

# The LOOKOUT



*Photo by Fairchild Aerial Surveys*

The Institute's Place on a Busy Waterfront

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

VOLUME XXIV

SEPTEMBER, 1933

THIS MONTH'S COVER shows an airplane view of lower Manhattan and indicates the prominent position of the Institute and Jeannette Park in the center of waterfront activities along South Street and the East River.

## The LOOKOUT

PUBLISHED MONTHLY

by the

SEAMEN'S CHURCH  
INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

25 SOUTH ST., NEW YORK, N. Y.

Telephone BOWling Green 9-2710

CLARENCE G. MICHALIS  
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Address all communications to

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," a corporation 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. If land or any specific property such as bonds, stocks, etc., is given, a brief description of the property should be inserted instead of the words, "the sum of.....Dollars."

It is to the generosity of numerous donors, and testators that the Institute owes its present position, and for their benefactions their memory will ever be cherished by all friends of the seaman.

NOTE: The editor of THE LOOKOUT furnishes publicity material concerning the Institute to newspapers and magazines as occasion demands and upon request. In this issue we are reprinting some of the articles which have appeared recently.

# The Lookout

VOL. XXIV

SEPTEMBER, 1933

No. 8

## A TRADITION OF THE SEA

UPSTAIRS and downstairs, in lobbies, reading rooms and elevators, we have heard conversations in regard to the action of Captain F. L. Sears who chose to go down with his burning tanker southeast of Hatteras. Opinions among seamen at the Institute differ as to the wisdom of this deed. Some say that he simply wished to die adhering to the stern code: the captain shall be the last to leave his ship. Others say that Captain Sears need not have taken the grim tradition so literally; that when all were taken from the sinking vessel there was no need for him to remain. Still others tell tales of masters of ships who, during the stress and strain of the moment, lose their reason and only know, blindly, that they must stand on the deck until the waters close over them.

Several of the tanker's officers and crew stayed at the Institute for a few days after the disaster. One officer said that when Captain Sears went down he held \$8,000 in cash from the safe and the ship's papers. Another officer said that the captain had been terribly moved by the death of a young oiler during the explosion. A steward told of trying to persuade the captain to leave the sinking ship.

The *New York Herald-Tribune* published the following editorial on the subject:

### SEA MYSTERY

Nightfall, a rising wind and sea lit by the last flames from a burning tanker, the great hull already far down by the



stern and wallowing dangerously, and a ship's boat full of men looking up impatiently as the captain, alone upon the forecandle, refuses to go with them—it makes a sudden and memorable scene. Everything wet with spray and full of smoke and danger, the waves reddening as they dash along the plating under the glow from the fire, but black enough where they stretch away toward the rescuing steamers—a Conrad would perhaps be required to describe the last moments of the tanker Cities Service Petrol off the Carolina coast on Friday, as a Conrad could alone interpret the mystery in that single figure, immovable in the face of fire and death on the ship which he would not leave. "We managed," said the mate, "to take all the men off the blazing ship except the captain, who refused to come. At 10:25 p. m. we left the ship." It took them an hour to pull back to safety; and five minutes later they saw the tanker vanish with her master. "As the ship was sinking he flashed his light." The words remain as his unsatisfying epitaph.

The true mysteries of the sea—perhaps all true mysteries—are not those of external chance but those of human conduct and inner experience. "He refused to come." Why? Was he simply so confident of his ship that he believed she would float in spite of everything? Or

was he responding to some obscure sense of duty, to some half-admitted tradition of his own or to some more intricate and unfathomable mixture of motive? How can one ever know? Overtaken by abrupt disaster early in the morning, he had fought all day to save his crew, bandaged the injured, got them all off, picked up those who had jumped, mastered the situation as well as it could be mastered. So far as the world knows or could know he had answered every responsibility, but at last, when every man was clear and the boat was waiting, he would not leave his ship. So they pulled away and left him; and an hour later the tiny spark of a flashlight across the rising sea gave the last beam wherewith one might pierce his mystery.

