Ferries, and Hugh Bancroft, Chairman of the Directors of the Port of Boston.

Hosted by Mr. Tomkins, the meeting convened December 10 in the rooms of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York. Present were representatives from Mobile, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Jacksonville, Baltimore, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Providence, Norfolk, New Jersey, and, of course, New York City. Also represented were various New York City-area commercial associations and interests, as well as several federal agencies. Among the latter was the Isthmian Canal Commission, a reminder that the Panama Canal was under construction at that time.

Following a welcoming address by New York Mayor William J. Gaynor, who wondered aloud how such bitter rivals could agree to meet and work cooperatively, the assembled delegates got down to business.
A constitution was drafted and ratified for what would be known as the National Association of Port Authorities. Two classes of membership were established. The first was reserved for public port administrators and representatives of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the Isthmian Canal Commission, and the U.S. Departments of Treasury, War, Navy, and Commerce & Labor. Others with port-related interests were classified as “associate members.” Annual dues were set at $50 for Class One members and $25 for Associate members. Procedures were established for the selection of officers, calling meetings, and conducting other business of the new association.

A slate of officers was elected, with Mr. Tomkins as President and Col. George W. Goethels, the Army engineer in charge of building the Isthmian Canal, as First Vice President. The others selected included four more vice presidents, a secretary, a treasurer, and a board of directors.

The meeting concluded the following day, after which the delegates departed by train for successive day-long inspection tours of the ports of Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Norfolk.

By the end of the month, 11 ports had paid their dues and were enrolled as members: Baltimore, Philadelphia, Norfolk, Mobile, Rhode Island, Boston, Los Angeles, New Orleans, New York City, San Francisco, and the New Jersey State Board of Commerce and Navigation. All of them or their administrative descendants are still active members of AAPA.

When AAPA was formed, public port administration was in its infancy. Though public port agencies existed in a number of states and port cities, few, if any, actually owned or operated marine terminals. Commercial ports were for the most part dominated by powerful railroad corporations, which owned the terminals and controlled access to harbor areas.

During the period when AAPA was formed – the so-called Progressive Era of American politics – vigorous protest to the railroad monopoly arose and crystallized in the form of “free harbor”
movements around the country. These sentiments underlay the decision to call the meeting in New York, where they were articulated in a particularly forceful manner by Calvin Tomkins, who declared that ports were too important to be left to the unfettered whim of powerful corporations. Instead, he said, seaport terminals should be built with public funds and operated under public control to assure equal access to all carriers and shippers. The public, not unbridled private enterprise, should have the upper hand.

In striving to achieve these goals, it was recognized that public port agencies should be efficiently managed by competent, well-trained professionals of strong moral character. Given the need, it was essential that port authorities work together to further the science of port administration, to develop professionalism among its members, and, in all, work together for the common good.

Thus it was Calvin Tomkins who provided the inspiration and the leadership that brought the association into being and gave it sense of purpose. Long after Tomkins' death in 1920 the official AAPA historian, J. Spencer Smith, wrote: "If we have accomplished anything by way of better harbor administration... then our first acknowledgment must be to Calvin Tomkins, who conciliated our prejudices and pointed the way for each of us to help the other."

A sturdy foundation had been laid in New York. One year later the convention was held in New Orleans. The association's second meeting was attended by 50 member representatives as well as observer delegations from the ports of Beaumont, Galveston, Oakland, Orange, Pensacola, Port Arthur, Seattle, and, significantly, the Montreal Harbour Commission.

The 1914 convention, in Baltimore, which coincided with the centennial observance of the Star Spangled Banner, came just months after the opening of the Panama Canal, and, more ominously, the outbreak in Europe of the First World War. For the association, too, it was a major milestone. Here it was decided to extend membership eligibility to ports throughout the Western Hemisphere, and accordingly, the organization was renamed "The American Association of Port Authorities."

Within a year, AAPA had welcomed its first Canadian port members – Montreal, Hamilton, and Toronto. At its first Canadian convention, held in Montreal in 1916, AAPA also elected its first Canadian president, W.G. Ross of Montreal.

AAPA's first Latin American member ports (Para, Brazil, and Arica, Chile) joined in 1921 and its first Caribbean member (Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic) in 1949.

While World War I was the overshadowing event of that era, AAPA concerned itself with a variety of other issues – not just the questions of peace and neutrality but such things as the standardization of port administration, the need for accurate port statistics, water pollution, fire prevention, and above all, the rate and service
practices of the railroads. After the United States entered the war, a particularly contentious problem arose in the form of massive congestion at the major embarkation ports, which led to harsh criticism of the federal government’s management of wartime traffic movements.

