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CONTAINER TRANSFER TERMINAL SYSTEM AND METHODCROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application claims the benefit of copending U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/077,443 filed March 10, 1998.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTIONTECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a terminal and system for the automatic computerized transfer, e.g., loading and unloading, of containerized cargo between a container ship and trucks, railroad cars, other ships and/or
10 storage.

BACKGROUND ART

The related art of interest describes various means for unloading ship cargo on land or offshore using gantries for loading and removing cargo from ships.

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Accordingly, it is a principal object of the invention to provide a container ship terminal with storage, truck and rail facilities.

It is another object to provide such a container ship terminal having an overhead transverse beam and elevated ground rail system, with the overhead transverse beams being used for loading and unloading of container
20 cargo from ships, and to and from storage, through the use of automated vehicles, preferably without changing the orientation of the containers.

It is a further object to provide such a container ship terminal with automated vehicles to transfer container cargo via the elevated ground rail system to and from trucks and railcars.

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It is also an object of the invention to provide such a container ship terminal which is fully automated and controlled by a central computer system for the transfer of cargo to ships, storage, trucks or railcars.

It is another object to provide such a container ship terminal offering a graving dock and container ship support services while a ship is berthed in the terminal.

It is a further object to provide such a container ship terminal with facilities for rapidly refueling ships berthed in the terminal.

A still further object of the invention is to provide such a container ship terminal which is dependable, economic and fully effective in accomplishing its intended purposes.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a terminal and system for the automatic computerized transfer, e.g., loading and unloading, of containerized cargo between container ships, trucks, railroad cars, and storage. The terminal and system of the present invention reduces the amount of time required for a container ship to berth, to bunker (take on fuel), load supplies and to discharge and/or take on cargo. The terminal and system of the present invention is equipped to store or transfer the unloaded cargo automatically by using independent container transfer vehicles. The cargo ships are moored in docks of a terminal building constructed in or adjacent to a waterway. Preferably, each of the docks in the terminal and system of the present invention has the capability of acting as a wet dock, a graving dock and a lock. The terminal may be constructed by utilizing encapsulated dredged material. An overhead transverse beam system permits an individual container transport vehicle to lift a piece of cargo up and away from the ship. The container transport vehicle then distributes the unloaded cargo to the pertinent transportation vehicle or to storage within the terminal.

Thus, as a first aspect of the present invention, a terminal system for unloading containers from and loading containers onto container ships is

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disclosed, comprising a terminal structure having an interconnected right side, left side and rear side, and a substantially open front side with at least one quay adapted to form at least one dock, the dock preferably having a wall on at least two facing sides thereof, a plurality of parallel elevated ground conveyance rails positioned atop at least one of the walls, parallel longitudinal conveyance rails positioned above each of the walls, a plurality of parallel transverse overhead conveyance beams constructed and adapted to be positioned perpendicularly between the parallel longitudinal conveyance rails, and at least one container transport vehicle constructed and adapted to be capable of traveling along the elevated ground conveyance rails and the parallel transverse overhead conveyance beams and adapted to pick up, carry and deposit a container between a container ship berthed in one of the at least one docks and a location other than the container ship.

The terminal system may further comprise a computer control system for controlling the operations of each of the container transport vehicles. When more than one dock is included in the terminal system, interquay transfer beams may be included for conveying container transport vehicles from dock to dock.

In addition, the terminal structure may further comprise a storage and transfer area adjacent to the docks containing railroad tracks and/or a roadway, so that the terminal system can transfer containers between a first ship berthed in one of the docks, a second ship berthed in a second dock, a railroad car on the railroad tracks, a truck on the roadway, and/or a storage area within the storage and transfer area by utilizing the transverse overhead conveyance beams, the elevated ground conveyance rails, and the container transport vehicles under computerized control. Furthermore, the terminal system may comprise a railroad access and a truck access to the terminal structure for connection to the railroad tracks and roadway in the storage and transfer area.

In a second embodiment of the present invention, the railroad access and/or the truck access are connected by a tunnel under water to the

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terminal structure using container chutes located therein. In a third embodiment, the railroad access and the truck access are connected by a causeway on supports to the terminal structure.

Furthermore, the terminal system may include an enclosed terminal structure to accommodate all-weather, year-round operation, which terminal system further comprises a roof on the terminal structure, means for removing ship stack emissions from within the terminal structure, service portals separate from the cargo handling areas of the terminal which provide access to ships berthed in the docks, bow and side fender mooring devices adaptable to the form of a ship's hull, service harnesses which provide fast shore service connections to ships berthed in the docks, caisson doors (which may be attached to at least one of the docks) which open and close, and when closed isolate the dock from the adjoining waterway to allow dewatering of the dock for drydocking a ship or to permit water to be pumped into the dock acting as a lock to raise the position of a ship within the dock, and a high flow rate fueling system for a ship berthed in one of the docks comprising storage tanks and means for high-speed pumping of fuel.

As another aspect of the present invention, remotely controlled docking modules are provided for moving ships in or out of the docks.

As an additional aspect of the present invention, a bow mooring assembly for mooring a ship by the bow in a dock of a terminal is disclosed, comprising a horizontal rail in a dock wall, mechanical stop elements mounted to the horizontal rail, an H-shaped frame having a front portion consisting of a pair of separated bumpers for accepting a bow of a ship and a rear portion, wider than the front portion, and a plurality of hydraulic damper devices interconnected between the horizontal rail and the rear portion of the H-shaped frame, and whereby the H-shaped frame is limited in movement by the mechanical stop elements and the front portion of the H-shaped frame can accommodate a plurality of bow shapes.

