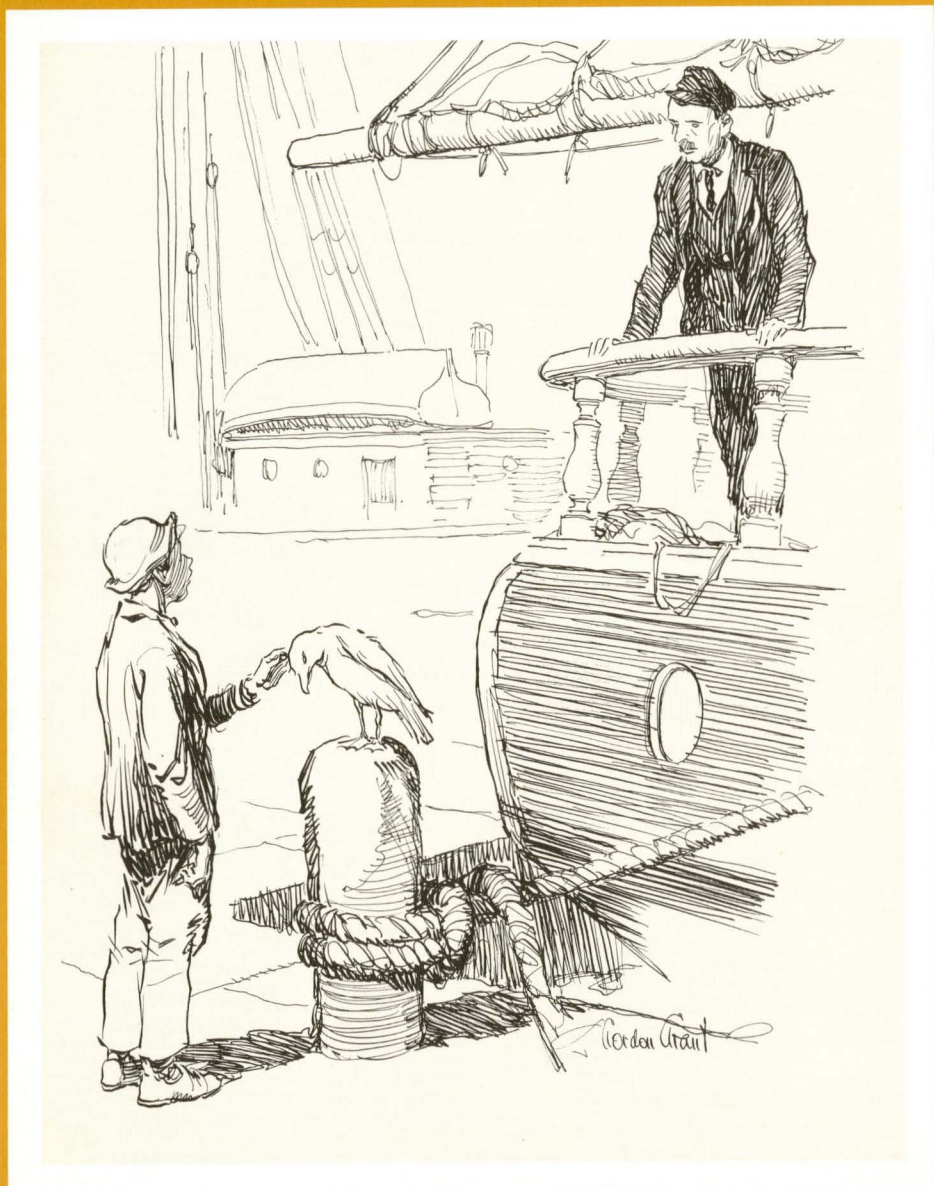




the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



IS THAT YOUR GULL? 12" x 9" ink (illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

JUNE 1975

THE PROGRAM OF THE INSTITUTE

The Seamen's Church Institute of New York, an agency of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of New York, is a unique organization devoted to the well-being and special interests of active merchant seamen.

More than 753,000 such seamen of all nationalities, races and creeds come into the Port of New York every year. To many of them the Institute is their shore center in port and remains their polestar while they transit the distant oceans of the earth.

First established in 1834 as a floating chapel in New York harbor, the Institute offers a wide range of recreational and educational services for the mariner, including counseling and the help of five chaplains in emergency situations.

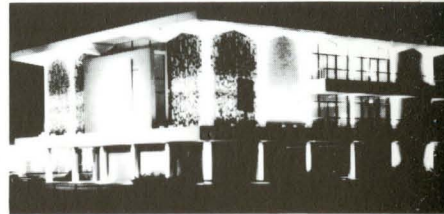
Each year 2,300 ships with 96,600 men aboard put in at Port Newark, where time ashore is extremely limited.

Here in the very middle of huge, sprawling Port Newark pulsing with activity of container-shipping, SCI has provided an oasis known as the Mariners International Center which offers seamen a recreational center especially constructed and designed, operated in a special way for the very special needs of the men. An outstanding feature is a soccer field (lighted at night) for games between ship teams.

Although 61% of the overall Institute budget is met by income from seamen and the public, the cost of special services comes from endowment and contributions. Contributions are tax deductible.



Seamen's Church Institute
State and Pearl Streets
Manhattan



Mariners International Center (SCI)
Export and Calcutta Streets
Port Newark, N.J.

the LOOKOUT

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GORDON GRANT ABOARD THE STAR OF ALASKA - 1925



Gordon Grant

ARTIST 1875-1962

On June 7, 1975, Gordon Grant, one of this nation's foremost marine artists, would have celebrated his 100th birthday.

Because of his outstanding accomplishments as a marine artist, and because of his long and special relationship with the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, we dedicate and devote this issue of *the Lookout* to him. We do so not only to honor the achievements of this valued friend, but also to encourage others to help bring back to today's public recognition, the works of a notable artist who was one of the last men to sail and paint the great windships of yesteryear.

MISS SANFORD

We also dedicate this edition to Miss Alexandra Reid Sanford, an exceptional woman in her own right, who for more than thirty years was a close and valued friend of Gordon Grant and his wife, Vi; or "Bobbie" (as he called her).

Had Miss Sanford not decided to become Grant's "biographer" we would have been unable to present this issue. The article which follows consists primarily of excerpts from her as yet unpublished biography of Gordon Grant (thus the sometimes uneven transitions). The lithographs and full page drawings were given to Miss Sanford by Gordon Grant and most of the photographs are from her collection.

We thank her for the time and effort she has given to this collaborative endeavor; are grateful that she was born with and still retains a "touch of salt water in her veins;" and that she was, in many ways, the "child" the Grants never had.

We hope this small booklet expresses to her (and to Mr. Grant) our appreciation.

GORDON GRANT WINDJAMMERS AND MEN OF THE SEA

by Alexandra Reid Sanford



Life can spring strange surprises on a person, right out of the blue. At times it can be enough to throw you on your beam ends. This thought flicked with a shock through the mind of the tall Gordon Grant with the sea blue eyes, sandy hair and long Scot-

tish nose above closely clipped mustache, as he strode along South Street. He glanced up by habit at the bold ship's figurehead of Sir Galahad above the entrance, before he entered the Seamen's Church Institute. Sailors from all over the world had long swung through the doors of this big building looming over the New York harbor at 25 South Street, due in great measure to the tireless efforts of Dr. Archibald R. Mansfield, who for well over 30 years had devoted himself to the welfare of the sailor, often homeless and friendless.

Grant had been struck with the many varied and welcome facilities for men of the sea when ashore which Dr. Mansfield had shown him on a recent tour. They had both chuckled appreciatively over one crowded hideaway, called the "Slop Chest" where contents of unclaimed duffle bags were dumped - scrimshaw, ship models and varied creations of cord and canvas made by sailors on dog watches at sea.