The 1918 convention in Boston, which preceded the signing of the Armistice by about two months, was notable in a number of respects. First, the welcoming address was delivered by Calvin Coolidge, the then Lt. Governor of Massachusetts and future President of the United States. Also, it was in Boston that the association established its first standing committees: on Glossary; Handling Facilities and General Port Facilities; and on Pilotage, Local Port and Stevedore policies. During that convention, a bitter debate erupted over whether the U.S. merchant marine and particularly the railroads should be permanently nationalized. During the war, the carriers had been taken over and managed by a federal agency. The issue seriously divided the members. A resolution supporting nationalization was defeated, but only after a rancorous parliamentary maneuver.

Growing indifference and perhaps the aftertaste of the bitter meeting in Boston made 1919 a year of crisis for AAPA. Evidence of that came at the Galveston convention the following year which attracted just 29 registrants, including the minister who gave the invocation. Fearing that the association was facing extinction, the leadership decided on a plan of action to restore its health. That included a decision to publish a monthly bulletin, with the AAPA Secretary, Michael P. Fennell, Jr., of Montreal, as editor.

The first issue of the Monthly Bulletin, dated January 1920, was devoted mainly to the proceedings of the Galveston convention. Subsequent issues were filled with news about AAPA, analyses of technical matters, and reports on port developments around the world. The May 1920 issue, for example, featured articles on dredging on the South Atlantic and Gulf coasts, the unification of ports, and the use of motor trucks in marine terminal operations. Included, too, was a list of papers to be delivered at the upcoming Chicago convention, and news about the planned widening and deepening of the Houston Ship Channel, the new State Pier in Portland, Maine, and a prospective $50 million loan for harbor development in Baltimore.
The *Bulletin* proved to be an almost instant success. Reader-ship and advertising grew at a gratifying pace. The following spring, beginning with the March 1921 issue, it was renamed *World Ports*.

In the meantime, Mr. Fennell traveled extensively on AAPA’s behalf. His travels and the magazine’s popularity appear to have had the desired effect. Membership increased by 90 percent in 1920, and the Chicago convention of that year drew 136 registrants, more than four times the number attending the convention of 1919.

The association flourished through the remainder of the decade under a succession of gifted Presidents, including Mr. Fennell, who served in 1923/24. Others were Benjamin Thomson of Tampa, John H. Walsh of New Orleans, George B. Hegardt of Oakland, Brigadier General T.L. Tremblay of Quebec, Major General W.L. Sibert of Mobile, and J. Spencer Smith, President of the New Jersey State Board of Commerce and Navigation. Mr. Smith, AAPA’s President from 1925-27, was among those attending the New York meeting of 1912 and was also the association’s first official historian.

In that era, too, another individual began a long, distinguished career in the service of AAPA. Tiley S. McChesney, Assistant General Manager of the Port of New Orleans, an active participant in AAPA affairs since the New Orleans convention of 1913, succeeded Mr. Fennel as AAPA Secretary in 1922, a position he would retain until his death in 1949. In 1936 he assumed the additional duties of AAPA Treasurer.

Mr. McChesney managed AAPA’s affairs from his home in New Orleans. There, he kept its books, conducted extensive correspondence, and oversaw the management of *World Ports*. For his services, Mr. McChesney was paid a small salary and expenses. Thus, Mr. McChesney became AAPA’s first staff member and his home its first headquarters. He provided the association with a sense of continuity, a link with its founders. Presidents came and went, but McChesney remained.

Well-attended conventions followed in Chicago, Seattle, Toronto, New Orleans, Los Angeles, Norfolk, St. Louis, Houston, Quebec, and New York. This was the era of Prohibition, which helps explain the popularity of Canadian conventions and delegations in that period. At the Houston-Galveston convention of 1928, our Canadian friends arrived carrying what the official AAPA history describes as “elephant-edition thermos bottles.” At the opportune time, the Canadian delegation’s hotel suite was packed with eager conventioneers. Unfortunately, somewhere between the lobby and their suite, someone lacking a sense of humor had discovered the contents of the baggage, and when it came time to fill the glasses there was nothing to pour over the ice cubes but water.

Signs of vigor were evident in a well-nourished treasury and continuing increase in membership. Evidently, corporate membership was not strictly limited to ports of the Western Hemisphere. Among those inducted into the association in 1925, for example, in
addition to the ports of Albany, Coos Bay, Oswego and San Juan, were the Port of Manila, and the Chief, Direction of Sea Transport of the Soviet Union. For a time, too, the Bombay Port Trust and various British and European ports were also AAPA members.

