

The LOOKOUT

JUNE 1954



SEAMEN'S
CHURCH
INSTITUTE
of NEW YORK

The Lookout

VOL. XLV

June, 1954

No. 6



THE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK is a shore home for merchant seamen who are between ships in this great port. The largest organization of its kind in the world, the Institute combines the services of a modern hotel with a wide range of educational, medical, religious and recreational facilities needed by a profession that cannot share fully the important advantages of home and community life.

The Institute is partially self-supporting, the nature of its work requiring assistance from the public to provide the personal and social services that distinguish it from a waterfront boarding house and so enable it to fulfill its true purpose: being a home away from home for the merchant seamen of all nationalities and religions.

A tribute to the service it has performed during the past century is its growth from a floating chapel in 1844 to the thirteen-story building at 25 South Street known to merchant seamen the world around.

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VOL. XLV

JUNE, 1954

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SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
25 South Street, New York 4, N. Y. BOWling Green 9-2710

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President

REV. RAYMOND S. HALL, D.D.
Director

TOM BAAB
Editor

THOMAS ROBERTS
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MAE STOKE
Associate Editor

Published Monthly \$1.00 yearly 10c a copy

Gifts to the Institute of \$5.00 and over include a year's subscription

Entered as second class matter, July 8, 1925 at New York, N. Y., under
the act of March 3, 1879



From the painting by Frank Vining Smith

To China for Tea

EMPEROR Shen Nung was an easy-going old fellow; a few leaves and a ladybug more or less in his boiled water bothered him not in the least. In fact, one day, exclaiming something suitably ecstatic in Chinese, he demanded that certain evergreen leaves always be popped in his boiling water. That was hot tea.

Some 4,000 years later at a 1904 fair in St. Louis someone put ice in a glass and made iced tea. Offhand, that wouldn't seem to be much progress. But in the meantime, tea became a globetrotter, figured in a revolution, had an interlude or two with lovesick poets and survived

a grim period in which people buttered and salted soggy tea leaves and solemnly gulped them down.

China trade and world shipping grew up together. It was more than the wind that sent the 19th century clippers scudding across the Pacific. Fierce competition among the world's merchants for choice tea cargoes was the impetus for better and speedier ships.

A crew of bold, redheaded Dutchmen carried away the first Chinese tea in 1616. A Chinese scholar of the day was much impressed with their tall bodies and big feet. "Their faces and hair were red," he wrote, "and they had blue eyes

THE COVER: This aerial view shows the newly opened South Street Viaduct, which starts opposite the Institute and extends beyond the Manhattan Bridge to join with the East River Drive. See page 12.

sunk deep in their heads. They frightened the people by their strange appearance.”

England dawdled another hundred years before cutting in on the China trade. But once they started, the English took to tea like ducks to water and by the latter part of the century, business boomed. Tea was scarce, high-priced and cherished. Dainty tea services were all the rage and tea-time became the social event of the titled upper strata.

The British East India Company grew a mighty set of muscles and flexed them importing to the markets of the New World. Tea destined for the colonies in America was taxed. One December evening in 1773 some fifty-odd uproarious ruffians boarded a ship in Boston harbor and tossed 343 chests of the precious leaves into the sea. England met this impudence with stern counter-measures. And thus the Revolution.

The newborn United States tried out her shaky sea-legs in Far Eastern trade in 1784. A privateer, the *Empress of China*, logged 13,000 miles in ten months and dropped anchor triumphantly in New York's East River with the first cargo of tea, silk and chinaware. The market was wide open and profits were enormous. Enthusiastic venturers were soon beating their way around the Horn and braving the wild monsoons of the far Pacific. Ginseng root, an herb revered by the Chinese as a “dose of immortality,” comprised the main outbound cargo. American forests were picked clean of the root, which was to be had for the gathering.

In Canton there was some sharp elbowing among the traders for the first tea of the season, which usually went to the fastest bark. Speed meant cargo, and speed was the whiplash that drove the designers of ships to narrow the hulls and to pile on the canvas. The *Ann McKim* stepped out in the front ranks in 1832. In 1845 the first radical clipper, the *Rainbow*, was launched. South Street merchants warned that she was designed contrary to the laws of nature, but her sharp, slim hull knifed through the waters and she showed her heels to every other ship in the China trade.

In 1847, the *Sea Witch*, with raked masts and billowing canvas, made the return voyage from Canton to New York in 81 days. This compares with passages of 185 to 200 days by ordinary sailing ships. The clipper era was at hand.