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As a yet further aspect of the present invention, a locking side fender assembly for mooring a ship in a dock of a terminal is disclosed, comprising a slotted mooring fitting mounted to a hull of a ship, a key element adapted to fit into the slotted mooring fitting comprising an oblong element
5 connected to a first end of a shaft and an electric rotary actuator attached to a second end of the shaft, a rectangular fender element having elastomeric pads on a front surface and an aperture for the shaft of the key element, the rectangular fender element further having a top surface connected to a first end of a rotatable extender arm and to a first end of an adjuster arm, a rectangular
10 fender carriage mounted in a dock wall and being connected at a top surface thereof to both the rotatable extender arm at a second end thereof, and the adjuster arm at a second end thereof, an extender ram connected between the top surface of the rectangular fender carriage and the rotatable extender arm, a hydraulic power unit mounted to the rectangular fender carriage and to the
15 extender ram to automatically adjust the fender element to an inclination of the hull surface of a ship with appropriate dampening by positioning the extender ram, and a pair of wheels mounted to the rectangular fender carriage for positioning the rectangular fender carriage within a horizontal groove in the dock wall, and whereby the fender carriage can be locked and unlocked to the
20 slotted mooring fitting by the use of the key element.

As a final aspect of the present invention, a system for rapidly fueling a fuel storage tank of a docked ship in a terminal having quays is presented, comprising a quayside storage tank inside the transfer terminal for storing fuel, a fuel pumping unit connectable to the ship's fuel storage tank, a
25 fuel filtration unit located downstream from the quayside storage tank and connected to the pumping unit, a pumping control unit adapted to control the flow of fuel by the fuel pumping unit, and a vapor evacuation unit connected between the quayside storage tank and the ship's fuel storage tank, whereby rapid and safe fueling of the ship's fuel storage tank can be accomplished.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

The above and related objects, features and advantages of the present invention will be more fully understood by reference to the following detailed description of the presently preferred, albeit illustrative, embodiments of the present invention when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawing wherein:

Fig. 1A is a fragmentary front isometric view, partially broken away, of a first embodiment of a ship terminal according to the present invention;

10 Fig. 1B is a fragmentary detail view, on an enlarged scale, of an interquay transfer beam and its support;

Fig. 2 is a fragmentary sectional view (from the front) of a ship's berthing area;

15 Fig. 3 is a fragmentary schematic top plan view of the terminal of Fig. 1A showing the rail, truck and ship access facilities;

Fig. 4A is a fragmentary sectional view (from the front) of containers on a loaded ship, with containers being moved by container transport vehicles;

20 Fig. 4B is a fragmentary top plan view of the terminal of Fig. 1A showing the top of a quay wall with container transport vehicles on elevated ground conveyance rails and on an overhead transverse beam;

Fig. 5 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view (from the front) of the service portal area of the terminal of Fig. 1A;

25 Fig. 6 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view (from one side) of the terminal of Fig. 1A showing the container storage area and access thereto by truck and rail;

Fig. 7 is a fragmentary schematic sectional view (from the front) of the container storage area of Fig. 6, taken along the line 7-7 of Fig. 3 and looking in the direction of the arrows, showing access thereto by truck and rail;

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Fig. 8 is a fragmentary front elevational view, to an enlarged scale, of one transfer area of Fig. 7;

Fig. 9A is a fragmentary schematic top plan view of a container transport vehicle carrying a cargo container on an overhead transverse beam;

5 Fig. 9B is a right side elevational view of the container transport vehicle on the overhead transverse beam of Fig. 9A;

Fig. 9C is a front elevational view of the container transport vehicle on the overhead transverse beam of Fig. 9A;

10 Fig. 10A is a schematic top plan view of a ship's bow catcher fender;

Fig. 10B is a schematic top plan view of a fender for a side of a ship or a docking module in a locked position;

15 Fig. 10C is a schematic front elevational view, to an enlarged scale, of a rotary actuator and key in a locked position relative to a slotted mooring fitting affixed to a side of a ship or docking module;

Fig. 10D is a schematic sectional view (from the top) of the fender of Fig. 10B showing the key in the unlocked position;

Fig. 11 is a schematic top plan view of ships in moorings with side fenders engaged;

20 Figs. 12A, 12B, 12C and 12D are schematic top plan views which illustrate the sequence of events that take place to berth and moor a ship using remotely controlled docking modules and fender devices;

Fig. 13 is a schematic diagram of a system used to rapidly refuel or bunker ships;

25 Fig. 14 is a fragmentary schematic left side representation of a second embodiment of the present invention in which the terminal and system is located offshore in any navigable waterway (such as a bay or harbor) with a bridge from the mainland for truck and rail access to the terminal; and

30 Fig. 15 is a fragmentary schematic left side representation of a third embodiment of the present invention in which the terminal and system is

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located offshore in any navigable waterway (such as a bay or harbor) with an access tunnel for truck and rail access to the terminal from the mainland.

Similar reference characters are used in the several figures to denote corresponding features.

5 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

THE TERMINAL

Referring now to the drawing, and in particular to the partial breakaway drawing of Fig. 1A, as a first embodiment of a site plan, the present invention provides a container ship terminal, generally designated by the
10 reference numeral 10, constructed in or adjacent to waterway 12, which includes an automated overhead beam and elevated ground rail transfer system generally designated 14 and controlled by a central computer system (not shown) housed in control station 16 for loading, storage and unloading of cargo containers 18 from stacks thereof, generally designated 64, on ships 20.