The *New York Times* published this letter:

To the Editor:

In this day of codes and legislated ethics one cannot but ponder the death of Captain F. L. Sears, who chose to go down with his burning tanker, July 15th, southeast of Hatteras. In taking this grim course he fulfilled to the letter an unwritten code which has come down, unaltered, through centuries, that the captain shall be the last to leave his ship.

Charged by the ship owner with unlimited responsibility for vessel and cargo, he is also clothed by law with supreme authority over all on board. Thus he stands, an element unique in our modern social organization, subject to no man's will while his vessel is on the high seas; but going whither he is ordered, over all the oceans, far from home and family. His responsibilities are endless, his life is hard, his pay is low. If by some mischance blame attaches to him for any maritime loss or damage, his certificate is forfeit, his means of livelihood taken from him. But though in storm or fog or heat or cold he may meditate on his uncertain lot, yet when the dread hour strikes, and his ship is foundering—the fate of any of its company yet uncertain—that stern tradition bids him stand on his deck until the water closes over it, and over him. Noblesse oblige.

If but this same code might find adoption ashore, what beneficent changes it could bring into being! If our captains of finance, of industry, our mayors, governors and other political rulers could be brought to serve as the ship master serves—thinking last of their own well-being,

their own ambitions—no need then for legislated codes and penalties.

Were a cenotaph to be erected to the memory of Captain Sears and those uncounted thousands who preceded him, it might well bear an inscription taken from the shield of another valiant service—"Semper Fidelis." —W. D. D.

### THE LOOKOUT

*Editor's Note:* The following poem was written by Nicol Bissell, age 19, and was published in "The Loom," publication of the Loomis School, Windsor, Connecticut. It was inspired by a trip which young Bissell made aboard the "Swiftlight" of the C. D. Mallory Line. His father, Dr. Dougal Bissell, is an intimate friend of our Superintendent, Dr. Mansfield.

Throbbing gently to the strain of heavy diesels  
 that send a cloud of smoke astern to be  
 lost in the clear evening, a freighter dips  
 rhythmically to the easy swell of the  
 Gulf Stream.  
 She's homeward bound, bilges full,  
 yet never seems to move; always alone  
 in the  
 center of that endless blue bowl  
 Flaring bows rise and fall, changing ripples  
 to glassy sheets. They curl and cut  
 the coming sea  
 like seagull's wings;  
 spattering bubbles, bubbles that burst  
 to foam  
 leaving a winding wake.  
 Walking up into the sunset a sailor goes  
 to take his watch on the fo'c's'le head.  
 Perched on a cool capstain, calmed by  
 the swish  
 of playful porpoises below,  
 he waits for darkness and familiar stars.  
 Whether the dipper shines above,  
 whether the air is thick with mystery  
 or a storm sweeps the bridge, he is  
 there  
 to watch for lights; to answer bells.  
 All night the little bridge bell rings the  
 hours;  
 From the forepeak echoing bells. On  
 deck the lookout calls  
 "All lights are bright"; from the mate:  
 "All right!"  
 While the stars look down and the  
 sea sparkles,  
 the lookout dreams.  
 He is one with the rhythm of the deep.

## IDLE TARs HAVE DEPRESSION TIED UP IN SAILOR'S KNOT

By Norman Klein

Reprinted from The New York Evening Post, June 8, 1933

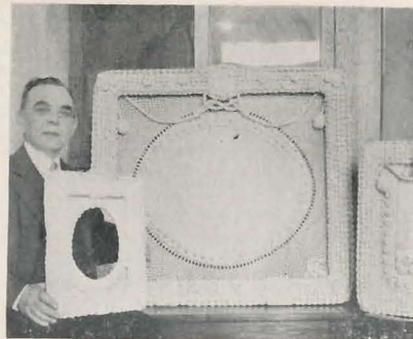
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Courtesy Schneider Studios  
 "Old Salt"

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Otto Lang, Rope Weaver

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John Freeman, Steeplejack,  
Paints the Institute Flagpole

## JACK TAR'S OWN TELEPHONE

“SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE” says an alert, pleasant voice in answer to the ring of our telephone number, Bowling Green 9-2710. “You wish to speak with Seaman Jack T . . . ? Just one moment, please. Seaman Jack T . . . is not registered here but we'll have him paged if you'll hold the wire, please . . . Hotel Desk? Kindly page Seaman Jack T . . . He is being called by the M . . . . . Steamship Company for a job.”