Committee work, which had lapsed earlier in the decade, rebounded. Nine standing committees were established in 1920; more were added in subsequent years. By 1930, there were 16 including the committees on National Defense, Fire Prevention, Port Research, Oil Pollution, Uniform Port Practices and Terminal Rates, Foreign Trade Zones, and Public Ownership of Rail-Water Terminal Facilities.

AAPA conventions received regular reports on legislative developments affecting ports in both the United States and Canada, but AAPA did not maintain a Washington office, and appears to have done little if any lobbying.

Examples of AAPA concerns in that era, based on a sampling of papers delivered at conventions or published in *World Ports*, were the fire hazards created by oil pollution of waters, coordination of rail and water facilities, ship and cargo salvage operations, the science of port planning, the importance of commercial ports to the U.S. Navy, and recreational waterfront area development.

During this period, AAPA produced a number of important documents. A directory to the ports of North America was featured annually in *World Ports*. AAPA also published a glossary of port terminology, a survey of port financial practices, and a comprehensive bibliography of books and articles dealing with ports and related subjects.

The thirties were difficult times for the country and its ports. The Depression cut deeply into port traffic, making it difficult for port authorities to continue their membership in the association.
Nonetheless, AAPA held its own. In 1930, the Association was incorporated in Delaware, thus giving it a permanent legal structure. Thirties-era conventions were held in Milwaukee, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Toronto, New York, Houston-Galveston, San Francisco, Wilmington (Delaware), St. John-Halifax, and again in Milwaukee. During these years the association lobbied successfully for the enactment of legislation permitting the creation of foreign trade zones and worked to secure some degree of uniformity in port rates and practices. It also produced a Canon of Ethics for governing public port entities, cooperated with the National Fire Protection Association in the development of an acceptable fire code for ports, and succeeded, with the help of some Congressional pressure, in persuading the Interstate Commerce Commission to provide for more effective regulation of common carriers transporting hazardous commodities on U.S. waterways.

When the decade came to a close, war had again broken out in Europe. During the next couple of years, the mobilization of the
national economy and national defense preparedness were prime considerations. After the U.S. entered the conflict, major port facilities were taken over and operated by the War Department. Shipping was subject to naval control. The coastwise trades, which had accounted for much pre-war port business, were virtually annihilated by German U-Boats.

Wartime rationing and travel restrictions crimped AAPA activities to a considerable extent. World Ports, which by then was being published under contract by the Traffic World Corporation, virtually suspended operations: only one issue a year was published in 1942, 1943 and 1944. Full monthly publication did not resume until late 1945.

When the war ended, the association and the country turned their attention to peacetime recovery. Immediate concerns were the return to port authorities and private sector of port facilities taken for war-related purposes, the expansion of international commerce, and particularly important to the port industry itself, the debate over federal ownership of tidelands.

The year 1947 marked a turning point in AAPA’s history. That year, Traffic World Corporation decided to move the editorial offices of World Ports from Chicago to Washington. In charge of the Washington operation was a bright young editor, Paul A. Amundsen, who, on top of his journalistic activities, also established an informal AAPA headquarters with the blessing of the then AAPA President, E.O. Jewell of New Orleans. That December, the leadership decided to put the Washington presence on a more formal basis by appointing Mr. Amundsen to the salaried position of Special Assistant to the President, while continuing his editorial responsibilities with the magazine. After the death of Tiley McChesney, Amundsen was named AAPA’s Secretary/Treasurer at the Milwaukee convention of 1949. Several years afterward, the title was changed to Executive Director.
AAPA now had a full-time Washington presence. The regular spring meetings of the executive committee were expanded into more formal affairs that included what has since become the association’s “Washington Peoples’ Luncheon.” Other AAPA traditions that trace their beginnings to the Amundsen era are Puertos Amigos, the Salary Survey, the Port Management Seminars, publication of the *Advisory*, and a slew of books on port development, port engineering, port maintenance, port development overseas, port management and port planning, and the history of the association. Most important, Paul Amundsen put AAPA permanently into the Washington, DC, directory.

Mr. Amundsen retired in 1974, to be succeeded as Executive Director by Richard J. Schultz, a career port executive who most recently had been Port Director of the Port of Brownsville. After Mr. Schultz stepped down in 1979, the office was assumed by J. Ron Brinson, who came to Washington after a distinguished career in journalism and as an executive with the South Carolina State Ports Authority.