15 Ships are shown berthed in an exemplary number of three wet docks, graving (dry) docks or locks 200 (hereafter all referred to as "docks"). Each dock 200 preferably includes caisson doors 24 (shown in Fig. 3, but not shown in Fig. 1A to enable viewing of ships 20) which may be hingedly secured to dock 200. Caisson doors 24 (Fig. 3) may have a hollow steel structure and
20 open outward and close across the entrance of dock 200 with the requisite conventional locking and sealing elements. Conventional support blocks 47 required for dry-docking are shown in dock 200 under left ship 20 in Fig. 2. The required pump rooms 23 for flooding and dewatering dock 200 are preferably included in berms 54 of quays 22 as shown in Fig. 2.

25 Individual containers 18 are shown being transported by container transport vehicles 26 on an automated overhead beam and elevated ground rail transfer system 14. Transfer system 14 comprises a plurality of longitudinally spaced overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 and a plurality of transversely spaced longitudinal rail assemblies 30. Note that the orientation of individual

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containers 18 is always maintained in the same direction to reduce the complexities of transfer within transfer system 14, and is a distinct advantage.

Roof 42 can comprise either structural steel, steel strut-supported fiberglass or other suitable materials, as one reasonably skilled in the art will recognize.

On land 32, combined beacon light and vessel tracking system 34 may be provided for the guidance of incoming cargo ships 20. Terminal 10 has an entrance area, generally designated 36, and an exit area, generally designated 38, for ingress and egress, respectively, of preferably both railcars (see 36a and 38a) and trucks (see 36b and 38b) to and from storage and transfer area 40. It should be noted that the entrance 36 and exit 38, respectively, of the first embodiment can be positioned on any land-adjacent side of terminal 10. The elevations of the truck and rail transfer lanes shown in Fig. 1A are peculiar to the particular site plan shown, and as one reasonably skilled in the art will recognize, the positioning thereof is a design choice to be made at the time the particular terminal is being designed.

Figs. 14 and 15 illustrate alternative embodiments of site plans for terminal 10 dependent on its distance from land 32. In Fig. 14, as a second embodiment, a causeway, generally designated 15, on supports 21 is provided for rail and truck ingress and egress. In Fig. 15, as a third embodiment, a rail and truck tunnel 17 is formed from land 32 to the rear end of terminal 10 to connect with a plurality of container chutes 19 for receiving or delivering cargo containers 18.

Fig. 14 depicts as a second embodiment of the present invention an alternative site location for terminal 10 in a navigable waterway 12 such as a bay or harbor, completely surrounded by water, with truck and rail access to the terminal from land 32 via the rail and truck causeway 15 on supports 21.

Fig. 15 depicts as a third embodiment of the present invention another alternative means of connecting terminal 10 to land 32 by employing a

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rail and truck tunnel 17 to the terminal to container chutes 19 where container transport vehicles (not shown) can load and unload cargo containers.

Referring now back to Fig. 1A in particular, terminal 10 is essentially composed of quays 22 and docks 200 to the front and at least one storage and transfer area 40 to the rear, all under one roof 42. The structure of terminal 10, as depicted in Fig. 1A, comprises a planar roof 42 (which, of course, may be pitched), planar right sidewall 46, planar left sidewall 48, planar rear sidewall 50, and an open front generally designated 52, with quays 22 forming an exemplary number of three docks 200. Each dock 200 is preferably formed by quays 22 interconnected to form three sides, as best shown in Fig. 3, which quays typically are man-made structures. However, as one reasonably skilled in the art will realize, one or more of quays 22 may be formed on one or more sides from naturally-occurring formations, if the particular site chosen for terminal 10 includes the appropriate naturally-occurring formations.

Optionally, terminal 10 may include corner lights 44 mounted on roof 42. It should be noted that the terminal structure shown in Fig. 1A is exemplary of one of several possible forms, including the type and shape of the roof and sidewalls, the number of docks included therein, and the optional use of encapsulated dredge material for terminal construction. When functioning as a graving dock, caisson doors 24 of dock 200 (shown in Fig. 3) can be closed and sealed, and dock 200 then dewatered. When dewatered, ship 20 will be supported above dock floor 25 by the use of support blocks, generally designated 47 (shown in Fig. 2), such that repairs, inspections and maintenance can be conducted on the underwater hull of ship 20.

Caisson doors 24 also allow dock 200 to function as a lock, whereby caisson doors 24 are closed and sealed, and water pumped into the dock 200 to raise ship 20 relative to overhead transverse beam assemblies 28. The raising of ship 20 relative to overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 serves to minimize the transfer distance, and thus the transfer time between container transport vehicles 26 on overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 and containers

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18 on ship 20. A central computer system in control station 16 controls, inter alia, the transfer of water into and out of dock 200 to optimize cargo movements between container transport vehicles 26 on overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 and ship 20.

5 Fig. 2 is a fragmentary sectional view of the ship berthing area comprising quays 22 and docks 200 of terminal 10, and illustrates the excavation required to form quays 22 by dredging. Optionally, the material removed during dredging can be utilized to form berms 54, which are contained by concrete walls or casings 56, although, as one reasonably skilled in the art
10 will realize, other types of fill may be used to form berms 54, and other construction techniques may be used to form quays 22. Service portal areas 60 are located in each berm 54 of each quay 22 with longitudinal access tunnels 62 serving each service portal area 60 (as best shown in Fig. 5).

Overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 of automated overhead
15 beam and elevated ground rail transfer system 14 are shown extending between right sidewall 46 and left sidewall 48. Overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 travel on rollers 58 (see Fig. 4A) on longitudinal rail assemblies 30 extending from open front 52 to the rear of dock area 200. It should be noted that several transverse beam assemblies 28 are shown incidentally aligned in Fig. 1A, but
20 that the exact longitudinal position of each assembly 28 over dock area 200 can be controlled by the central computer system which causes the assemblies 28 to traverse along longitudinal rail assemblies 30 on their individual motorized rollers 58. One container transport vehicle 26 is shown at the right in overhead suspension over a stack 64 of containers 18. Another container transport
25 vehicle 26 with container 18 is shown at the left atop one quay 22 on elevated ground conveyance rails 72 (not shown in Fig. 2) for transport longitudinally within terminal 10.