American clippers, racing the ships of other nations and each other, carried as much as 15 million pounds of tea a year in the late 1840's. By the end of the decade, England had lost more than half of her former China trade. In an effort to recoup, she repealed restrictive navigation laws so that her merchants could buy American bottoms and compete with the Yanks on their own terms. But the first swift result of the repeal was the dash across two oceans in 97 days by the American clipper *Oriental* to claim the British bounty for the first tea of the season. On December 3, 1850, she rode boldly into the London docks, the first American clipper to strike for a share of England's home trade.

The clipper ships monopolized the trade of the world and importers competed fiercely with other importers, with other cities and with other nations. The clippers, drawn up at their docks along South Street, were operated like a stable of race horses. Merchants put their prize ships up against all other comers and half the nation bet on the outcome. Often ships would race each other thousands of miles from China or California, be abreast around the Horn and skim into New York Harbor mere hours apart. Fortunes often hung on the result. The other rewards were cargoes and glory.

The greatest traffic passed through the port of New York and the mightiest and most beautiful of the clippers berthed along this waterfront: the *Challenge*, the *Flying Cloud*, the *Bald Eagle*, the *Surprise*, the *Sword Fish* and the *Sovereign of the Seas*. The *Sea Witch* sailed out of Pier 9, East River.

In the frenzy for speed and more speed, captains drove their ships and crews night and day, and many a master of a vessel strapped a gun to his belt against the time when the fury of the pace would breed mutiny. Sails ripped away and top-

masts sheared off by the savage winds of the monsoons were the usual penalties paid by the clippers for a fast passage. This quarter-century was indeed a fabled era of wooden ships and iron men — but the fever of the rich trade blinded all to the ominous, plodding gains of the steamship. South Street and its counterparts were choked with ships, traders and speculators; with men who believed the clippers would always rule if they only went faster, faster. And South Street's alleys were shadowed by those who used a short stout club to secure a crew for an unhappy ship. Along about this time, with remarkable aloofness, Longfellow observed: “Tea urges the tranquility of the soul.”

In 1866 the clippers arrogantly held sway over the sea, the trade and the romantic imagination of men. Their “tin can” rivals belched black smoke, wallowed in stormy seas and exploded their boilers with distressing regularity. Few importers of spices would risk their delicate cargoes in the smoky, pulsating holds of the cantankerous steamers. Ship builders and trading companies, for the most part, bet their futures on the thoroughbred sailing ship but the longshot, steam, won out.

In an incredibly short time the steadily increasing reliability of the steamships had wrested the choice cargoes from the foremost clippers. In 1869 the sailing ships idled at the Foochow docks while the steamers loaded the first teas of the season. The day that sailing men swore would never come had dawned.

Relentlessly steam drove the sailing ship from the earth's oceans. The clippers carried an ever dwindling share of world cargo. The death struggle, prolonged and humiliating, was over by 1900. Only the stragglers — the lumber schooners, the wool traders, the haulers of fish scrap and fertilizer — set sail into the 20th Century.

The tea trade itself went through a series of convulsive changes. To combat the artificial coloring of green teas, the United States enacted the Tea Law in 1897, which set up exact physical standards of purity for all imported teas. In

1913 strict enforcement of the law resulted in rejection of 1½ million pounds of tea. Gradually the market shifted away from green tea and favored the black. Soon the puffing steamships were carrying wooden tea chests from India and Ceylon and the great China trade flickered fitfully in its twilight years.

Today the tea importers are still huddled together in the stubby, aged buildings of the South Street area. The industry has been “stable” for over half-a-century. Although the number of tea drinkers in the United States has increased, the actual amount of tea imported has not varied very greatly from the clipper ship days. It takes much less of the black tea than it did of the green variety to make a creditable cup.

It is a melancholy fact that the modern ships bearing tea and spices are lifted tenderly from one sea to another by the Suez and Panama canals, scorning the joys of braving the terrors of Cape Horn and the fickle moods of the South Pacific.

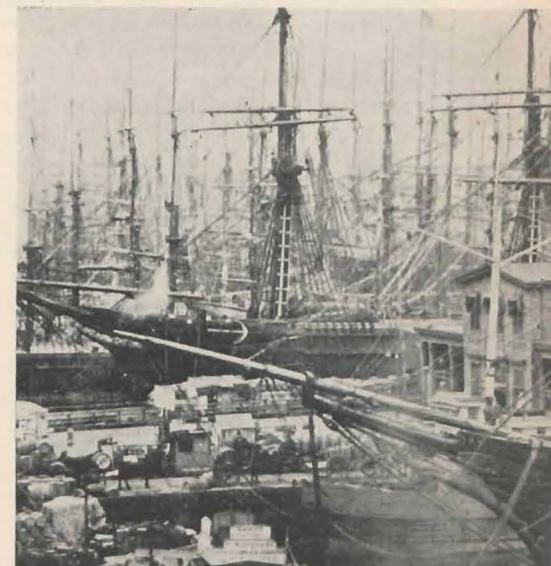
For rhapsodic copy on tea one must search back to the Chinese philosophers. Lu Yu wrote: “Tea tempers the spirit and calms and harmonizes the mind; it arouses thought, refreshes the body and clears the perceptive faculties.”