Now, though the New York Times said Dr. Mansfield had worked as usual Saturday, there had come a sudden heart attack, and it seemed incredible that Grant found himself the following Tuesday on his way to serve as one of the honorary pall bearers at his funeral.

The paper said Dr. Mansfield was

barely 63 and Grant was 58. Only a few weeks before (January 1934) Dr. Mansfield had completed the installation of the Conrad Library at the Institute and wanted a librarian. "It is a charming place," was Grant's comment, "and I am sure someone will get a very interesting job. *But* she must have an understanding of sailors, and that will not be easy to find." He wrote me "The Doctor will value your suggestions."

Gordon Grant often said that fate had unexpectedly changed the course of his career, when his father each time he sent his allowance, insisted his son should try to become a naval architect, instead of an artist, since his keen interest in ships, the sea and seamen had persisted. Even after finishing courses at St. Andrews and in time finding work as an apprentice in a Glasgow shipyard, his ambition was still to become a marine artist for math had always been his worst subject.

Discouraged over the contempt of his instructor for a plan he had toiled over, Gordon pushed it aside and began, on a fresh sheet, a sketch more to his liking. He was unaware that a distinguished art critic had stopped to look over his shoulder. In a later tour of inspection again he paused beside him and said, "Draw a hansom cab." Gordon did it with no hesitation. "Difficult subject. Boy, do you realize you have a photographic mind?" "To my astonishment," said Grant, "the critic burst out - 'To hell with apprenticeships! You are wasting your time here! You should be in Art School in London!'"

The father's reply to his son's account of this was skeptical - *impractical advice*. His mother, whose faith in her son never wavered, used her influence. The banker finally agreed to send two pounds a week (about \$10 then) for his son to attend art school in London.



GORDON GRANT IN HIS SUMMER STUDIO 1940's

Gordon Grant

Now it seemed incredible he was again heading for the Conrad Library which Dr. Mansfield had shown him with such satisfaction the month before - but this time to join the others - many distinguished men - who were to serve with him as honorary pall bearers at Dr. Mansfield's funeral.

It had also been the middle of January (1933) that a festive luncheon was arranged at the Institute for John Masefield when he was in New York. How like Dr. Mansfield, Grant thought, to include among the guests two distinguished poets, Stephen and William Rose Benet; two publishers - Donald MacKay and George Brett; two New York literary figures - J. Donald Adams and Isabel Patterson; (Mrs. Mansfield and Mrs. Grant were also present); two famous sea captains, Allen Villiers and Bob Bartlett; Robert Patterson and himself (Grant) representative marine artists, and Gerald Lamont.



As they waited now for the various pall bearers to assemble, Grant was reminded of Masefield's interest in the stained glass windows which Dr. Mansfield had shown him - facing the water, and depicting in colorful stained glass, the small floating chapels in New York about the turn of the century. These preceded the Institute. Also, how Masefield had paused admiringly before the figurehead of Joseph Conrad, recently placed in the library.

Grant long remembered the good talk around that luncheon table. It chanced that Villiers had, as a Skipper, circled Cape Stiff aboard his own ship. Masefield and Grant were the only two who had rounded the Horn under sail as youngsters. Grant was seated next to Masefield and, under his breath quoted a few lines from Masefield's *Dauber*; (Rounding the Horn).

"Then came the cry of "Call all hands on deck!" The Dauber knew its meaning; it was come; Cape Horn, that tramples beauty into wreck; and crumples steel and smites the strong man dumb."

*"The haze wrought all things to intenser hue
In tingling impotence the Dauber drew
As all men draw, keen to the shaken soul
To give a hint that might suggest the whole."*

The unspoken thought between them — they had survived and the Dauber had not. But though Masefield's sensitive expression changed, all he said was how the illustrations Grant made for his narrative poem "Wanderer" seemed just right ... which they had first discussed earlier when the Grants had tea with the Masefields in their home outside London.

Then the luncheon party had gone to the roof where a photograph was taken of the group. (Grant's remark - "This photo on the roof, I look (to be very vulgar) as though I were about to spit in the ocean.") It was in front of the powerful beacon placed there in memory of both seamen and passengers who lost their lives in the *Titanic* disaster in 1912. Visible for many miles at sea at night, already it was watched for by weary seafarers.

Before they descended to the chapel on the first floor so Dr. Mansfield could show Masefield the recently installed altar mural in the chapel which he had asked Gordon Grant to paint, they paused to sniff the unmistakable odor from the Fulton Fish Market; listen to the whistle of harbor boats - both characteristic of South Street and quite evident even from that height.

Grant, as a marine artist of high standards, meticulous taste and wide knowledge of things nautical, in his maturity had keen appreciation for the authentic details in the chapel's decor. He had an appreciative eye for its wrought iron work, wood carving and well made ship models. When asked to make the altar painting, it had been for him both a satisfaction and a labor of love.

When the moment came to file in to the solemn music with the honorary pall bearers behind Bishop Manning and other church dignitaries, he hoped anxiously



Gordon Grant

ously that the many sailors crowding the chapel would feel that the altar painting seemed right - what he had considered, after careful thought, was its treatment — realistic, to proclaim Space - Light - Creation - Eternity - Sky and Sea - the sailor's Be All and End All. Furthermore, the picture must light the chancel. . . "Does it give you pleasure to look at it? Does it suggest something beyond the mere works of man, I hope so. That's what I strove to put into it." (part of what Gordon Grant wrote in the *Lookout*)

Next day in the New York Times' full account, also in the editorial, they said more than 2,000 sailors, temporary charges of the Institute, were present at the services. He had served the organization at 25 South Street for 38 years, and it continued - "Dr. Mansfield won world wide recognition for his work on the New York waterfront. . . Thousands in many ports join in mourning his passing - Like Masfield, who gave himself to telling his tales and fashioning his songs not for "princes and prelates" but for the sailor, the stoker of steamers and those in the rain and the cold." *New York Times*,
Tues., February 13, 1934

Some of the words of the Episcopal service were echoing in Grant's ears as they left the chapel -

"Almighty God. . . we give thee hearty thanks for the good examples of all thy servants, who having finished their course in faith, do now rest from their labours." Then out of long ago there seemed to come his grandmother's well modulated Scottish voice - "Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth. . . for 1,000 years in thy sight are as but yesterday, when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

As Grant crossed the lobby, his eye was caught by the bulging chest of a sailor when he stopped to fasten a strap around his dingy bag. A hula, hula dancer had been tattooed in sharp relief against that leathery brown skin. Suddenly it reminded him of a mild Sunday aboard the square rigged *City of Madras*, his home for over four months after they rounded the

formidable Cape Horn. (The death and funeral service of a friend or relative seems to make events of one's own past life rise up suddenly, one after the other.)