. . . And thus the telephone switchboard at the Institute relays hundreds of calls to our sailors. Seven thousand messages every month are received over the wires. The owners of these voices are often miles and miles away but they seek, through our familiar 'phone number, some particular Jack Tar, knowing that he can be reached, sooner or later, at 25 South Street. And our patient, good-natured operators do not look upon these calls as so much routine business, as mechanical as the wires they manipulate. They know that life, and death, and happiness and tragedy are mingled in these telephone messages. They bring to their work sympathy and understanding, a real interest and concern for the welfare of our Jack Tars. They go to all sorts of trouble to locate seamen in order to help them get in touch with employers, relatives, friends—sweethearts.

A worried feminine voice beseeches: “Can you please find my brother? He left a note saying that he's going to be a sailor. Mother is terribly upset. Oh, thank you. I knew you would help us. He's wearing a derby hat and a coonskin coat. He has red curly hair.” So our operator who is used to such frantic requests, realizing that such conspicuous apparel would be remembered among the crowd of seafarers in our lobby, set to work. It was not long before she succeeded in finding the boy (she had him paged through our Callaphone) and he came to the telephone where she connected him with his sister. He promised to return home.

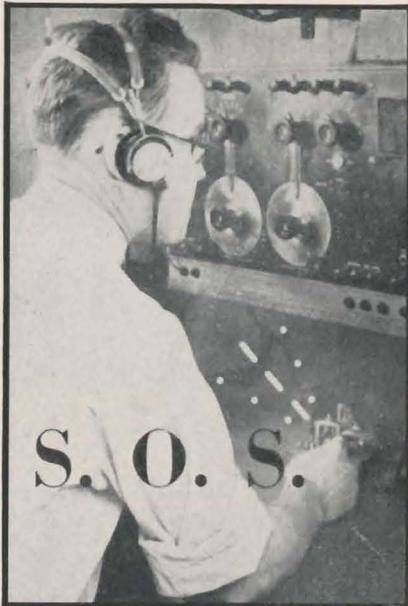
From this central switchboard are radiated the hundreds of calls to and from our various departments. A chaplain 'phones the undertaker to make arrangements for a sailor's funeral; he telephones the relatives, the coroner, the employer, the insurance company, etc. A chief mate is called home by illness; he comes



to our social service department for advice; our social worker 'phones the railroad station and arranges for reduced fare for him. Mother Roper sends a telegram to an anxious relative of a missing seaman. Our relief secretary telephones a hospital to arrange for care of a tubercular seaman. 3,000 of these outgoing calls a month!

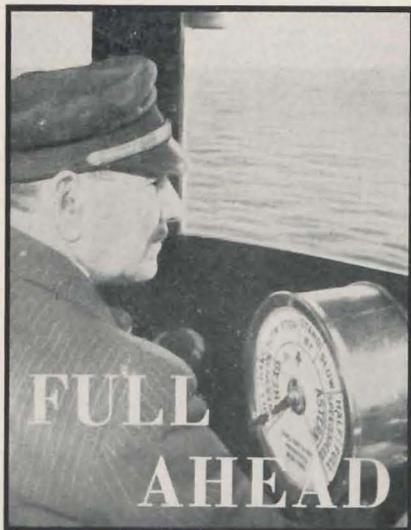
A hospital sends word to a chief engineer that “It's a boy. Mother and baby doing nicely.” A yachtsman calls our Navigation School for information. A seaman sends word to his “buddy” that he is shipping out and leaves with our operator the address of his ship's first port of call. An oiler 'phones our Dental Clinic to make an appointment.

