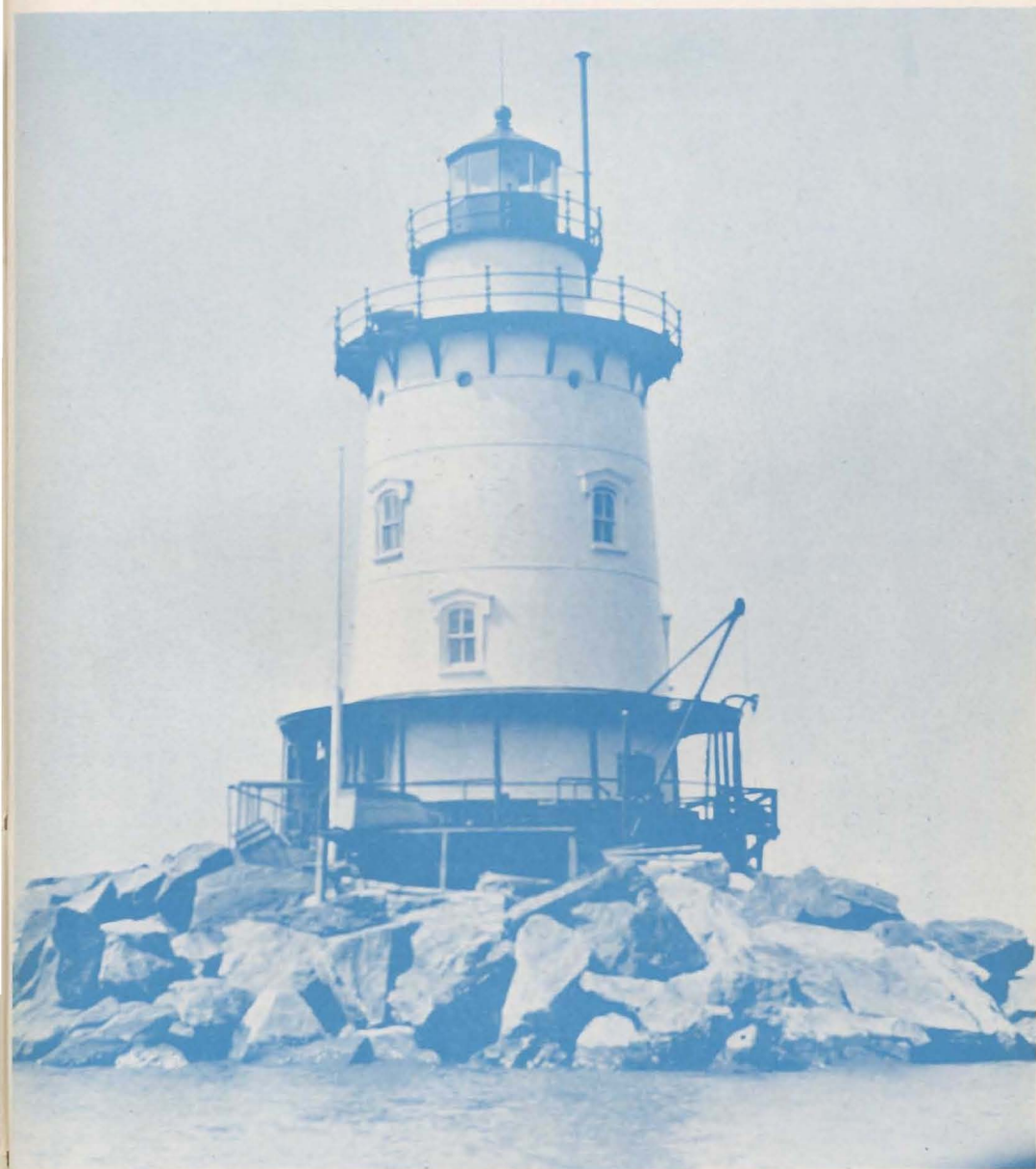


THE LOOKOUT



MARINERS' FRIEND

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE
OF NEW YORK

VOL. XXX No. 9

SEPTEMBER, 1939

THIS MONTH'S COVER shows the Lighthouse at Tarrytown, N. Y. on the Hudson River, which was built in 1883. It is a 55 ft. tower equipped with an incandescent oil vapour light, and it guards the channel to Albany. The keeper in charge is Arthur J. Minzner.