Interquay transfer beams 130 (see Figs. 1A and 1B) are used to convey container transport vehicles 26 between elevated ground conveyance
30 rails 72 (see Fig. 4A) within terminal 10. Similar in form and function to

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- transverse overhead beams 28, the interquay transfer beams 130 differ only in that optionally they are in a fixed position and span substantially the entire width of terminal 10. The interquay transfer beams 130 must allow container transport vehicles 26 to pass through, above or below longitudinal rail assemblies 30 (as shown in additional detail in Fig. 1B). Thus, a container transport vehicle 26 located on any given elevated ground rail 72 on any quay 22 can transfer to another elevated ground rail 72 on another quay 22 by engaging an interquay transfer beam 130 traversing along a width of terminal 10, and transferring to the desired elevated ground rail 72 destination.
- Interquay transfer beams 130 may also facilitate ship-to-ship transfer, when shifting containers from a first ship in a first dock to a second ship in a second dock. As illustrated in Fig. 1B, preferably the interquay transfer beam 130 is supported from the top by the longitudinal rail assembly 30 to facilitate passage thereby of the container transport vehicles 26.
- For details on the intersection of overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 and elevated longitudinal rail assemblies 30, see Figs. 4A and 4B; for details on the intersection of the elevated longitudinal rail assemblies 30 and interquay transfer beams 130, see Fig. 1B.
- The central computer system may create and continuously update a viable loading plan for each ship 20 based upon its trim and stability characteristics as well as the cargo, ballast and fuel conditions thereof. The central computer system is capable of continuously adjusting the loading plan in accordance with input data regarding the timeliness of cargo not yet arrived in terminal 10, and accurately monitors the locations of all incoming and outgoing containers 18 in terminal 10. The central computer system may also program and control the movements of all container transport vehicles 26 and overhead transverse beam assemblies 28, and maintains an optimum water level in dock 200 to maintain a predetermined distance between the highest container 18 and overhead transverse beam assemblies 28.

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Fig. 3 is a schematic top plan view of terminal 10 depicting storage and transfer area 40, docks 200 and quays 22. Each dock 200 preferably has a pair of caisson doors 24 operative to close completely for drydock ship repair work after pumping out the enclosed water from dock 200.

5 Each dock 200 can also function as a lock, as mentioned above, wherein water is pumped into the enclosed area of dock 200 to raise the level of ship 20 and decrease transfer distances between overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 and ships 20. Storage and transfer area 40 has an exemplary number of three areas 66 for container storage. Storage and transfer area 40 is accessed by

10 flatbed trucks 112 and rail flatcars 110 (see Fig. 6) on roads 68 and tracks 70 entering through entrance 36 and leaving through exit 38. The switching operations for the train system may also be automatically controlled by the central computer system (not shown).

In Fig. 4A, three container transport vehicles 26 are depicted with

15 right container transport vehicle 26 in the process of uplifting an attached container 18 from a ship (not shown). Middle container transport vehicle 26 with container 18 is in the process of transitioning between overhead transverse beam assembly 28 and elevated ground conveyance rails 72 of quay 22, and is resting on ground wheels 92. The left container transport vehicle 26 with

20 container 18 has been disconnected, as shown by the separation between carriage frame 114 of container transport vehicle 26 and overhead transverse beam assembly 28, and lowered from overhead transverse beam assembly 28, and is resting on elevated ground conveyance rails 72, ready to be transported to storage and transfer area 40 or to another ship 20. When container transport

25 vehicle 26 is connected to overhead transverse beam assembly 28 by retractable wheel carriage 80, stop elements 74 located proximate to each end of each transverse beam assembly 28 prevent it from traveling beyond such stop elements 74. Container transport vehicles 26, running on electricity, are remotely controlled by the central computer system to lower spreader 83 from

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container transport vehicle frame 78 by cables 82 from hoist 126 (shown in Fig. 9B) for attachment to and hoisting a container 18.

In Fig. 4A, roof support truss structure 86 is supported by post 88 and buttress 90 on roof support base structure 76. A pair of elevated rails 59 of longitudinal rail assembly 30 on roof support base structure 76 are located on opposite sides of post 88 for travel of overhead transverse beams 28 on motorized rollers 58 along longitudinal rail assembly 30 for alignment in positioning container transport vehicles 26 over containers 18 on a ship (not shown).

Fig. 4B is a top plan view of overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 which are movable by computer control on longitudinal elevated rail assemblies 30 for alignment in loading and unloading of containers 18 from ships 20. Elevated ground conveyance rails 72 conduct movement of container transport vehicles 26 on ground wheels 92 to storage and transfer area 40. Stops 74 are shown for limiting the traversal of container transport vehicles 26 on overhead transverse beam assemblies 28. Retractable wheel carriages 80 are positioned on top of each container transport vehicle 26 in a folded position, and can automatically swivel up and rotate to contact drive wheels 122 to wheel flanges 116 and ride on overhead transverse beam assembly 28.

Fig. 5 shows a diagrammatic sectional view of service portal area 60 which is designed to service ship 20 with conventional shore service connections 94 such as electric power (shore power), sewage discharge, compressed air, telephone, water, fuel, and the like. Retractable service harness boom 96 with support brackets 98 for service connections 94 projects from service portal area 60 to ship 20. The flexible service connections 94 are encased in metal conduits 100 inside service portal area 60, and conduits 100 are flexible at hinge 95 of harness boom 96. Conduits 100 are accessed for maintenance by platforms 102 with stairs 104. A retractable gangway 106 provides pedestrian access to ship 20. A longitudinal access tunnel 62 is provided for electric utility carts 108 for use by the terminal personnel.