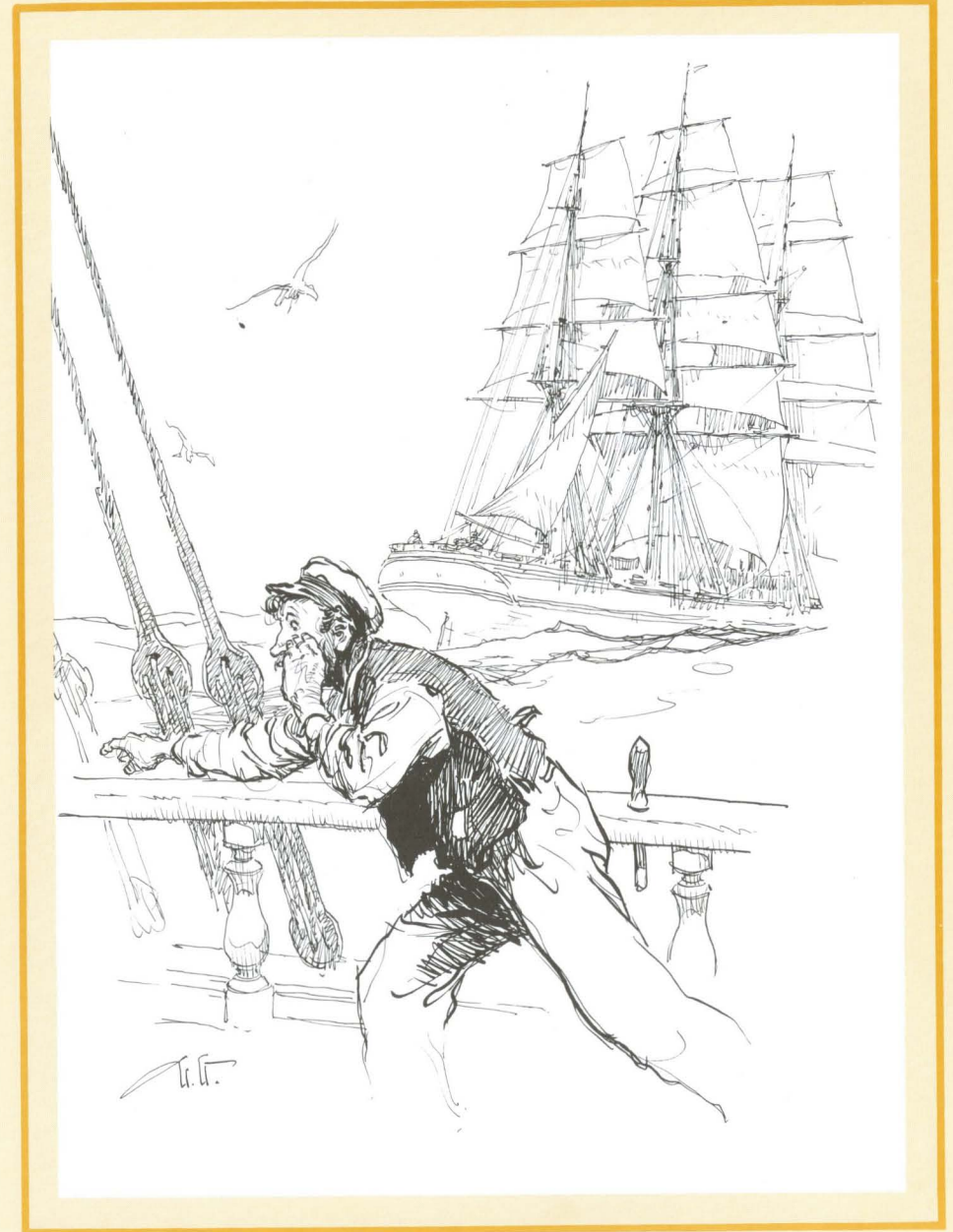


One member of the crew, skilled in the art of tattooing, had an interested group on deck offering advice and comments. When he finished doing a snake around one sailor's arm, he gave a wink at his mates, and offered his services to the 12-year old Gordon. Though he grinned a bit foolishly, the boy shook his head in the negative, with instinctive Scottish caution.

"You are, wise, lad," the Bosun had spoken up. "Them marks never come off, and they are a hard thing to get by with. Many a poor bloke has gone to the gallows because he carried a bright red star of hope tattooed on his chest."

Gordon Grant, at the time of Dr. Mansfield's funeral was a widely known marine artist on both sides of the Atlantic. He had been exposed to saltwater sailing craft and seamen from earliest childhood throughout a long and active life. The sights and sounds of San Francisco Harbor and Oakland he absorbed with the salt water he breathed for the first twelve years of his life. After school he raced to the water's edge to sketch a dory or watch the heavily booted Italian fishermen jump lightly aboard their craft, and without a waste motion, hoist a lateen sail and shoot away like racers, too fast for him to make the kind of sketch he wanted.

Square riggers, barks, long, lean Liverpool and Glasgow craft, broader beamed New Englanders and many others, nosing in and out of the Golden Gate he watched till the sun crept low and then vanished. He felt the urge to capture both sailors and ships even at twelve years. The spell those outward bound windjammers cast over the boy



MAN OVERBOARD! 14" x 11" ink (illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Gordon Grant

dangling his legs against the pier; his eagerness to try to catch on paper the way they looked; his sense of wonder about all the sights those aboard might see, was abruptly broken. As the clock on the Ferry Building struck he had to run. Unless he caught the next ferry for Oakland he would be late for dinner again. This was the night two sea captains, known to his family in Edinburgh or in San Francisco, were coming to dinner. He liked to hear their talk about life on the high seas and distant ports. He knew this time it could be more than a stern look his strict Scottish father might give him.

His father, keen to have his son follow him as a banker, was upset because the boy drew boats instead of solving arithmetic problems, his worst subject. Gordon thought this unreasonable. He had long watched his father sketching scenes outdoors, relaxed in comfortable togs, a contrast to his formal attire as a dignified officer in the Wells Fargo Bank of San Francisco. Yet when the boy rode his bicycle along the waterfront to find what would make a good sketch, back he had to come, if each problem was not done. Gordon's school teacher, principal and piano instructor had complained about him. It was not the first time he'd thought of running away to sea, though he was choosy about the craft. But the best one had vanished overnight.



September meant the windy mile-long walk to school and no end of struggles with dull arithmetic problems. The fall and winter stretched ahead with endless monotony. At that moment Gordon had no notion that Fate was about to spring a big surprise on — him.

With scant warning, little more than three months after his twelfth birthday, young Gordon, instead of trudging the dusty mile to school, found himself in high excitement aboard a crack Glasgow square rigger - *The City of Madras* - heading round Cape Horn for Scotland, more

or less under the eye of the captain. Aware of ills lately befalling the boy while he shot up like a weed, this Scottish Skipper had convinced his parents of the benefits of the voyage. Also the advantage of a good school near his Granny and Aunts in Kirkcaldy which would be his second home. "Aye," vowed the Captain, "across the Firth of Forth from "Auld Reekie" and all that Edinburgh had to offer. "Tis bound to have a marked effect on a lad who has known little beyond what this verra new part of a young country can offer."