And so it goes, our telephone switchboard playing an important part in the lives of the thousands of seamen who cross our threshold. If the seaman for whom the message is intended does not live at the Institute, or if he cannot be located in our lobby, the message is then written out in triplicate. One copy is sent to the hotel desk, another is posted on the bulletin board and a third is kept on file. Thumbing through the carbon copies of these messages one comes across all sorts of curiosity-provoking messages such as “Both.” “It's all off.” “Go to Pop Corn Shop.” “Very important.” Or romantic ones such as: “Margie says she's sorry. Please come over tonight.” “Your fiancee phoned.” But the messages which require the most alertness and intelligence are like this one: “I need five able-bodied seamen and a carpenter. Please have them down at Pier — in thirty minutes.” Such messages from shipping companies bring happy smiles to sailormen long out of work.



Courtesy, Vacuum Oil Co., Inc.

We are giving our time and effort, but we offer YOU the opportunity to help finance our work. Your help will turn desperate men from a road that leads toward a prison cot, even suicide, utter despair. It will give them a fresh start toward self-support and independence when the jobs open.



Courtesy, Vacuum Oil Co., Inc.

THE struggle of hundreds of unemployed seamen to keep alive is appalling. Even those who could weather a year or more of unemployment, having been thrifty in more prosperous days, have exhausted their savings and have joined the ranks of the destitute.

"These seagoing lads," writes Harry Acton, ship news reporter for the New York American, "are the ones you never hear of—until their ship sinks and then you read their names in the papers, sometimes see their pictures as the fellows who did the rescue work."

Shipping is improving but our relief problem is still acute. We need so much your generous and understanding assistance in this emergency.

CAN we deny these hundreds of men the use of our building?

Can we deny them a place to rest their head and food to eat? So long as we can find generous friends to provide the money, we shall continue to welcome them, to befriend them, and to keep them encouraged. For they are homeless and have no other place to go. Please help the Institute go "Full Ahead" with its relief program. Kindly read Dr. Mansfield's urgent appeal on the opposite page and send your contribution to: Seamen's Church Institute of New York, 25 South Street.



OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
25 SOUTH STREET  
NEW YORK

Dear Friends of Seamen:

Deep concern actuates this urgent personal appeal. An imminent financial situation confronts this Society, notwithstanding the fact that the affairs of "the Institute" are being managed with extreme economy and our employees have accepted drastic cuts in salaries. Anxious and heartsick, I am impelled to ask for your especial help whatever you may have given previously.

We are forced to further curtail all of our activities. Only prompt and adequate financial assistance will obviate an irretrievable loss of the Institute's services to our seamen who urgently want them today as never before.

The situation threatens as the result of decreased income from funds outside of our control, and also loss of revenue through Institute commercial departments because unemployed seamen have no funds with which to help maintain these departments but are instead dependent upon us for Relief. Furthermore, so far this year more than 900 regular contributors for some reason have failed to renew their contributions and hundreds have been obliged to reduce the usual amount of their gifts.

"And what shall I more say"?

This is my S O S message! I am calling to you to help us through this crisis, appealing to you to "lend a hand" in this time of "the Institute's" great distress. We must weather this financial storm which besets us until the days of "recovery" when we shall again "sail on" to greater and ever greater accomplishments for the welfare of our Merchant Seamen.

I count on you to respond to my call for assistance.

Very sincerely yours,

*A. R. Mansfield*  
Superintendent.

## TWO SEAMEN ARTISTS



Harold Flynn

**A**RT for art's sake," has become the involuntary slogan of two seamen artists who would like to make their talents a means of earning a living—who in spite of genuine ability—are having difficult going these days.

One of them, Harold Flynn, is a modern "long John Silver." After working aboard transatlantic ships for twelve years he was injured in February, 1930 in a train accident and lost both legs. While recovering, he took a course in Commercial Art, and the Institute for Crippled and Disabled Men provided him with wooden legs. He had never had an art lesson in his life, but his instructors soon recognized his unusual talent for doing marine pictures. Last month he came to 25 South Street and we have been helping him to market some of his paintings. But buyers are few and prices for oil paintings are not what they used to be. He is a cheerful fellow, and believes that he has definitely "licked" his handicaps. As times improve, he has faith that in some advertising agency he may obtain a position as a commercial artist. Our relief secretary is trying to arrange for him to get into Sailors' Snug Harbor in the event that he cannot secure a job.