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Fig. 6 is a schematic sectional view of a front portion of container storage area 66 and rear portions of quay 22 and dock 200. Fig. 6 illustrates how truck access lane 68 is elevated above train access track 70 to avoid interference between truck and railway traffic, and to facilitate double stacking of containers 18 on flatbed railcar or flatcar 110 below that of flatbed truck 112 as shown in Fig. 7. Posts 88 of steel support one of a plurality of longitudinal rails 30, which in turn supports overhead transverse beams 28. Fuel storage tanks 184 are shown located in a compartment between dock 200 and container storage area 66. The central computer system is capable of facilitating rolling transfers of containers 18 between container transport vehicles 26 and trucks 112 or flatcars 110. This feature eliminates the need for either vehicle to come to a complete stop before commencing the transfer of one or more containers 18, therefore saving valuable time in the transfer process.

In Fig. 7, a cross-section through the three storage areas 66 is illustrated to show elevated truck road 68 and train track 70 with respective flatbed trucks 112 and flatcars 110. On the right, container transport vehicle 26, which is attached to overhead transverse beam assembly 28, is shown lifting container 18 from stack 64.

In Fig. 8, container transport vehicle 260 is shown loading a container 300 onto a flatcar 110 using four cables 82 (2 cables hidden) passing through an open space between elevated ground conveyance rails 72 on which container transport vehicle 260 is traveling. Cables 82, which are attached to spreader 83, are lowered from container transport vehicle frame 78. Spreader 83 attaches to container 300 in four conventionally available holes located in the corners of container 18. Spreader 83 can adjust to the length of different size containers 18 (e.g., 20 feet, 40 feet or 45 feet long). Second container transport vehicle 270 has another container 302 ready to load on a flatbed truck (not shown). Truck 112 underneath has already been loaded with container 304.

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The mechanisms of overhead transverse beam assembly 28 and of container transport vehicle 26 are illustrated in Figs. 9A, 9B and 9C. Fig. 9A shows a top plan view of container transport vehicle 26 attached to overhead transverse beam assembly 28. Beam assembly 28 consists of a box beam with wheel flanges 116 and an electric power (3-phase) rail 120 underneath for energizing container transport vehicle 26. Preferably, four drive wheels 122 in sets of two are driven by two motors 124 through a transmission located in wheel carriage 80. Alternatively, it is possible to provide a drive on overhead beam 28, through an electric linear motor system (not shown) in lieu of electric rotating motors 124.

As shown in Fig. 9B, each side of container transport vehicle frame 78 has an electric wire rope hoist assembly 126. Hoist 126 in turn raises and lowers wire rope cables 82 (not shown in Fig. 9B, see Fig. 4A) which are attached to spreader frame 83, which in turn is lowered on top of container 18. Spreader frame 83 has rotatable locking pins (not shown), which enter containers 18 at sockets (not shown) located in each of the four corners thereof, and rotate to lock in. Once spreader 83 is locked onto container 18, hoist 126 is engaged to raise spreader 83 attached to container 18 until container 18 is fully drawn up into container transport vehicle 26. Lowering of container 18 and disengagement of container 18 from spreader 83 follows the reverse procedure from that described hereinabove. Fig. 9B also shows retractable wheel carriage 80 with its drive wheels 122 positioned on wheel flanges 116 by operation of a pair of actuators (such as hydraulic rams 140) which raise and lower retractable wheel carriages 80 on command from the central computer system (not shown). Rams 140 are attached to carriage frame 114 of container transport vehicle 26.

The detachment of container transport vehicle 26 from overhead transverse beam assembly 28 begins with the extension of an hydraulic, pneumatic or electrical actuator (such as jack-up rams 138 shown in Fig. 9C) to permit the ground wheels 92 of container transport vehicle 26 to rest on elevated ground conveyance rails 72. Rams 138 continue to extend until

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carriage frame 114 rises slightly to cause overhead drive wheels 122 to lift up off of wheel flanges 116 of overhead transverse beam assembly 28. Then rams 140 (Fig. 9B) attached to retractable wheel carriage 80 extend and rotate retractable wheel carriage 80 to a horizontal position which rotates wheels 122 away from overhead transverse beam assembly 28. Rams 138 and 140 may operate from an electrically driven hydraulic power unit (not shown) located within the frame of container transport vehicle 26. With wheel carriages 80 and the drive wheels 122 now clear of overhead transverse beam assembly 28, and with container transport vehicle 26 in contact with elevated ground conveyance rails 72, jack-up rams 138 are lowered, lowering carriage frame 114. The electrical contact between container transport vehicle 26 and overhead transverse beam assembly 28 is now severed. Thus, container transport vehicle 26 with container 18 can now traverse terminal 10 on elevated ground conveyance rails 72. Preferably, a ground rail 3-phase electric power rail (not shown) contacts container transport vehicle 26 to energize the individual electric motors (not shown) within each leg 142 to propel ground wheels 92. Alternately, it is possible to provide drive on elevated ground conveyance rails 72 through an electric linear motor system (not shown) in lieu of electric rotating motors.