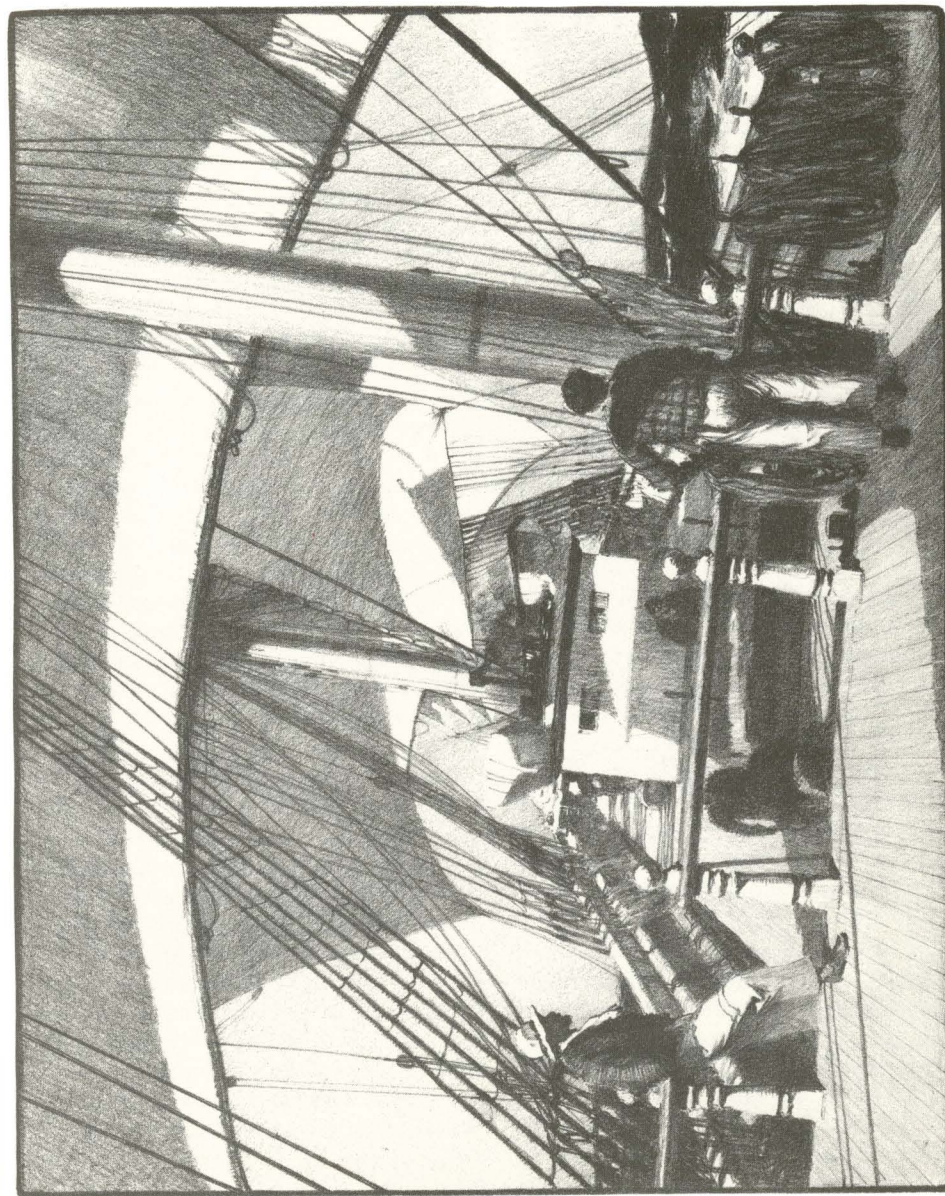
With all his being, the boy responded to this more than four month adventure at sea under sail, in all kinds of weather, scrambling aloft against orders, spell-bound by tales of salt-to-the-bone seamen and their vivid lingo, fishing from the bowsprit, impressed by the Skipper's endless familiarity with the heavens, the seven seas, and the Bible. All this had a strong effect on a responsive lad.

His varied life and contacts among Scottish people, Highlanders and Lowlanders, in schools, towns and along their coasts throughout his impressionable teens, left their mark.

As he matured, he was loaded to the gunwales with the persistence and staunchness, flicked with humor of his Scottish forebears, which together with the quality of his talent, standards and determination, was to launch him on a steady course toward the distinguished marine artist he became. This, despite contrary winds still coming his way from a skeptical father.

Two intensive years in London followed. He absorbed much along the banks of the Thames, in art galleries, and all that two outstanding art schools provided, despite his father's lack of approval and meager allowance.

Then he returned to California. Before photography took over the business of illustrating written articles, young Grant got a job on San Francisco's two big newspapers, first the Examiner, then the Chronicle, to show his father he could earn his living as an artist. Below his outward air of assurance lay uncertainty. Yet he knew his art schools' training had



Gordon Grant

OLD WINDJAMMER 9" x 11-1/2" lithograph
Inscribed: To Sandy "Wishing you plenty of Sea Room"

been thorough and sound.

After two years varied experience on the west coast, like other young artists, he came to New York in the middle of the 90's certain this growing art and publishing center held greater possibilities. Before his last San Francisco savings were gone, he got a job on the staff of the New York World as one of their contributing artists, at \$30 a week. His assignments were varied - from the Tombs to ex-President Cleveland's guide holding the largest fish caught that season near a big hotel in the Adirondacks.



Harper's Weekly sent him to South Africa shortly before the turn of the century as their combat artist to serve at the front during the Boer War; publishing many of his sketches for some time after its duration.

His diary kept then was terse but lively.

He joined the staff of Puck, remaining with them more than ten years. It, with Judge and Life wielded wide national influence in politics and humor. Grant's forte was closer to humor and human foibles than politics. He did general illustrating for other magazines, Scribners for one, and Scribners books as well. He was a tireless worker, had served a stern apprenticeship, had a sure touch and individual style.

In 1901 he married Vi Goodall, or "Bobbie" as he came to call her. The British actress left the theatrical company on tour in the States. By planning, they were able to spend their summer in California so she could meet his family. Not too long after those carefree days Gordon clapped eyes on his old papers, the *Examiner* and *Chronicle*, with the headline: *Earthquake and Fire: San Francisco in Ruins*. The suspense seemed endless before a telegram came that his family was safe in Oakland.

His flair for sketching lively small boys with few but effective strokes in the three

Penrod stories appealed to the publisher, the author, and the countless readers, first in 1912, "about a boy's doings in the days when the stable was empty, but not yet rebuilt into a garage," Tarkington wrote. All recognized the collaboration of Tarkington and Grant as true to the period, as well as to boy nature in a small middle western town, or anywhere.

After the Grants spent a number of summers in their place on the North Shore of Long Island, Gordon said: "Let's sell the house and see the world." So they traveled in France, Italy, England and Scotland, Scandinavia, etc.

Grant was familiar with London galleries from his two years in art school there, so he was curious to see which works of modern European artists had arrived for the famous 1913 Armory Show in New York, to give the American public and American artists the chance to see for themselves how some European artists had moved in new directions. He walked into his first visit with one line from the Catalogue's introduction still ringing in his ears: "To be afraid of what is different or unfamiliar, is to be afraid of life." The era of modern art in the new world was launched.

Art has been independent and irrepressible. Painters have worked side by side along widely different lines, he knew, each man true to his own staunch beliefs. At this time Grant was keen to reach the point in his own career where, instead of book illustrations and other miscellaneous art work by which he earned a living, he could devote himself to what he longed to paint more than anything else - ships and the sea. At times a nudge of the spirit assailed him to show, also, the characters who faced the hazards of coping with both. This was a challenge he felt in his bones he could meet effectively in his own way. His response to the beauty of ships under sail, far horizons, and to the varied types of humanity who had gravitated toward this fast vanishing way of life, stemmed from deep and strong roots. His was a sturdy conviction that an artist has the



HE ROWED OFF QUICKLY 13" x 10" ink (illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Gordon Grant

right to express his beliefs, to experiment and change. The very act of creativity grows from the individual's compelling impulse, he felt.

Among his other interests, Grant had become a Lieutenant in the Seventh Infantry of the New York National Guard and, in late 1916, was ordered with his company to guard the border at various points along the Rio Grande. The bandit Pancho Villa's cavalry was the most famous Mexican force which had escaped General Pershing, sent by President Wilson. The wind, dust, heat and deluge had

been trying, though he enjoyed chances to ride horseback now and then. This spared his bad foot, which prevented his active duty overseas in either World War I or II. His posters and other work for the war effort were very effective.



His time of departure from maneuvers with his company at camp in Massachusetts was delayed so he might meet Doubleday's deadline for the illustrations in a fourteen volume de luxe limited edition of all O. Henry's works. It was quite a push. "But they have been pronounced by experts to set the highwater mark of book illustration in America," etc. At one time a friend read the above on a publisher's blurb, but Grant stopped him as he began to read aloud, embarrassed beyond words, but not quite — for he began to swear with such vehemence that the chap told another that Grant had not repeated himself for minutes on end. "A terrific performance," he added with a grin.

Franklin Roosevelt, Under-Secretary of the Navy, commissioned him to paint a poster to meet a dire need in the Naval Service — Binoculars. With the caption *Eyes for the Navy*, Grant pictured a naval officer on the bridge of a ship, blindfolded, his arms outstretched in an appealing gesture. This helped to bring in 60,000 pieces of equipment - binoculars and

navigational instruments.