Reprinted by courtesy of the Department of Commerce, Bureau of Lighthouses.

The **LOOKOUT**

VOL. XXX, SEPTEMBER, 1939

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by the

SEAMEN'S CHURCH

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SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE
OF NEW YORK
25 South Street

LEGACIES TO THE INSTITUTE

You are asked to remember this Institute in your will, that it may properly carry on its important work for seamen. While it is advisable to consult your lawyer as to the drawing of your will, we submit nevertheless the following as a clause that may be used:

I give and bequeath to "Seamen's Church Institute of New York," incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, located at 25 South Street, New York City, the sum of.....

.....Dollars.

Note that the words "of New York" are a part of our title.

The Lookout

Vol. XXX

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Lighthouses: Mariners' Friends

BY THE setting aside of the week of August 7th for the official celebration of Lighthouse Week, Congress focused attention on the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the United States Lighthouse Service. This year marks also the termination of this historic service as an independent unit, it now being consolidated with the famous United States Coast Guard, under the current Federal reorganization program. Former issues of THE LOOKOUT have carried stories of the lighthouses and lightships (see February, 1937) and every new tragedy of the sea brings stories of hazardous rescues undertaken by these brave men as part of the routine of the job, without thought of reward. The purpose of this article is to point out some of Uncle Sam's latest innovations to make their lives a little more pleasant, if not easier. For the service is still so dangerous that the Lighthouse employees pay the very highest insurance rates.

Nowadays, a lighthouse keeper not only has a radio to keep him up-to-the-minute on the outside world and its activities but he is allowed a week of "shore leave" every month. He goes ashore in a small power boat which is hoisted out onto a cradle with aid of a derrick, to insure safe launching in the nastiest of weather. It is never necessary to leave a light untended for every station has at least two men, most of them without families. The one keeper in the New York district with a family occupies a rambling Victorian house at Bergen Point, off Bayonne, New Jersey.

Modern lighthouses are machine-shops, tended by skilled mechanics. The Hudson boasts more than eighty lights. Under the Brooklyn Bridge is the Jeffreys Hook light, and there is one at Hellgate turn and another at Negro Point on Ward's Island. The twisting East River needs land towers as well. The Titanic Lighthouse Tower atop the 13-story Institute building on South Street flashes a green light powerful enough to reach twenty miles to sea but obstructions cut it down to six.

A recent invention makes it possible to light harbor buoys with 1,000 ampere batteries instead of acetylene gas as formerly. Both kinds need to be changed about every six months and must be watched constantly for neglect of duty. This is one of the daily tasks of the seven tenders which go out from St. George, Staten Island. These are sturdy boats which carry supplies to the stations, inspect lighthouses twice and lightships three times a year. A new tender, the Maple (following the unexplained tradition of a tree or flower name), has recently been assigned to the Buffalo, New York station. It is an all-steel twin screw vessel, 122 feet long, with a displacement of 342 tons, propelled by two Diesel engines totalling 44 horsepower.

There are two lightships—used where it is impossible to build a lighthouse—in the vicinity of New York: the Ambrose Channel Lightship and the Scotland Lightship, off Sandy Hook. A new lightship which embodies an unusual number

(Continued on Page 11)

Tattooing A Lost "Art"