And he never had it iced!

MAE STOKE

South Street, 1855

Brown Bros. photo, Courtesy Louis S. Tiemann



The Helicopter Patrol

Our Coast Guard Rises
for a Better Look



SMALL, yellow, Quixotic — like a skittish windmill playing leapfrog with two logs — the Coast Guard helicopter seems omnipresent over the docks of New York Harbor. The canary “whirlibird” commonly seen hovering over the waterfront in this area is one of four Bell helicopters from the Coast Guard Air Detachment domiciled at Floyd Bennett Field. These boney, bubble-snouted Bells are under the command of Port Captain Johnson, Third Coast Guard District, and their mission is to insure the security of the port by regular patrols over its vast dock acreage.

Whirling low over the million-dollar piers that barb the harbor shoreline, the helicopter affords its pilot a “cut-away” view of everything going on. Persons nosing around where they shouldn’t be are easily spotted, as are fires, loose lines and other menaces.

However, these patrols never lose sight of the Coast Guard’s essentially humanitarian purpose. Since all else is secondary to protecting lives, the pilot keeps a sharp eye on all craft in the harbor and on all fishermen and others along the shoreline. As the helicopter passes over, friendly waves are exchanged. Saturday loungers in Riverside Park roll over on their blankets and squint up at the noise. On the Harlem River exuberant speedboaters sashay their greetings and sailboat crews on Long Island Sound flutter scarves in recognition of the Coast Guard patrol.

When the helicopter pilot spots trouble he collaborates with the Coast Guard’s patrol boats in effecting a rescue. The Port Security radio station at Pier 9 is contacted for the location of the nearest “40-footer” in the area, which speeds to the scene. The helicopter stands by to render such immediate aid as the emer-

gency may require, landing on the water if necessary to forestall a drowning.

Sometimes it takes the special talents of both the patrol boat and the helicopter to repair a situation. One Saturday morning, for example, a fast speedboat outmaneuvered its riders and dumped them near City Island. A “40-footer” was hailed to pick up the swimmers, but the speedboat itself had fled to shallower water, whence the patrol boat could not follow. The runaway’s outboard motor finally conked out, and the helicopter corraled it in time to keep it from ruin on the rocks. A line was made fast to the drifting craft and it was given an “air-sea” tow to a reunion with its thoroughly subdued crew. After this improvisation the helicopter continued on its appointed rounds.

Port Security sends out its patrols rain or shine. In the words of one of the pilots, Lt. (jg) Perkins, “As long as we can see from one dock to the next, we go. When it’s tough out we have all the more reason for being in the air. That’s when trouble is apt to turn up.” Caught in bad fogs, the helicopters on occasion have used the trick of following behind a ship that was being guided by radar.

The Coast Guard has played an important role in the development of practical helicopters. Their Captain Frank A. Erickson pioneered in bringing the helicopter into its own when he made the first mercy flight with such a machine in January of 1944. A destroyer had exploded off Sandy Hook, killing and injuring many crewmembers. Weather conditions in the area at the time of the accident were such that it would have taken more than an hour for a boat to reach the scene. In the meantime men would have died from loss of blood. It was in this extremity that Captain Erickson took off from the Battery in an experimental helicopter the Coast Guard had just received; in fourteen minutes he was at Sandy Hook with ten cases of blood plasma.

This flight today would seem routine, and Captain Erickson has so described it. However, its importance could never

be overstated by any of the Korean wounded who were flown from the brink of doom by these “whirlibirds.”

The Coast Guard has not rested on the laurels of this pioneer flight. With the continued leadership of Captain Erickson they have worked closely with aircraft manufacturers in developing rescue equipment that capitalizes on the helicopter’s unique abilities, and from service experience they have suggested modifications in the aircraft itself. These include among others: a stabilizing device, the landing skid, the hoist basket and the side blister for transporting stretcher cases “inboard” where medical aid can be given in flight.