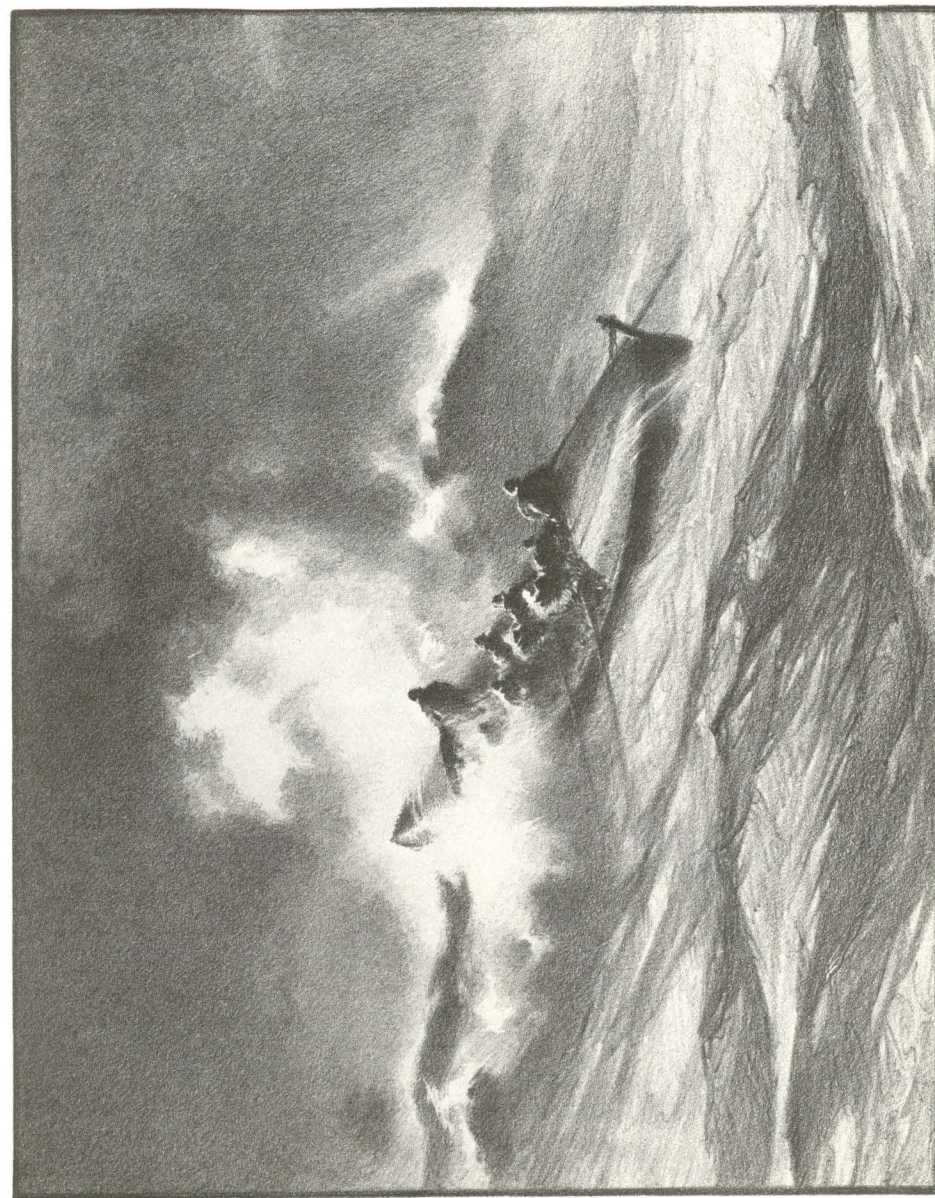
After the first World War, Grant said, "My anchor to windward proved to be my illustrating contacts, but gradually I was able to break away and do my own stuff." His thorough art training, sure draftsmanship and effective economy of line, together with his firsthand knowledge of ships and the sea rapidly won him recognition. His fame as a marine artist became established. His disregard of short cuts began to bear results. He stressed the central theme of the picture. This sure touch was apparent also in the lithographs and etchings he did at this time. By 1920, at long last, he was able to concentrate on ships and the sea. Here was the goal toward which he had worked hard.

Early in the twenties his work was shown in galleries in New York and Boston, San Francisco and Los Angeles, in addition to inland cities north and south. Art critics were struck with the distinction of his work, and nautical experts with its accuracy. His first one-man show in the spacious Grand Central Art Gallery in New York proved so outstanding that it became one of their most successful exhibitions.

The general public responded with appreciation to what this artist was recording of a rapidly vanishing form of man-made beauty in these handsome old windjammers.

A seasoned old salt who looked as if he had served most of his life aboard a square rigger, after long and intent study of Grant's paintings, admitted with astonishment to the gallery official that he could find no mistake whatever, in the rigging or any intricate detail of this dauber's ships.

Recognition on the west coast resulted from an offer from the president of the Alaska Packer's Association, who knew of Grant's keen interest in old square riggers. He invited him to sail aboard one of the few remaining such ships in active service. She was the *Star of Alaska*, about to make a voyage from San Francisco to the company's salmon cannery near Chignik on the Aleutian Peninsula. This



LIFE BOAT 9" x 11-1/2" lithograph

London Grant

he could not resist. While the Clyde built square rigger which had first borne the name *Balclutha* was being fitted out for her annual trip to Alaska, Grant, without a moment's delay sped across the country and arrived in San Francisco just before she shoved off early in April, 1925.



She was commanded by a former whaling captain and was a far cry from the neat and spotless *City of Madras*. Her unkempt decks were covered with grease and brown paint. Hundreds of cans were battened down both below and above decks. "She was, in fact, the messiest ship I'd seen in many a day," commented Grant later to a reporter.

Grant's technical knowledge was that of a competent ship's officer. His instinct was to make terse entries in the log he kept in a pocket size notebook, chiefly concerned with the perpetual effect of the fluctuating elements on this windjammer. Not once did he note the fact he made countless sketches which were to prove invaluable for his future work. His wide interest had led to much research, not only for drawings, but also for models of sailing ships which he made with the care of a perfectionist.

On the voyage, one extreme of weather succeeded another. "Sea rising and she's kicking her heels and sticking her nose in it. . . one morning calm enough for fishing — a half gale by nightfall. . . One night when the moon was full and the wind kept sails well filled, he went forward, lay on his back on the fo'c'sle head, and watched the moon through the sails. "Something I've imagined - and something to remember!" was the brief entry in his log.

A few days later a Northwest gale with squalls of hail and snow. . . "Ship rolling like mad and the sound of things breaking every time she gives a special heave. Steward, coal shuttle, six plates and the dinner stew all went into the corner together."