20 THE MOORING ASSEMBLIES

Fig. 10A shows a bow mooring assembly (bow fender) generally designated 144, and Figs. 10B - 10D show a hull side mooring assembly (side fender) generally designated 162, which assemblies 144, 162 can be used to position ships 20 moored in docks 200. Fig. 10A depicts bow fender 144 in top plan view positioned on horizontal rail 152 (for transverse movement) between a pair of mechanical stops 154. Four hydraulic dampers 156 support H-shaped steel frame 158 with elastomeric bumpers 160 for accommodating the various rounded or sharp bows of ships 20 (shown in phantom). Bow fender 144 serves to position bow 150 of ship 20 transversely in dock 200, as seen in Fig. 11, for centering a large ship 196 or two small ships 198. Bow fender 144 is capable of

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effectively absorbing the energy imparted to it by a slow moving ship 20 during docking or while docked.

Figs. 10B, 10C and 10D illustrate locking side fender device 162 which positions ships 20 moored in docks 200. Locking fender device 162 can conform to virtually any contour of the side of ship 20 or docking module 199 (see Fig. 11). In Fig. 10B, rectangular fender element 164 with elastomeric pads 194 is supported by fender carriage 168 that travels horizontally on two pairs of wheels 163 in horizontal track 165 within the sidewall of quay 22. Extender arm 170 with groove 172 on its upper surface is pivotally hinged between fender element 164 and fender carriage 168. An extender ram 174 with one end pivoting from the fender carriage 168 and its opposite end having pin 176 riding in groove 172 of extender arm 170, is motivated by hydraulic power unit 178 housed in fender carriage 168 to automatically adapt with appropriate damping to the inclination of the surface of moored ship 20 or the outboard side of docking module 199 (Fig. 11). Third adjustment arm 180 is preferably positioned parallel to extender arm 170 and pivotally hinged between fender element 164 and fender carriage 168.

Provision is made for locking fender device 162 to the hull of ship 20 via slotted rectangular mooring fitting 43 which is integral to the hull of ship 20 or docking module 199 (Fig. 11). Fender device 162 engages mooring fitting 43 in such a way as to restrain horizontal movement of ship 20 within dock 200, yet permit vertical movement of ship 20 with changes in the draft and water level within the dock 200. This method of horizontal restraint facilitates the necessary alignment between container transport vehicles 26 on the overhead transverse beams 28 and containers 18 on ship 20. Vertical keyway 41 along the longitudinal axis of mooring fitting 43 permits the operation of a locking key element 39 on the end of key shaft 37, which element 39 is preferably oblong-shaped and is rotatable in either direction by electric rotary actuator 35. Locking key element 39 is integrated and centered in fixed rectangular fender element 164.

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Fig. 10C is a front elevational view of electric rotary actuator 35, key shaft 37 and key element 39 in a locked position in mooring fitting 43 affixed to a side of ship 20 or docking module 199 (Fig. 11).

Fig. 10D is a top plan view of key element 39 shown rotated to an open position by rotating electric rotary actuator 35, enabling the release of fender element 164 from mooring fitting 43.

Fig. 11 illustrates the versatility of bow fender assemblies 144 and side fender devices 162 in mooring different sized ships 20 in docks 200. A single large ship 196 is moored in left dock 200 with horizontal adjustment of fender devices 162. Two smaller ships 198 are berthed together in right dock 200 with appropriate positioning of fender devices 162. Fig. 11 also illustrates docking modules 199 that may be used to maneuver ship 196 into and out of dock 200.

Figs. 12A, 12B, 12C, and 12D illustrate the sequence of events required for docking ship 20. In Fig. 12A, four docking modules 199, which are small, motorized and remotely controlled vehicles, are dispatched to incoming ship 20. A guidance system controlled by the central system of terminal 10 sends commands to each docking module 199 to control the magnitude and the direction of thrust of each docking module 199 to guide modules 199 toward ship 20.

In Fig. 12B, modules 199 are secured to the hull of ship 20 in a manner similar to that utilized by fender devices 162 and steer ship 20 into dock 200.

In Fig. 12C, as ship 20 enters dock 200, the two forward side fender devices 162 extend under the control of the central computer system to engage the outboard side of each of the two forward docking modules 199, thus establishing the line of the entrance of ship 20 into dock 200. The two forward fender devices 162 in turn ride in horizontal tracks 165 in the quay wall, thus permitting ship 20 to enter dock 200 without the danger of contacting the sidewalls of quay 22. Then the two rear fender devices 162 extend, also under

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the control of the central computer system, to engage the outboard side of each of the two rear docking modules 199, thus stabilizing the ship 20.

Once ship 20 reaches its final position in dock 200 as shown in Fig. 12D, the docking modules 199 are deactivated, but remain in place and cooperate with fender devices 162 to keep ship 20 moored in dock 200.

Provision is made for manual control of docking modules 199 from the bridge (control room) of incoming ship 20, via a special control connection made between docking module 199 and ship 20 when docking module 199 attaches to the hull of ship 20. Each docking module 199 can also be manually controlled from a local control station aboard docking module 199 itself. During operation of dock 200 as a graving dock, optionally docking modules 199 can be removed from their position between fender devices 162 and ship 20, and ship 20 then moored directly with fender devices 162. In this scenario, docking modules 199 are reattached to ship 20 once ship 20 is refloated. Use of docking modules 199 is unique in that they preclude the need for conventional tugboats, and in some instances also serve as a part of the mooring/fender apparatus.

Smaller, more maneuverable, ships entering and leaving dock 200 may not require the use of docking modules 199, and thus these ships can be moored exclusively with fender devices 162, as seen in the right dock 200 in Fig. 11.

RAPID FUELING SYSTEM

Fig. 13 is a diagram of a high flow rate fueling system 45 designed to rapidly fuel (or bunker) ships utilizing terminal 10 of the present invention. Fueling system 45 precludes the need for outside fueling barges to be brought into terminal 10 to refuel ships 20. Fuel 183 from a land based source is supplied through pipe 33 to storage tanks 184 located within quays 22 of terminal 10 of the present invention. Fuel 183 is pumped from storage tanks 184 with vent pipe 13, to ship 20 through pipes 1 and 2 via the filtration unit 186 and a pumping unit 185, respectively, to remove any impurities in fuel 183.