A Filipino seaman, Benjamin Cortezano,

who turned portrait painter and has painted portraits of celebrities: Jackie Coogan, ex-president Hoover, and others, is now a guest at the Institute. He was graduated from the College of Fine Arts, University of Manila and worked his way on ships by painting portraits of the captains. On his way east from San Francisco on board the S.S. Sage Brush of the Shepard Steamship Company, Boston, he signed on as a steward but spent his time painting three oil portraits of Captain William W. Reid.

A diminutive fellow with long, wavy black hair, Cortezano looks very much the artist. His mastery of the brush impressed the Pacific coast and his work is rated exceptionally high by such artists as Professors Amosoto and Peralta of Manila. He is handicapped because he speaks very little English but through interpreters he explains that all he wishes is a chance here in the East to show the public that he can paint portraits which are life-like and which have distinction, beauty and splendid tonal quality.

... Just two examples of seafarers with handicaps as well as talents, who are being helped by YOU, through this Institute, to keep up their courage and faith through these critical days.



Benjamin Cortezano

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International News Photo

## OUR SAILOR PRESIDENT

The nation's skipper, aboard the Amberjack II, discusses weighty affairs of state while off Roque Island, Maine, during a heavy fog. President Roosevelt is a lay vice-president of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, having served on our Board of Managers for the past twenty-five years. His interest in the welfare of merchant seamen and in the American merchant marine is evident on many occasions.

When President Roosevelt graduated from Columbia Law School in 1907 he entered the law firm of Carter, Ledyard & Milburn. The late Edmund Lincoln Baylies was President of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and a member of this law firm. He succeeded in interesting the young attorney in welfare work among seamen. Subsequently, Mr. Roosevelt was elected to the Board of Managers in 1908 and in 1929 he was elected a vice-president of the Institute. He continued very actively interested in the work of the Institute until he was appointed Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1913 when he moved to Washington. However, his keen interest in the seamen and in ships has not waned. He has a unique collection of ship models and paintings in his home on East 65th Street, and seafarers everywhere, from deep-water salts to millionaire yachtsmen, pay high tribute to his skill as a navigator.

## THE THREE MUSKETEERS OF THE FRENCH LINE

Reprinted from "The Sun" of Jan. 24, 1933 by John M'Clain

A MAN goes to sea, and the first thing he knows he has been forced to give up most of his old friends ashore. There are months that he doesn't have time to get home at all, and when he does he finds that the old pals have branched out for themselves. In spite of all we hear about close companionship between a sailor and a landlubber, it is probably true that the seaman's best friend is, besides his mother, a fellow seaman.

One of the handsomest little relationships of this sort maintains among three French Line pursers — Jean Henri of the Champlain, Andre Quedec of the France and Louis Mallet of the De Grasse. How it has weathered the ravages of years, and how they manage to see each other enough to keep it alive is their problem.

When the lads first went to sea, quite a few years ago, they were all bachelors—dashing fellows, with a sideward glance for a pretty face and a heavy bill at their tailor's. Quedec of the France was the first to go, and the occasion was celebrated by the presence of his two companions at the wedding.

For quite a time no further casualties were reported. Not, as a matter of fact, until about two months ago, when Mallet of the De Grasse wilted and fell before the onslaught of a Mlle. Gouizon, in Creuse, France. By careful manipulation, the wedding was arranged for the time when the other members of the threesome were ashore.

Jean Henri was master of ceremonies at the wedding celebration and best man. Quedec was second best man and chief confederate of his pal, who was arranging the entertainment.

Following the ceremony in the church a large and complicated din-

ner was given in the bride's home. All the wedding guests were present and the best food and wine flowed, as the man said, freely. After the demi-tasse Henri climbed to his feet and addressed the gathering.

"I have several very important telegrams to read," he said.

And when the shouting had died down he proceeded to read a number of highly congratulatory messages from Irene Bordoni, Mistinguette, Carpentier, Maurice Chevalier, the French Ambassador, the President of France and, finally, the President of the United States. And it was not until Hoover's message was read that the crowd realized it was a hoax—and even that discovery failed to dampen the enthusiasm.