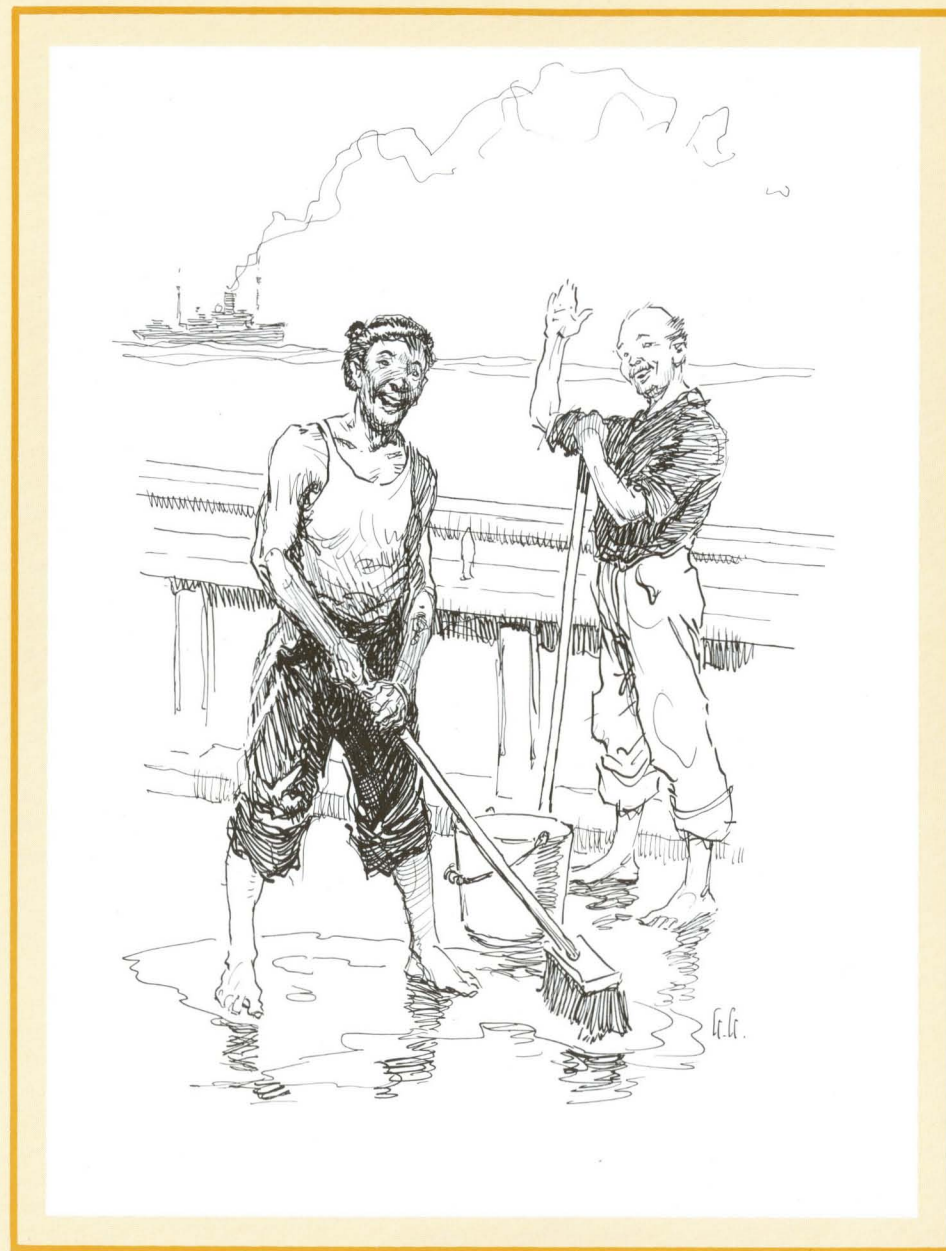
"Heavy mist so Captain has to resort to

dead reckoning. . . Fresh meat used up and cook laid up with sprained ankle. . . Yesterday's gale developed into a howler with very heavy sea. Ship rolled, pitched and shook herself all night so that nobody slept at all. . . Three weeks out today and 400 miles away from our objective. . . bright sun but very cold. . . occasional snow squall. . . hove to during last night as we got the side sweep of somebody else's hurricane. . . during the day, wind hauled aft, and we're now squared and rolling scuppers under. . . Captain says we should make a land fall by early tomorrow, and if the wind holds should drop the hook by evening. . . have never seen more beautiful seas than those this afternoon, the ship sliding down them like a surf board." Two days later the tender from the cannery towed them into the bay. "We said good-bye to the old *Star of Alaska*. As I write this I am sitting by Captain Halverson's stove in Chignik, warm at last."

At the outset of the voyage the Norwegian captain of this ship resented what he supposed was a landlubber passenger. But Grant won his confidence, and they became such friends that the old Skipper told him about his dearest ship, and actually wept as he ended the tale with her being scrapped. As they parted, to Grant's surprise, the captain said he'd learned much about ships from him which he had not known before.

After the Alaska voyage the American Art News began its review of his oils at the Howard Young Gallery that autumn: "Gordon Grant's new work is the most stimulating and vigorous of anything he has yet shown. . . In the pictures which result from this renewed intimacy with the sea, he has worked with an increased and infectious enthusiasm. His latest pictures have an intensity of observation. . . Those ships of his move, their sails are being raised or lowered, or are strained in the wind with an actuality which does not distinguish the majority of ship pictures."

The critic also pointed out that the exhibit included 18 pictures, lasted 18 days and 18 were sold.



TWO SAILORS SCRUBBING THE MAIN DECK 12" x 9" ink (illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Gordon Grant



At the Grand Central Galleries both his oils and water colors were shown, 'til the depression eliminated the big costly oils. But his watercolors were annual affairs there for decades. Asked about the reason for this continuing success, the Director of that gallery, still there 45 years after the showing of this

artist's work, replied: "Gordon Grant had authenticity. He was not only a good draftsman, he was prolific. He had good taste and excellent composition. This is a fine combination. He knew instinctively the effect of light on water and sails. His watercolors had an intimate quality that was appealing. The collection of 35 or 40 of these he would bring us for a show would be sold before the exhibition ended. His large oil paintings of ships under sail were more formal."

"The lure of the sea and adventure under sail still held a spell for many, as they always have," thoughtfully added this experienced director.

But the gallery's demand for square riggers scudding before a fair wind, under full sail, (because there was demand for them) dismayed Grant. Like other artists he felt too much repetition would cramp his development. Persistent sketching for many summers along the Maine coast, choice spots along the coast of Brittany, Southern France, Italy, Holland, Norway and Cornwall bore results. His observant eye, humor and swift skill caught, in a few lines, seafarers of many nations in action, afloat and ashore. He had a flair for revealing the character of the individual. Also he caught typical seaside spots; sand dunes; a bowl of flowers in the window of a cottage they had lived in above a picturesque cove along the Cornish coast at Mousehole, or a vivid oil of the harbor at Marseille, etc.

For fishermen and all deep water men he had understanding, sympathy for their few joys, many hardships, and their

response to pressure and beauty. He revealed this in the strong but sensitive lines by which he portrayed these men.