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Fuel 183 is pumped through pipe 3 to fueling station 187 of ship 20, where fuel 183 is routed to pipe 4 connected to fuel storage tank 191 of ship 20. In order to maximize the pumping rate, vapor evacuation unit 192 is used to draw the fuel vapor and air composition from the top of fuel storage tank 191, and to maintain atmospheric pressure in tank 191 as fuel 183 is pumped in. Excessive vapors are recycled to storage tanks 184 by pipe 31. By maintaining atmospheric pressure in tank 191 through pipes 5 and 6 as it fills with the tank vent 27 closed, excessive structural damaging pressures are prevented in the tank. Quick connection 29 is conveniently provided in pipe 6. Elimination of back pressures permits higher pumping rates than used conventionally, and therefore results advantageously in less time to fill the tanks 191 of ship 20 with fuel. The pumping rate is dependent on the capacity of pumping unit 185 and not the structural integrity of tank 191 or its ability to withstand the higher back pressures associated with high pumping rates. The pumping rate is controlled via combined feedback of pressure sensor 193 by electrical line 7 and tank level indicator 195 by electrical line 8. Both of these devices provide signals to pumping control unit 197, which is programmed to set and adjust the speeds of pumping unit 185 by electrical line 9 and vapor evacuation unit 192 by electrical line 11 to maximize the rate at which fuel is safely pumped aboard ship 20. Tank level indicator 195 signals pumping control unit 197 with respect to the actual level of fuel in tank 191. Pressure sensor 193 provides pumping control unit 197 with the actual pressure in tank 191. Pumping control unit 197 in turn adjusts the speed of vapor evacuation unit 192 to maintain tank 191 at atmospheric pressure. As long as atmospheric pressure is maintained, pumping control unit 197 signals pumping unit 185 to pump at a maximum rate.

To summarize, container transfer terminal 10, with an integrated and automated central computerized system incorporating container transport vehicles 26 traveling on overhead transverse beam assemblies 28 and elevated ground conveyance rails 72, has been disclosed for the loading and unloading of cargo containers 18 from container ships 20 with a minimum of time and effort.

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Containers 18 can subsequently be temporarily stored in the rear portion of terminal 10 or immediately loaded onto either train flatcars 110, flatbed trucks 112, or another ship 20 utilizing container transport vehicles 26 and resulting in maximum efficiency, and minimizing storage and loading time. It should be
5 noted that this system can be applied to transferring cargo directly from one ship to another. Terminal 10 can be constructed in or adjacent to any waterway 12 and can handle year-round operation.

Now that the preferred embodiments of the present invention have been shown and described in detail, various modifications and improvements
10 thereon will become readily apparent to those skilled in the art. Accordingly, the spirit and scope of the present invention is to be construed broadly and limited only by the appended claims, and not by the foregoing specification.

WE CLAIM:

1. A terminal system for unloading containers from and loading containers onto container ships, comprising:

5 A. a terminal structure having an interconnected right side, left side and rear side, and a substantially open front side with at least one quay adapted to form at least one dock, said dock including a wall on at least two facing sides thereof;

B. a plurality of elevated ground conveyance rails positioned atop at least one of said walls;

10 C. longitudinal conveyance rails positioned above each of said walls;

D. a plurality of generally transverse overhead conveyance beams constructed and adapted to be positioned substantially perpendicularly between said longitudinal conveyance rails; and

15 E. at least one container transport vehicle constructed and adapted to be capable of traveling along said elevated ground conveyance rails and said parallel transverse overhead conveyance beams and adapted to pick up, carry and deposit a container between a container ship berthed in said dock and a location other than the container ship.

20 2. The terminal system of Claim 1, further comprising a computer control system for controlling the operations of each container transport vehicle.

3. The terminal system of Claim 1, including a plurality of quays adapted to form a plurality of docks, and further comprising an interquay transfer beam for conveying said container transport vehicle between said plurality of
25 docks.

4. The terminal system of Claim 1, whereby said container transport vehicle is constructed and arranged so as not to change the orientation of the container when the container is being picked up, carried or deposited thereby.



5. The terminal system of Claim 1, wherein said terminal structure further comprises a storage area adjacent to each of a plurality of docks, and whereby said terminal can transfer containers between one ship berthed in one dock and another ship berthed in another dock and/or said storage area by utilizing said transverse overhead conveyance beams, said elevated ground conveyance rails, and said container transport vehicles, under computerized control.

6. The terminal system of Claim 1, wherein said terminal structure further comprises a storage and transfer area adjacent to a dock containing railroad tracks, and whereby said terminal can transfer containers between one ship berthed in one dock and another ship berthed in another dock, a railroad car on said railroad tracks, and/or a storage area within said storage and transfer area by utilizing said transverse overhead conveyance beams, said elevated ground conveyance rails, and said container transport vehicles under computerized control.

7. The terminal system of Claim 6, further comprising a railroad access to said terminal structure for connection to said railroad tracks in said storage and transfer area.

8. The terminal system of Claim 7, wherein said railroad access is connected to said terminal structure by a tunnel under water.

9. A terminal system according to Claim 7, wherein said railroad access is connected to said terminal structure by a causeway on supports.

10. The terminal system of Claim 1, wherein said terminal structure further comprises a storage and transfer area adjacent to a dock containing a roadway, and whereby said terminal can transfer containers between one ship berthed in one dock and another ship berthed in another dock, a truck on said roadway and/or a storage area within said storage and transfer area, by utilizing said transverse overhead conveyance beams, said elevated ground conveyance rails, and said container transport vehicles under computerized control.