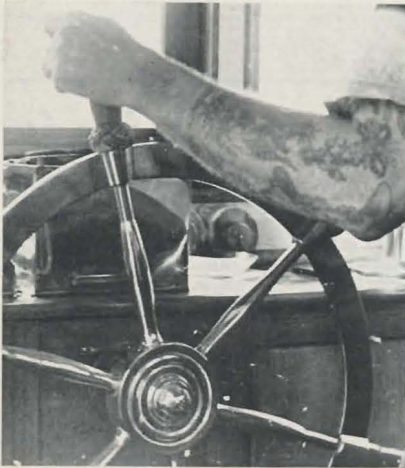


Photo by Marie Higginson

A SAILOR may not wear his heart upon his sleeve, but he often wears a bleeding heart *under* his sleeve, and when he rolls up his sleeves and goes to work polishing brass or "sugy-mugying", you may observe a heart tattooed on his brawny biceps or forearm. American flags and dancing ladies were once the vogue, but alas, the modern sailor will have none of this tattooing. Professor Jack, who used to keep a tattooing shop on the corner of South and Moore Streets, has abandoned his place because of the scarcity of customers. A few tattoo artists eke out a living in the Bowery section, but the majority of able-bodied seamen—at least the newcomers to the seagoing fraternity—are not interested in having a square-rigger with all sails set permanently decorating their chests. As one young seaman put it: "Tattooing was once the special pleasure of savages and sailors. Today, we sailors give it back to the savages!"

The main thing, according to Captain Robert Huntington, principal of the Institute's Merchant Marine School, is that tattooing is no longer needed for identification;

is no longer a mark of distinction, it hurts to have it put on (even with an electric needle) and it is practically impossible to remove. Time was when a green sailor as soon as his ship docked in a foreign port made for the local tattoo artist, gritted his teeth, bared his chest and arms, and said: "Go ahead, Mister" in much the stoical manner that a college boy goes through a gruelling initiation into a fraternity.

A few weeks ago a movie company was making pictures at the Institute to be shown at the Maritime Building of the World's Fair, and they wanted a "shot" of a sailor reading John Masefield's poem, "Sea Fever." They wanted a close-up of the sailor's hands, preferably with tattoo marks on them. Word went around and about a dozen old-timers applied as models. They proudly showed off their tattoos: One ship's carpenter had the face of Santa Claus on his hand and fore-arm; an old bosun had the American and Irish flag, intertwined, with "Erin Go Brah" and "Hands Across The Sea" etched beneath. A tombstone commemorating the death of his father embellished the wrist of an A.B.—he had it tattooed in Shanghai twenty years ago. The man selected for the movie, John O'Brien, had a simple motif—an anchor on one hand and a ship's wheel tattooed on the other.

A few up-to-date seamen who scoff at tattooing as exhibitionism admit that it's mighty useful as a memorandum pad. Take the matter of a life-boat ticket: One sailor has had his lifeboat certificate number neatly tattooed on his ankle—all he has to do is to hitch up his left pants leg and roll down his

(Continued on Page 11)

Seamen Artists:

EIGHT merchant seamen who had never before painted a picture or showed any artistic bent, took a few lessons in the WPA art class being held at the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, and the result of their work is now on exhibition in a window of the Hotel Pennsylvania. Joseph Martin, able-bodied seaman, shipped out on an oil tanker several months ago, leaving behind an unfinished mural painting which was too large to exhibit in the window, but which is now on display on the second floor of the Institute. The mural, which Martin intends to finish on his return, is executed in oil and the subject is the New York waterfront. Groups are shown loading ship, and seamen are "signing on". In the upper right corner a ship's figurehead is recognizable as from the square-rigger "Joseph Conrad", now a training ship for the U. S. Maritime Commission's School at Hoffman Island. The satirical, realistic treatment of the faces of the seamen in the mural has caused observers to compare Martin's work with Diego Rivera. His instructor, Samuel Sulkowicz, himself an ex-seaman, believes that Martin shows great ability and will go far.

As for surrealism, that too has an exponent, a Filipino seaman named Herminio Vanga has turned out an oil painting of a ship that never was seen on land or sea. The art project started in January, and to date, about twenty seamen have completed paintings, while several others had to leave their work unfinished, because the call of the sea sent them off on their ships again.