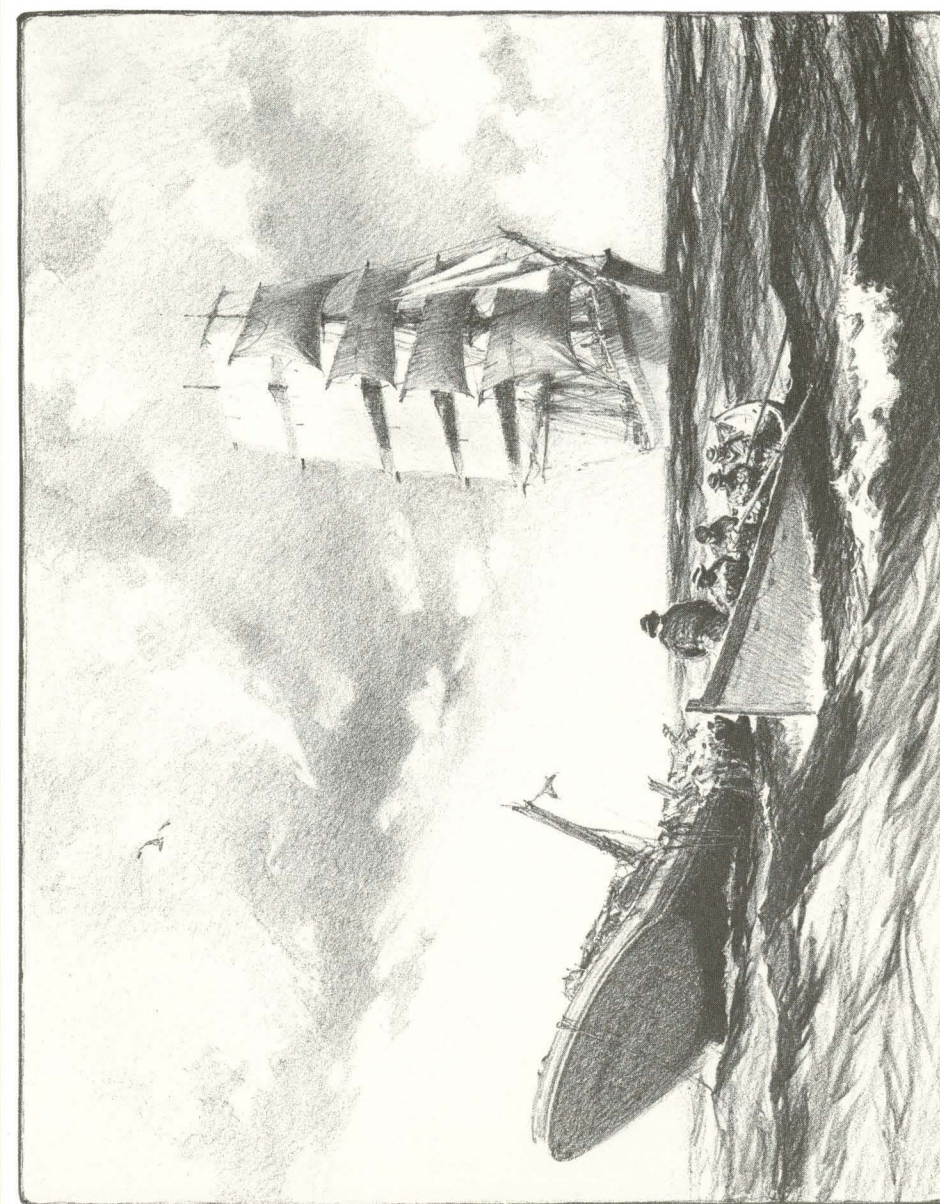
For sketching historic vessels, research in books was not all he sought, though he recognized its importance. He wanted to learn all he could of how men had fashioned the crafts that had carried them on their bold adventuring into the unknown. In Norway, he lingered before the Viking ship so well preserved near Oslo. Along the Mediterranean, the double ended craft with their jaunty lateen sails reminded him how both their grace and practicality in those sheltered waters had persisted through many generations.

In England he spent time aboard Nelson's *Victory* and the *Cutty Sark*, as well as examining ship models which interested him in museums over Europe.

In the States he went aboard the *Bark Lagoda* in the Bourne Whaling Museum, also the *Charles W. Morgan*; much in the Peabody Museum at Salem and in Nantucket, Norfolk and Annapolis. One of the Annapolis classes presented the Academy with one of his large ship paintings. He was represented in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the New-York Historical Society and many museums throughout the country, receiving prizes here and in Paris. He was a member of the National Academy (which gave him a gold medal) and other outstanding artists' organizations, including the Salmagundi Club on lower Fifth Avenue.

As a long time member of the Amateur Comedy Club in which he served in many capacities, he took part in the benefit for Merchant Seamen of All Nationalities at the Seamen's Church Institute; the Military Academy at West Point benefit for wounded men. Also in war years he went to Veteran's Hospitals to make sketches of disabled men they might send home.

The *Book of Old Ships* and *50 Famous Ships* which Grant and Culver did together received fine notices, but *Sail Ho!* and *Greasy Luck* for which Grant did both text and illustrations received the widest and most discriminating praise on both sides of the Atlantic.



Gordon Grant

DERELICT 9" x 11-1/2" lithograph Inscribed: To Sandy

When *The Constitution* or as dubbed, *Old Ironsides*, needed overhauling after serving under every President from Washington to Hoover without losing a battle, a critic, in reviewing one of his exhibitions in Philadelphia wrote: "Gordon Grant bears the distinction of being the artist chosen by the Secretary of the Navy to paint 'Old Ironsides'. Instead of asking Congress to appropriate funds, it was felt the people themselves, including the children, should share in this. "She saved the Nation. Let us save her," was the motto. It worked. Coins from five million American school children poured in, contributions from patriotic societies, business organizations and individuals. Inexpensive but good reproductions of the Gordon Grant painting soon produced \$80,000 toward the cause. The latter half of the twenties was a prosperous period. Also it was a time when recognition of the role played in American history by ships under sail was keen in many quarters. Several large dramatic oils by Grant showing the main sea battles of the *Constitution* displayed at the Howard Young Galleries were at once purchased by Mr. Wanamaker to hang in the New York and Philadelphia stores. The price of each was in four figures. Grant spent time in Boston making sketches of her at different stages of her reconstruction. These appeared often in papers and magazines. When Grant turned in the finished picture as his contribution, the committee issued this statement: "America's foremost marine artist has painted a picture of *Old Ironsides* as she appeared at the height of her glory. . . He has produced a masterpiece. . . the original will hang in the White House."

This it did. But by some conjuring it hangs now at *Hyde Park!*

When reconstruction aboard the ship was in progress, Grant was asked to paint in the four panels in the Commodore's cabin, four of her chief engagements. The headline in *The Transcript* read: "*Old Ironsides* sails tomorrow, Old Battles in her Skylight, now immortalized by Gordon Grant."

Laurence Stallings, author of "What

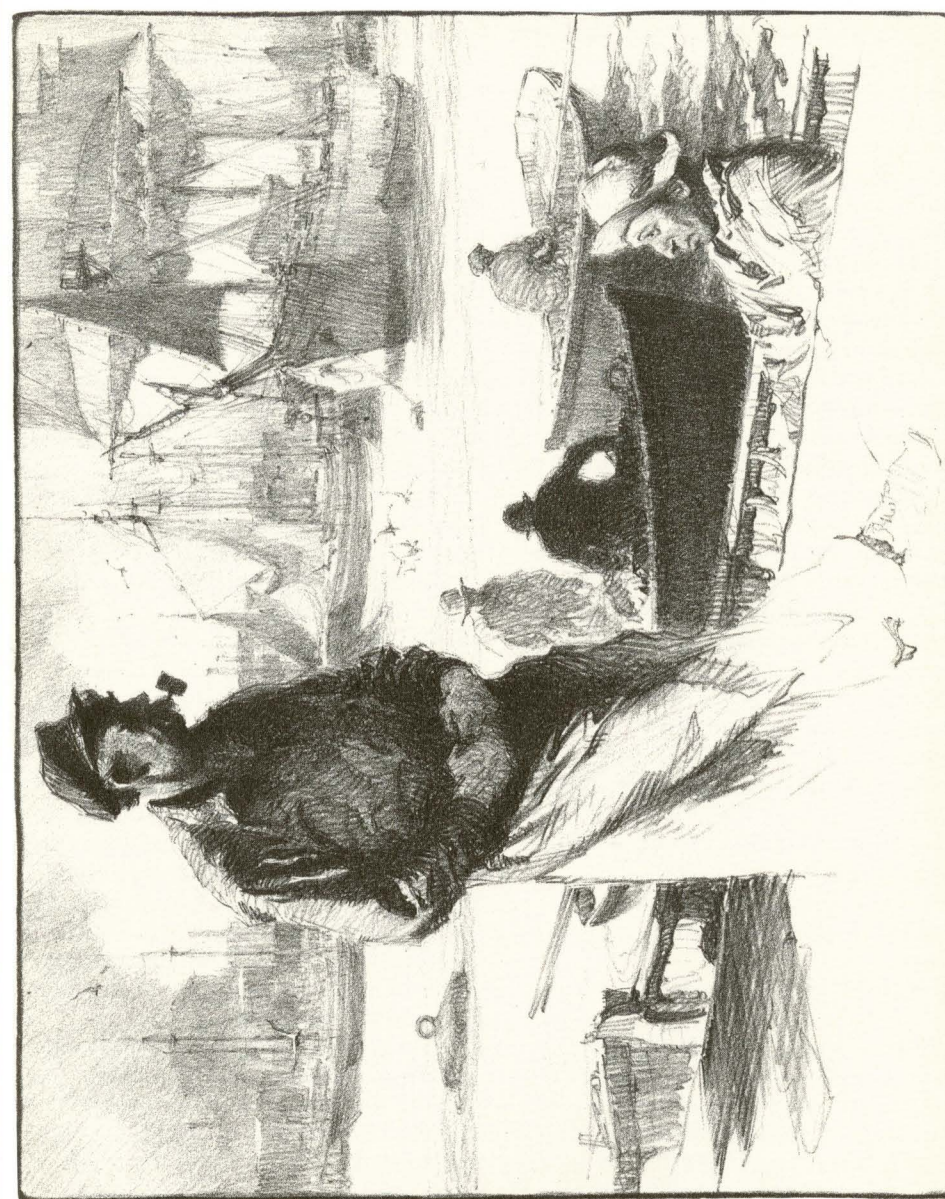
Price Glory", after much research, did a story around her sea victory over the Barbary pirates. After wild adventures, the film opened in New York with great fanfare, including a banquet at the Biltmore attended by rows of gold braid from Washington, prominent members of society, distinguished representatives of the art and financial worlds. At the intermission the Secretary of the Navy stood on a balcony, delivered a vigorous speech about *Old Ironsides* and as a climax, unveiled Gordon Grant's fine painting of that proud vessel amid much applause.