At the writing, Henri is the only bachelor of the original three musketeers of the French Line. While his two pals are dividing their interest between a home and a career at sea, Henri proceeds placidly on his way, adding to the ever increasing collection of elephant's models with which his cabin is decorated. The last time his ship was in port we asked him how he had happened to remain single.

"Oh," he said, "I can't spare the time to think about that—not until I get all the little elephants I want."



S.S. Champlain. Courtesy French Line.

Drawn by Charles Pears for "Salt Water Poems and Ballads" by John Masefield.  
Courtesy, The MacMillan Co.

## TRAMP! TRAMP! TRAMP!

Up and down the waterfront, along the Hudson and East River walk hundreds of merchant seamen—old and young, eighty per cent of them American-born or naturalized citizens. They trudge along the pavements, stopping at the various shipping offices, searching for work. Soon the shoes wear out and bits of pasteboard or folded newspaper are stuffed into the holes. And still they trudge. A man cannot sit on a street corner or sit on a park bench all day. Able-bodied seamen prefer work aboard ship to loafing ashore but with the millions of tons of ships tied up, they have no choice. They must walk, walk, walk in their quest for jobs. One sailor walked

every day from South Street to the Brooklyn Navy Yard. For such as these the Institute has been providing shoes. But just at present there is a shortage in the supply of shoes and funds are lacking with which to purchase more. So we make this earnest appeal to our readers: if you have in your closets or attics good, stout, strong pairs of men's shoes — of any kind — please wrap them up and send them by parcel post to 25 South Street, New York. They will be a boon and a blessing to many homeless men who depend on the Institute for clothing, as well as for food and shelter during these times when shipping is slow.

## READER, CAN YOU SPARE A STAMP?

A one-inch square bit of paper may become, like the Institute's Melting Pot, a successful means of raising funds to help needy seamen. We refer to the humble postage stamp. It has been decided to organize a Stamp Bureau and we are here and now appealing to LOOKOUT readers to search through attics, old trunks and souvenir boxes and send us all the old stamps you can gather together. Do not tear them off envelopes—send them intact. If you are a philatelist—or have been one at some time or other—but have now tired of

the hobby, won't you bundle up your stamp albums and send them to 25 South Street? We have been fortunate in securing the expert services of Mr. R. A. Barry, stamp columnist for the New York Herald-Tribune, who has graciously consented to appraise the stamps received and sell them for us to collectors and dealers. So we eagerly await response from our subscribers and contributors. Will you kindly send all parcels of stamps to: Stamp Bureau, Seamen's Church Institute of New York, 25 South Street.

## SUMMARY OF SERVICES RENDERED

BY THE

### SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

January 1st to July 1st, 1933

- 165,151 Lodgings provided (including emergency dormitories).
- 16,198 Pieces of Baggage Checked.
- 437,873 Meals served in Restaurant and Soda Fountain (including relief meals).
- 12,737 Barber, Tailor and Laundry Customers.
  - 128 Religious Services at Institute and U. S. Marine Hospitals attended by 5,996 Seamen.
  - 24 Communion Services attended by 347 Seamen Communing.
  - 2 Marriages, 21 Burials, 13 Baptisms.
  - 115 Entertainments, moving pictures, athletic activities, concerts and lectures attended by 72,633 Seamen.
- 45,579 Social Service interviews.
- 6,035 Relief Loans.
  - 3,648 Individual Seamen received relief.
- 11,928 Books and magazines distributed.
- 1,994 Knitted articles and 4,970 old clothes distributed.
- 2,748 Cases treated in Medical, Dental and Eye Clinics.
  - 349 Seamen referred to Hospitals.
  - 88 Seamen referred to Legal Aid Society; 78 to other agencies.
- 3,133 Apprentices and Cadets entertained in Apprentices' Room.
- 8,621 Interviews for emergency barber and cobbler.
  - 97 Missing Seamen located.
- 27,615 Information Desk interviews.
  - 668 Positions procured for Seamen: 378 on vessels, 290 on shore; 88 shipping companies served.
- 1,936 Seamen made deposits in Seamen's Funds Department.
- 885 Transmissions totalling \$17,458.42.
- \$131,779 Deposited for Safekeeping and Transmission.

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