A Negro seaman, John Solomon, has done a group of "primitive"



Seaman John Solomon

paintings which lovers of modern art have admired. His instructor says, "Johnny has the freshest approach, considering that he has no technical knowledge of painting whatever. With a little craftsmanship he will make a fine artist." Johnny's teacher encourages him to make a pencil sketch first, then gives him paint and canvas and lets him go to it. He does each picture at one sitting—no dawdling for months for an effect—he uses bold strokes and warm colors. He likes architectural subjects and strange cities he has seen in his travels, particularly Casa Blanca, Morocco and Puerto Barrios, South America. Johnny responds to beauty nearer home as well. He thinks "that pink church" over on the Bowery (St. Mark's) is "sure good to look at," and he's going to get it on canvas any day now.

The Clipper Ship "Hornet"



Captain Robert Benson in command of the Clipper Hornet 1857 and 58.

A RARE painting of the famous clipper ship "Hornet", which beat the "Flying Cloud" in the 1853 race from New York to San Francisco by way of Cape Horn, has been presented to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York by Miss Jessie Benson of Englewood, N. J. whose father, Captain Benson, sailed in command of the "Hornet" three times around the Horn. As soon as the painting has been repaired and restored, it will hang in the Institute's Nautical Museum at 25 South Street. Miss Benson recalls her father taking her to worship in the Institute's Floating Church of Our Saviour.

The "Hornet" has a famous history, made even more illustrious by the fact that the great American author, Mark Twain, sold as his first magazine story, an account of his interview with the survivors of the "Hornet" in Honolulu, whither they came in an open boat after the ship caught fire.

She was built by Jacob Wester-

velt and George Mackay in New York in 1851. Chamberlain and Phelps were her owners. She was an extreme clipper ship of 1426 tons and was a very fast sailer. In 1853 she sailed on a voyage which still stands as the closest sailing match in the history of clippers. On April 8th, the "Hornet" and the "Flying Cloud" left Sandy Hook a few hours apart, the "Hornet" leaving first. Both clippers arrived in San Francisco on August 12th—105 days from New York. The "Hornet", built by the New York firm, came in just 40 minutes ahead of the "Flying Cloud", built in a Boston shipyard by the famous Donald McKay, designer of clipper ships.

"The Hornet" continued to make many trips and records, in command of various captains. She set a record for the passage from San Francisco to Callao, in 34 days. Later on, she ran between India and England. Finally, in 1866, came her dramatic end. She had sailed from New York, in command of Captain Josiah Mitchell, a New Englander of the best seafaring stock, with a full cargo of oil and candles. On May 3rd, in the Pacific (about 112 degrees 10' west longitude, latitude two degrees, above the Equator,) she caught fire.

From now on, we may quote Mark Twain's account in his story "My Debut As A Literary Person." He collected a bonus from his newspaper for his interview with the "Hornet" survivors.

"The three boats were launched," (writes Mark Twain) long-boat and two quarter-boats. The captain's first care was to have four sick sailors brought up and placed on deck out of harm's way—among them a 'Portygee.' . . . The fire spread with great rapidity. The

smoke and flame drove the men back, and they had to take to the boats with only ten days' rations secured. Each boat had a compass, a quadrant, a copy of Bowditch's Navigator, and a nautical almanac, and the captain's and chief mate's boats had chronometers. There were thirty-one men all told, including two passengers, two young gentlemen from Stamford, Connecticut—brothers: Samuel and Henry Ferguson. The captain and two passengers kept diaries. There were no medicines. Of course the whole party had to go on short rations at once.

"They had four or five hundred miles of doldrums in front of them. They wisely chose a northward course, rather than Albemarle Island (Galapagos group) or Acapulco on the Mexican coast . . . From Henry Ferguson's diary, I quote: 'May 4, 5, 6, doldrums. May 7, 8, 9, doldrums. May 10, 11, 12, doldrums. Tells it all. Never saw, never felt, never heard, never experienced such heat, such darkness, such lightning and thunder, and wind and rain, in my life before.'

"The chief mate, according to the diarist, was 'an excellent officer—a self-possessed, resolute, fine, all-round man. The captain serves out two tablespoonfuls of brandy and water—half and half—to our crew.' From Captain Mitchell's log for May 17th: 'Only half a bushel of bread-crumbs left—' (and a month to wander the seas yet.) On the 19th the captain called up the quarter-boats and said the long-boat could no longer tow both of them. The chief mate (who was always ready when there was a man's work to the fore) took the second mate's boat and sailed away, and toward sunset passed out of sight . . . May 24, 14° 18' N. We are plainly getting weaker—God have mercy on us all!" wrote the diarist."