In November, 1957, Grant's thirty-fifth show at the Grand Central Galleries had its opening in the midst of New York City's famous blackout. A newspaper account claimed that this veteran artist, then 82 years old, guided 350 admirers down six flights with a flashlight.

"As a matter of fact," Grant said later, "the elevator was used and all got out safely about five-thirty." He had some of the wry, deprecating humor for which the British are noted.

Two years after his show which opened at the Grand Central Galleries in the midst of the blackout, Gordon Grant, who had used his eyes so unsparingly over the years, experienced his own blackout. He suddenly became blind the latter part of that summer at Gloucester. There was no remedy. It was sheer tragedy overtaking so active a man, utterly dependent on his eyes. He had lost beyond recall what he had taken for granted as the mainspring of his life. In time though, the resilience he possessed reasserted itself. His keen sense of humor rose again, bit by bit to the aid of his sense of values. His imagination let him see pictures in his mind's eye. This was his vision now - that something inside his head. He had lost his eyesight, but the first despair had been dealt with, and he gradually came to terms with what had befallen him.



SKIPPER WITH PIPE 9" x 11-1/2" lithograph

Gordon Grant

He had sent his old sketch books on to California for his nephew, Campbell Grant, who, being an artist himself, recognized the quality of these quick sketches. He forwarded them to Watson-Guptill in New York, who soon published them in book form. In a preface to this *Gordon Grant Sketch Book* the late Wade de Fontaine, art director and former editor of *Yachting Magazine* and author of nautical books, paid high tribute to Grant and his sure touch as an artist, giving rich details, gleaned from many sketching jaunts they made together near Gloucester, as to Gordon's technique.

The late Norman Kent, distinguished editor of *American Artist*, wrote the fine introduction to *The Gordon Grant Sketch Book*, knowing his contribution as an artist, and as a friend over the years in the Salmagundi Club. "His paintings and illustrations, owned and cherished from coast to coast, have recreated an era that, like the steam locomotive, will soon become legendary." declared Norman Kent.

For this book to be published then, and for it to receive so warm a reception in quarters that counted, meant everything to Gordon Grant. "Losh! He was not laid by on the shelf yet - not yet!"

He had his bad times, of course, but now and then sparks of his humor began to flash out. With that flair he had for lapsing into broad Scots at odd moments, he might quote -

"A hard life, but Maircy me!

So hae moist o' us, an' we dinna gang a boot,

Wi' faces as lang as Leith Walk because o' it."

When a friend chanced to bring him a mouth organ, he began to play it as if it had been no time since he had swung into a sea chantey aboard the old *City of Madras*. The quiet corridor of the Nursing Home became lively as his mates joined in with less salty but acceptable words.

When an old friend dropped in for a bit of a gam, he said at once, with a grin, "I've got a new one for you. It was passed on to me yesterday by the Minister of the Brick Church I attended. I've known him for

years, and he stops by now and then."

Then he lapsed into the cockney accent and intonation he could do almost as readily as the Scottish burr.

There was an old lady from Tring
Who said, when requested to sing —
"I saiy, ain't it odd?
I cannot tell 'God Save the Weasel'
From 'Pop Goes the king'."

When Gordon Grant slipped away from this world, John Steinway, in behalf of the Comedy Club, paid him affectionate and admiring tribute. He had served in most every way a member could serve his club, for forty years. There was much to be noted. Then he ended:

Who can ever forget Gordon's skit of the old Scottish bookseller, and the Bible for a Laddie in the Sunday School? Or his unforgettable performance as "*Fluther Good*" in the *Plough and the Stars*?"

Early in the summer of 1962, with engines silenced, flag at half mast, a memorial service was held at sea, off Gloucester, following a large attendance at the service held in a big New York church. Gordon Grant had worked and relaxed in Gloucester for many summers. Now the Chaplain of the Gloucester Fishermen's Institute, conducted the traditional service for this occasion, and scattered his ashes on the Atlantic.

Along San Francisco's waterfront at the same time, the flag on Gordon Grant's old ship *The Star of Alaska* was lowered to half mast. "It was the least gesture that we could make," said Karl Kortum, Director of the fine old square rigger, now a marine museum, and under her original name of *Balclutha*.

"I am pleased we can make the more enduring gesture," he continued, "of keeping his superb sketches of sea life from *Sail Ho!* on display aboard the ship that inspired them. The book had much to do with the shaping of my own love of the sea, diverting my interest to the later day windjammers. Consequently it played a basic role in the ship's restoration. . . Just one more instance of the awakened sea interest that Gordon Grant left behind him."

DRAWINGS

Is That Your Gull? 12"×9" ink
(illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Benjamin Was Standing Silent 12"×9" ink
(illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Two Sailors Scrubbing the Main Deck 12"×9" ink
(illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Man Overboard! 14"×11" ink
(illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

He Rowed Off Quickly 13"×10" ink
(illustration for book *Ship's Parrot*)

Ship Captain 10"×14" pencil and ink wash

LITHOGRAPHS

Skipper With Pipe 9"×11½" lithograph

Life Boat 9"×11½" lithograph

Derelect 9"×11½" lithograph
signed: Gordon Grant to Sandy

Old Windjammer 9"×11½" lithograph
signed: Gordon Grant to Sandy
"Wishing her plenty of Sea Room"

Man On The Jib 9"×11½" lithograph

PHOTOGRAPHS

Gordon Grant aboard the Star of Alaska — 1925

Gordon Grant in his Summer Studio 1940's

GORDON GRANT SEARCH

In that Mr. Grant was an unusually prolific artist, we found it impossible to determine what and where all his works are located.

If you have or know someone who has a Gordon Grant painting, watercolor, drawing, etc. we would be most appreciative if you would provide us with a brief description or photo of the piece, together with the dimensions of the picture area, media used, picture title and name and location of the current owner. This would greatly assist in gathering data for a future definitive catalog of Grant's works.

Thank you in advance for any assistance.

The Editor, Lookout
SCI

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CORRECTION

In publishing the *TITANIC* article "A Hymn to Valor" in the May 1975 issue of *the Lookout* we inadvertently omitted the name of the author
MR. PAUL V.D. HOYSRADT.
Our apologies.

Seamen's Church Institute of N. Y.
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Address Correction Requested

Gordon Grant altar painting as originally installed in the Chapel of
the Seamen's Church Institute of New York at 25 South Street, New York City