Under Mr. Brinson’s leadership, AAPA took a quantum leap. A full-time government relations program was established. Frequent appearances at Congressional hearings, constant contact with key federal agencies, and, in general, a greatly expanded Washington presence characterized the era. Research and membership services were greatly expanded. The annual Spring Conference assumed the form of a mini-convention. A full slate of seminars became a regular part of the annual AAPA activity calendar. In August 1984, AAPA relocated its headquarters to Alexandria, Virginia.

During the Brinson years there were also important organizational changes. Previously, the cadre of top elected officers included President, President-elect, and Vice President. In 1980, the titles were changed to Chairman, Chairman-elect and Vice Chairman, respectively, and the title of President was assigned to the association’s chief executive officer.
Even more substantial changes were to follow. Early on the Board of Directors was organized into regional delegations representing the association’s U.S., Canadian, and Latin American/Caribbean corporate members. The regional delegations nominated their own representatives to the Board of Directors but until the mid-1980s did not have their own officers. Instead, the corporate members voted collectively at the annual conventions to elect the Board of Directors and a Vice President (Vice Chairman after 1980) who automatically ascended to the positions of President-elect (Chairman-elect) and President (Chairman of the Board).

At the Portland convention in 1985, the bylaws were amended to allow broader participation in the governance of the association by each of the delegations. This was done by providing that each of the then three delegations – U.S., Canadian and Latin American/Caribbean – would select its own slate of officers: a Chairman, Chairman-elect, and Vice Chairman.

From the Chairmen-elect of the three delegations, the Board of Directors, voting at the Spring Conference, would elect a Chairman of the Board to serve in the ensuing activity year. The objective, among others, was to create broader opportunity for the corporate members of all three delegations to participate more directly in the governance of the association while at the same time focusing on issues of regional importance.

The new system was fully implemented in 1987-88 under Mr. Brinson’s successor, Erik Stromberg. At the Cleveland convention in 1991 it was decided to create separate delegations for the Latin American and Caribbean corporate members. Since then the office of Chairman of the Board has been occupied in succession by port directors from Canada, Chile, the United States, and the Caribbean.

The decade of Mr. Stromberg’s leadership also witnessed expansion of the association’s advocacy role at the national and international levels (with special emphasis on dredging and environmental issues), the launching of a national public awareness program, a more diversified seminar program (including its annual week-long Marine Terminal Training Conference), a vigorous re-
The names of 37 officers from the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey who were lost on September 11, 2001, were added to the Memorial Wall of the New York State Fraternal Order of Police in Hicksville, NY. A total of 84 industry colleagues from PANYNJ were lost in the tragedy.

awakening of its “Puertos Amigos” outreach to the ports of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the initiation of a Professional Port Manager (PPM®) certification program.

Mr. Stromberg was succeeded in September 1995 by Kurt Nagle, AAPA’s Senior Vice President and a staff member since 1985. The ensuing years gave rise to major challenges to the public port industry and the association. Most dramatic were the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, that brought death and devastation to an AAPA member, the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey. The attacks made port security a top priority for the association and its member ports throughout the Western Hemisphere. Other major shocks came from Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which caused widespread damage to U.S. Gulf Coast ports, and the near-collapse of the international financial system in the fall of 2008, which led to a precipitous drop in maritime trade volumes and severe economic costs to AAPA member ports.

Under Mr. Nagle’s leadership, AAPA has grown stronger and more resilient even in these challenging times. Among other things, the association developed and adopted a plan setting forth these strategic priorities: professional development and education, relationship building, public awareness and advocacy. It also expanded its headquarters with the acquisition of an adjoining building, established a relief fund for port employees impacted by disasters such as hurri-

In New Orleans, a Harbor Police rescue vessel patrols flooded neighborhoods looking for survivors in the days following Hurricane Katrina, which caused major damage to gulf ports.
canes, and began publishing the quarterly AAPA Seaports Magazine.

The association maintains an active presence in America’s capital city, vigorously representing the U.S. public seaport industry’s interests before Congress and various federal government agencies on a multitude of issues – from dredging, environmental protection and trade to security and sustainability.

It has solidified relationships with key partners through memoranda of understanding with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the International Association of Ports and Harbors, the International Navigation Organization, the Organization of American States, the International Association of Ports and Cities, the Association of Canadian Port Authorities, the European Sea Ports Organization, and the U.S. Department of Commerce’s International Trade Administration.

During these years, the association broadened and strengthened its ties with the Latin American port community by increasing the frequency and regularity of visits to the region by senior AAPA officials, by offering simultaneous Spanish/English translations at its seminars and workshops as well as its conventions, and most significantly by creating the staff position of Latin American Coordinator. AAPA’s annual congresses for Latin American ports have become an established tradition.