Now here comes a curious entry:

Ferguson writes: "A little starvation can really do more for the average sick man than can the best medicines and the best doctors. I do not mean a restricted diet; I mean total abstinence from food for one or two days . . . There were four sailors sick when the Hornet burned. Twenty-five days of pitiless starvation have followed, and now all the men are hearty and strong, even the ones that were down sick are well."

The hopeful tone of the diaries persists. On May 30th: "We have now left one can of oysters; three pounds of raisins; one can of soup; one-third of a ham; three pints of biscuit crumbs." And fifteen men to live on it while they creep and crawl six hundred and fifty miles, comments Mark Twain, who interviewed them on the 15th of June: "They were mere skinny skeletons; their clothes hung limp about them and fitted them no better than a flag fits the flagstaff in a calm."

One of the crew was a "banished duke—a Dane." We hear no more of him, except in the Captain's log: "He is one of our best men at pulling an oar." One of the Ferguson brothers wrote of Captain Mitchell: "He is a good man, and has been most kind to us—almost fatherly. He says that if he had been offered command of the Hornet sooner he should have brought his two daughters with him. It makes one shudder yet to think how narrow an escape it was."

Mark Twain records a note secretly passed by Henry Ferguson to his brother: "I asked a seaman if he would starve first or eat human flesh. He answered he would starve." It is a race for life now. Five days more and eight hundred miles to go. They chewed boot-legs, the ham-bone, leather and cloth. On June 14th they saw a magnificent rainbow. The Captain

(Continued on Page 11)

Voices of the City

"He no longer saw a rabble, but his brothers seeking the ideal."

—O. HENRY.

"I once came in from sea after four months out of sight of land. We were towed under the span of Brooklyn Bridge, our skysail, royal and top-gallant masts having been struck to permit the passage. This was many years ago but the memory clings. The voice of the city, rumbling, tumbling from the beautiful bridge, sounded like music out of heaven when angels greet a long deferred arrival."

—CAPT. FELIX RIESENBERG.

"To me, New York City is the most romantic and beautiful of all cities."

—JOHN MASEFIELD.

"Hate the place as you may, fear it, rue it, call it the treadmill and the rock pile, yet it drags you back. It drags in business, it attracts attention. The great fleets of the world send their sharpest prows, their proudest ships, through the Narrows and into the Bay, flags flying, with thousands longing for

the city, other thousands eager to have their first sight of the world's metropolis, to look upon its astonishing cliffs."

—CAPT. FELIX RIESENBERG
in "Portrait of New York"

"City of hurried and glittering tides!"

—WALT WHITMAN.

"Here on gray shore of island valanced
With ancestral foam of many Atlantics;
Here on island (O connect here for all
points of your travel.)"

—P. LEVINSON,
(winner of World's Fair Poetry award)

"To me, New York is never a friendless city of steel skyscrapers. I always look forward to (and receive) a hearty, warm welcome at the Seamen's Church Institute at 25 South Street."

—AN A.B. SEAMAN.

"The city means 'home again' whenever my ship touches the Port of New York. My real family lives a thousand miles away, but Mrs. Roper and the Institute make me feel at home—here."

—A CHIEF MATE.

To help welcome thousands of seamen annually to the Port of New York, please send your contribution to the
SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
25 South Street, New York, N. Y.



Drawing Contributed to the Institute by Hendrik Willem van Loon.