11. The terminal system of Claim 10, further comprising a truck access to said terminal structure for connection to said roadway in said storage and transfer area.
12. A terminal system according to Claim 11, wherein said truck access is connected to said terminal structure by a tunnel under water.
13. A terminal system according to Claim 11, wherein said truck access is connected to said terminal structure by a causeway on supports.
14. The terminal system of Claim 1, wherein said terminal structure further comprises a storage and transfer area adjacent to a dock containing railroad tracks and a roadway, and whereby said terminal can transfer containers among one ship berthed in one dock, another ship berthed in another dock, a railroad car on said railroad tracks, a truck on said roadway, and/or a storage area within said storage and transfer area, by utilizing said transverse overhead conveyance beams, said elevated ground conveyance rails, and said container transport vehicles under computerized control.
15. The terminal system of Claim 14, further comprising a railroad access and a truck access to said terminal structure for connection to said railroad tracks and said roadway in said storage and transfer area.
16. A terminal system according to Claim 15, wherein said railroad access and said truck access are connected to said terminal structure by a tunnel under water.
17. A terminal system according to Claim 15, wherein said railroad access and said truck access are connected to said terminal structure by a causeway on supports.
18. A terminal system according to Claim 1, wherein said dock has the capability of acting as a wet dock, a graving dock and a lock.
19. A terminal system according to Claim 1, wherein said walls consist of dredged material covered by a concrete wall.



20. A terminal system according to Claim 1, wherein said walls consist of structurally supported quays.

21. A terminal system according to Claim 1, further comprising remotely controlled docking modules for moving ships in or out of said dock.

5 22. A terminal system according to Claim 1, wherein said terminal structure is enclosed to accommodate all-weather, year-round operation and further comprising:

- A. a roof on said terminal structure;
- B. means for removing ship stack emissions from within
10 said terminal structure;
- C. service portals, separate from the cargo handling areas of said terminal, for providing access to a ship berthed in said dock;
- D. bow and side fender mooring devices adaptable to the form of a ship's hull;
- 15 E. service harnesses for providing fast shore service connections to a ship berthed in said dock;
- F. caisson doors attached to said dock which open and close, and when closed isolate said dock from the adjoining waterway to allow dewatering of said dock for drydocking a ship or to permit water to be pumped into
20 said dock for acting as a lock to raise the position of a ship within said dock; and
- G. a high flow rate fueling system for a ship berthed in said dock comprising storage tanks and means for high-speed pumping of fuel.

23. A bow mooring assembly for mooring a ship by the bow in a dock of a terminal, comprising:

- 25 A. a horizontal rail in a dock wall;
- B. mechanical stop elements mounted to said horizontal rail;
- C. a generally H-shaped frame having a front portion including of a pair of separated bumpers for accepting a bow of a ship and a rear
30 portion wider than said front portion; and

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D. a plurality of hydraulic damper devices interconnected between said horizontal rail and said rear portion of said generally H-shaped frame;

whereby said frame is limited in movement by said mechanical stop elements, and said front portion of said frame is constructed and arranged to accommodate a plurality of bow shapes.

24. A locking side fender assembly for mooring a ship in a dock of a terminal, comprising:

A. a slotted mooring fitting mounted to a hull of a ship;

10 B. a pivotable extender arm and a pivotable adjuster arm, each arm having opposed first and second ends pivotably connected to a rectangular fender element and a rectangular fender carriage, respectively;

C. a key element adapted to fit into said slotted mooring fitting, said key element including a shaft having opposed first and second ends, an oblong element connected to said first end of said shaft, and an electric rotary actuator connected to said second end of said shaft opposite from said first end of said shaft;

D. a rectangular fender element having elastomeric pads on a front surface thereof and an aperture for said shaft of said key element, said fender element being connected to a first end of said extender arm and to a first end of said adjuster arm;

E. a rectangular fender carriage mounted in a dock wall and pivotably a second end of said extender arm and a second end of said adjuster arm opposite from said first end thereof;

25 F. an extender ram having opposed first and second ends pivotably connected between said rectangular fender carriage and said extender arm, respectively;

G. a hydraulic power unit mounted to said rectangular fender carriage and to said extender ram and constructed and arranged to





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automatically adjust said fender element to an inclination of the hull surface of a ship with appropriate dampening by positioning said extender ram; and

- H. a pair of wheels mounted to said rectangular fender carriage for use in positioning said rectangular fender carriage longitudinally along
5 a dock wall;

whereby said fender carriage can be locked and unlocked to said slotted mooring fitting by the use of said key element.

25. A system for rapidly fueling a fuel storage tank of a docked ship in a transfer terminal having quays, comprising:

- 10 A. a quayside storage tank inside a transfer terminal for storing fuel;
- B. a fuel pumping unit connectable to a docked ship's fuel storage tank;
- C. a fuel filtration unit located downstream from said
15 quayside storage tank and connected to said fuel pumping unit;
- D. a pumping control unit for controlling the flow of fuel by said fuel pumping unit; and
- E. a vapor evacuation unit connected between said quayside storage tank and the ship's fuel storage tank;

20 whereby rapid and safe fueling of the ship's fuel storage tank can be accomplished.

26. A method of docking a ship into a dock, comprising the steps of:

- 25 A. providing a plurality of docking modules which are remotely controlled;
- B. dispatching said docking modules to a ship waiting to be docked;
- C. securing said docking modules to the hull of the ship;
- D. guiding the ship to the dock by remotely operating said
30 docking modules;



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E. securing said docking modules to fender devices mounted to the dock; and

F. guiding the ship within the dock by remotely operating said docking modules, said fender devices aligning the ship within the dock.



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