The association’s operations, like those of its member ports, have been revolutionized by information technology. Much of its business is transacted electronically or via the Internet, allowing for the near-instantaneous delivery of services and information and real-time communication with its members through its website, e-mail, webinars, and various social networks.

The PPM® program has grown and changed. The original program has been revamped, resulting in a more rigorous curriculum based on interactive groups or classes. A new variant designed for Latin American ports has been developed in partnership with the United Nations Trainmar program. Since its inception in 2005, the program has graduated approximately 85 certified port managers. The research papers authored by candidates in both programs constitute an important body of literature on port management.

AAPA has come a long way in its first century, and so has the public port industry. Publicly owned port facilities, little more than a dream in Calvin Tomkins’ day, are an established fact. And despite the doubts of those such as Mayor Gaynor, we have indeed succeeded in establishing a permanent organization with members dedicated to sharing and working together. Our founders and their successors have left a grand legacy. It is up to us and our successors to keep the flame alive.
AAPA Timeline

1912 December meeting in New York establishes the National Association of Port Authorities with 11 members
1914 Membership extended to ports in the western hemisphere, name changed to American Association of Port Authorities
1914 Opening of the Panama Canal revolutionizes shipping routes
1915 First Canadian member joins AAPA
1918 First standing committees formed
1920 First issue published of the Monthly Bulletin
1921 Monthly Bulletin renamed World Ports
1921 First Latin American member joins AAPA
1930 AAPA formally incorporated in Delaware, giving it permanent legal structure
1930s AAPA efforts result in greater uniformity in port tariffs and practices and a Canon of Ethics for governing public port entities
1936 25th Annual Convention held in San Francisco
1945 World Ports resumes full monthly publication after severe cutbacks during WWII
1947 Association’s offices established in Washington, DC
1949 Paul Amundsen becomes first full-time AAPA staff person, later becoming executive director
1949 First Caribbean member joins AAPA
1956 Advent of cargo containerization
1961 50th Annual Convention held in Long Beach
1966 Communications Awards Program initiated
1973 Environmental Improvement Awards Program initiated
1974 Richard Schultz becomes AAPA executive director
1979 J. Ron Brinson appointed AAPA executive director
1980s A full-time government relations program was established, research and membership services were greatly expanded, and a full slate of seminars became a regular part of the AAPA activity calendar
1985 Bylaws amended to allow AAPA delegations broader participation in governance
1986 75th Annual Convention held in Miami
1987 Erik Stromberg named AAPA President and CEO
1991 Separate association delegations created for Latin America and Caribbean ports
1991 First Communications Director hired
1995 Kurt Nagle named AAPA President and CEO
1995 Professional Port Manager (PPM®) certification program begins and graduates its first candidate
1998 AAPA website established
2000 Strategic plan approved, setting four goals of professional development and education, public awareness, relationship building, and representation and advocacy
2001 Terrorism attacks on World Trade Center and Pentagon reshape port and maritime security
2002 Maritime Transportation Security Act enacted
2002 Information Technology Awards program started
2003 Facilities Engineering Awards Program begun
2003 Seaports Magazine begins quarterly publication
2004 Port Environmental Management System (EMS) Assistance Program established
2003 Quality Partnership Initiative with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers launched
2004 “Seaports of the Hemisphere Allied in Relationships for Excellence” (SHARE) Initiative established
2004 Memoranda of Understanding signed with General Secretariat of the Organization of American States and IAPH
2004 Latin American Coordinator position established
2005 Hurricane Katrina disrupts Gulf of Mexico port operations; AAPA Port Employee Emergency Relief Fund established
2005 Seaport Security Manual in both English and Spanish developed by the Security Committee
2006 Latin American Professional Port Manager (PPM®) certification program started
2006 AAPA Cruise Award established
2006 Port Professional Technical Assistance Program established
2007 Memorandum of Understanding signed with the Association of Canadian Port Authorities
2008 “Seaports Deliver Prosperity” awareness initiative inaugurated
2009 Memorandum of Understanding signed with the European Sea Ports Organisation
2010 Professional Port Manager (PPM®) certification program revised from an individual to a group structure
2011 Memorandum of Intent signed with the U.S. Department of Commerce in implement the “Partnership with America’s Seaports to Further the National Export Initiative”
2011 100th Annual Convention held in Seattle
A special celebration of the association’s history as we celebrate 100 years of service to the seaports of the Western Hemisphere

American Association of Port Authorities
1010 Duke Street • Alexandria, VA 22314
www.aapa-ports.org