South Street Perks Up

By Leba Presner*

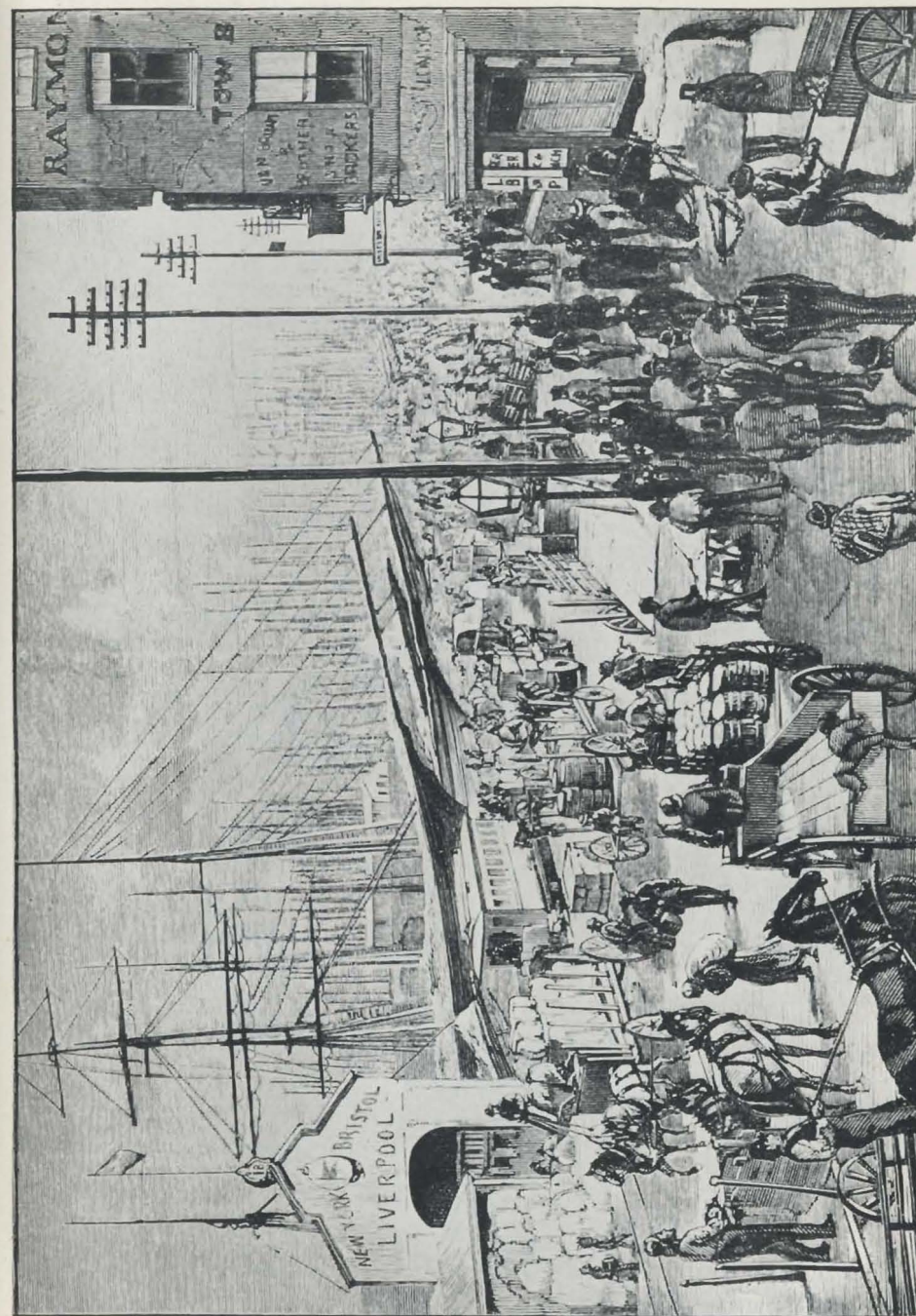
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*Reprinted from The New York Times, June 11, 1939

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Reprinted from: F.P.A.'s *THE CONNING TOWER*, New York Post, Sept. 29, 1938



South Street and the East River Wharves, Near Burling Slip. 1873.

Harper's

Maritime Miscellany

Why Ships Are "Christened"

The present custom is a relic of ancient days, when ships were decked with flowers, mariners were adorned with floral crowns, and wine flowed freely. The Vikings launched their ships by binding prisoners to the rollers over which the vessel was to run down to sea so that the "stem was sprinkled with blood" (for which the red wine was substituted in later, and more civilized times.) As early as 1418 the blessing of ships was alluded to by the monks of St. Denys. In Elizabethan times when some high official would drink from a cup, pour a libation on the quarterdeck and then give the cup to the dockyard

master as a memento. When figureheads were carried under the bowsprits, a priest sometimes consecrated an egg, or torch to the god whose figurehead the ship carried. On modern Greek ships the bows are decorated with flowers. The Captain takes a jar of wine which he raises to his lips and then pours on the deck. Captain Robert Huntington, principal of the Merchant Marine School at the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, recalls that several U. S. battleships were christened with bottles of water (usually from a river in the State for which the ship was named) during prohibition times.



Courtesy of Garde, in the N. Y. Journal and American and The Crow's Nest (Cunard-White Star Line).

"How's Penelope Spelt?"

Lighthouses: Mariners' Friends

(Continued from Page 1)

of safety features and is fitted with the latest types of signalling equipment has been especially constructed for the Cornfield Point Lightship Station, in Long Island Sound, westward of New London, Connecticut.

There is more chance for companionship aboard a lightship which is usually about fifty miles from port. Duties consist of caring for lights, fog signals, painting, cleaning and so on. These men are given not only their week ashore but a special allowance for food, in addition. Their pet slogan has become: "Join a light-ship and see the rest of the world go by."

The toughest Lighthouse Service job in recent years has been to make Alaska safe for shipping and a great many million dollars have been spent putting in radiobeams and concrete fog-signal stations.

Tattooing A Lost "Art"

(Continued from Page 2)

sock. Another sailor finds it convenient in recording girls' telephone numbers, since he has a short memory. And then there is the classic story of the sailor who had the words and music of "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight?" tattooed on his chest; he found it useful, when in a foreign port where his command of the language was slight, to remove his shirt and stand by the piano of a local dance hall while the pianist played his favorite tune.

Older seamen will tell you of the one-time popularity, for tattooing decorations, of Charles Dana Gibson's famous drawing of woman: The Eternal Question Mark.

Some of the old silent screen actresses like Mary Pickford, Theda Bara and Mabel Norman are tattooed indelibly on manly seafarer's chests. But hearts—whether bleeding or entwined, are no longer the favorite theme for anatomical decoration. So weep for the lost art of tattooing—for never again will the sailor record upon his body in blues, greens, reds and yellows, the story of his loves and hates, his triumphs, his religion and his patriotism—he finds other forms of self-expression today in swing music, writing poetry, or doing jig-saw puzzles.

Clipper Ship "Hornet"

(Continued from Page 5)

said: "Cheer up, boys; it's a prophecy—it's the bow of promise."

On June 15th, they sighted land. Some Kanakas swam out and took the boat ashore. Some white men brought the starving men water and fruits, and prevented those who would have eaten too much from doing so. Mark Twain concludes: "It is an amazing adventure. In one extraordinary detail—the survival of every person in the boat—it probably stands alone in the history of adventures of its kind . . . With ten days' provisions Captain Mitchell performed this memorable voyage of forty-three days and eight hours in an open boat, sailing four thousand miles in reality and thirty-three hundred and sixty by direct courses, and brought every man safe to land. The two other boats were never heard from."

As I went down by South Street piers
I lingered in my going
To smell the smell of tar and smoke
and feel the salt wind blowing,
To hear the cables fret and creak and
the ropes stir and sigh
(Shipmate, my shipmate!) as in days
gone by.

—CECILY FOX-SMITH.

Book Reviews

RIVALRY ON THE ATLANTIC By Commander W. Mack Angus (CEC) U.S.N.

Lee Furman, New York, 1939. \$3.50

Part of the story of man's never-ending quest for speed is the history of the record passages by merchant vessels across the Atlantic. Great steamship lines have risen and fallen in the struggle for the mythical Blue Ribbon, a symbolic reward for the fastest crossings. Commander Angus reviews the history of these liners, starting with the SIRIUS a wooden hulled paddle boat which crossed in 18 and one half days in 1838, down to the QUEEN MARY, which one hundred years later, took only 3 days and 20 hours. RIVALRY ON THE ATLANTIC gives a clear account of the ocean steamer. Although much of the book is technical, the general reader will be interested in the tales of great ships and great men and the obstacles they overcame. Commander Angus also provides some excellent tables on fast passages across the Atlantic and on principal dimensions of famous Atlantic steamers.

I. M. A.

"SAILING TO SEE"

Picture Cruise in the Schooner Yankee.
Norton, 1939. \$3.50

This lively description of the second voyage around the world of the Schooner "Yankee" is illustrated with about 300 splendid photographs taken by members of the crew, all of whom were amateurs except the cook! The story of their adventures makes exciting reading; they sailed far to see such ports as Easter Island, Pitcairn, some of the Galapagos group, and finally back to Gloucester. Amateur sailor or not, there is no question as to the excellent seamanship of the skipper, and the beauty of the illustrations attests the skill of the young photographers.

A. W. C.

I RAN AWAY TO SEA AT FIFTY

By Mary Sheridan Fahnestock

Harcourt, Brace, New York, 1939. \$2.50

This is the story of a grandmother who sailed through the South Pacific with her two sons. Becoming part of the crew of a 65 foot schooner at fifty is not usually a woman's adventure but Mary Sheridan Fahnestock had the time of her life. And though the story of the South Seas has been often told, this time it has a new vividness. Here are the details that men forget, how they planned the food, the gifts of shells and flowers brought her by the natives, stories of the hospitality of the people on the



Casting Off.

Photo by Ruth E. Cushman.

islands. Mrs. Fahnestock took part also in the real adventures of the trip. Diving for pearls in the shark ridden waters off Penrhyn has a new excitement when seen through the eyes of a mother watching her sons flick the sharks away with little white rags. Not the least interesting part of the story is her trip home to America after leaving the boys in the Fiji Islands. Using the pearls as bribes and presents, she traded her way in a thrilling, nerve-wracking game half-way around the world to her Long Island home.

I. M. A.

NEW YORK CITY GUIDE

Prepared by Federal Writers' Project
of W. P. A.

Random House. \$3.00

There have been good guides to New York City and bad ones, but the writers of the New York City Guide have given both visitors and native New Yorkers one of the best. The book covers not only Manhattan but the other four boroughs as well, and no material, however minute, which would be of value to someone is excluded. A chapter is devoted to the World's Fair and there are thirty-nine maps to enable one to go there or anywhere else in the city without difficulty.

The authors take one from Harlem to Times Square — from Fifth Avenue to the lower East Side. The work of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York is mentioned and the illustrations include pictures of it and of other famous points on historic South Street. An inquisitive reader could find no more graphic account of New York, nor any clearer guide through its intricacies and to its wonders.

E. E. K.



—Paul Parker Photo

A Million Meals Served Annually in the Institute's Cafeteria

Principal Facts About the Seamen's Church Institute of New York

- It is the **largest institution for merchant seamen in the world.**
- It was founded in 1834; in 1843 built a floating church and has now grown to a modern, thirteen-story shore headquarters.
- It is a **partially self-supporting** welfare organization for active seamen who need friendship, guidance, recreation and emergency financial help.
- It provides a **complete shore community** for thousands of self-respecting seamen **each day.** It is home, post office, safe, library, employment bureau, clinic, club and church combined.
- It is open to **active seamen of all nationalities**, although eighty percent of the men served are American citizens from every state in the Union.
- It befriends **ship apprentice boys** from foreign countries and hundreds of American cadets every year.
- It instituted **free radio medical service** for ships at sea, thereby saving hundreds of seamen's lives in emergencies.
- It instigated legislation requiring **first-aid examinations** for every ship's officer obtaining a license.
- It has trained over **4,000 seamen** in its Merchant Marine School and helped them to better positions.
- It has as an affiliate the Society for Seamen's Children, 56 Bay Street, Staten Island.
- It **cooperates fully** with other seamen's welfare agencies, but should not be confused with Sailors' Snug Harbor, the fine endowed home on Staten Island for retired seafarers.

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



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