A vote of confidence was accorded these ever more versatile mercy angels when last year’s severe cut in Coast Guard appropriations left the helicopters free to wing their way to greater glory in helping people out of trouble.

When a Port Security helicopter takes off, the pilot never knows what his patrol may bring. It might be just a pleasant ride in the warm sunshine, with an endless exchange of greetings. But he remains ever watchful for that frantic wave which will be saying something more than just “hello.”

Special air searches and rescues are generally handled by a separate division of the Coast Guard’s air arm and larger Sikorsky helicopters are employed. The “rescue” staged below demonstrates how the helicopter actually becomes a “sky hook,” the fabled device which green workmen have so often been sent to fetch.

U.S. Coast Guard photo



REBIRTH

"Old Ironsides" will ride the waters at the Boston Navy Yard as good as new one of these days. A bill providing funds for her restoration was voted recently by the House of Representatives. The venerable *Constitution* fought in America's infant Navy in the war of 1812, besting several English war frigates in bitter and decisive engagements.

Her sister ship, the *Constellation*, will be turned over to private interests in Baltimore for repairs and preservation.

The *Olympia* and the *Oregon*, veterans of the Spanish-American war, were given a brief respite from oblivion. The House bill will save these ships from destruction for one year, during which time they may be claimed by any interested group, willing to restore the vessels. The *Olympia* was Commodore Dewey's flagship at Manila Bay.

WESTWIND

To the tootling of the horns and the beating of drums the Coast Guard icebreaker *Westwind* recently began its annual trek to the Arctic's weather and radar stations. Families and friends shouted and waved encouragement from the dock to the crew embarking on one of the loneliest patrols in the service.

The vessel's job will be to clear the sea lanes to the Arctic bases for ship convoys. The blunt, heavy prow of the icebreaker will smash and ram its way through the never-ending fields of ice, in the never-ending daylight of the north country. Summer temperatures will make the *Westwind's* task a bit easier, though an Arctic "heat wave" hovers around 40° above zero.

Motion pictures will be shown regularly, but for the most part the men will have to depend on their own ingenuity to relieve the sameness of routine. Two helicopters are aboard and the pilots at times act as business agents for the crew, haggling with inshore Eskimos for suitable souvenirs. Or the men may go merrily over the side to have their beer on ice — no drinking allowed aboard ship.

The Coast Guard is not permitted to hunt the animals of the Arctic; the seals, polar bears, musk oxen and the *Westwind* crew will spend a good deal of time just staring at one another. On last year's voyage, the *Westwind* routed a particularly inquisitive polar bear by sounding its whistle.

Not the least of the hazards of the voyage will be the traditional initiation for newcomers to the Arctic Circle. The veterans will have time and enthusiasm aplenty to dream up suitable rites to embellish the mandatory mass headshaving.

The *Westwind* is expected to return to New York in four or five months.

THE TOWEL, PLEASE

Remarkable as they are, the achievements of the U. S. Maritime Administration in "mothballing" vessels have recently been more than matched by the discovery of Cheops' funeral ship, preserved in Egypt for 5,000 years.

Surely America will concede defeat and begin laying the keels of a new and modern merchant fleet.

VISITORS

On its annual "Open House," Sunday, May 23, the Seamen's Church Institute was host to 600 visitors. Popular attractions were the Marine Museum and "The

Cruel Sea," shown in the afternoon and evening through the courtesy of Universal Pictures Company, Inc. Tea was served in the Dining Room and services were conducted in the Chapel of Our Saviour by the Rev. Francis D. Daley.

For the occasion the building was "dressed" with more than sixty steamship company flags.

ICEBERGS

Blue-white fields of massive icebergs took over the North Atlantic shipping lanes during May. Shrouded in the shifting mists caused by their presence in a normally warm area, the bergs penetrated shipping lane A, the most southerly of the three Atlantic "tracks" used by ocean vessels. At this time of the year, ocean hazards should be at a minimum and the Coast Guard usually channels shipping along the shortest and northernmost route, lane C. The lanes are fifty-five miles wide.

The *Queen Elizabeth's* master, Commodore C. I. Thompson reported that he was forced to swing nearly forty miles south of track A in order to give the ice a thirty-five mile berth.

The vessel *Italia* radioed during her voyage that she was proceeding cautiously through fog and ice and had sighted a cluster of eight icebergs. The liners *Homeland* and *Flandre* docked eighteen and seven hours late respectively after going miles off course to avoid the bergs.

Icebergs thrust only about 10% of their bulk above the surface of the water. Among a group, some bergs may just ripple the ocean surface. It was a hidden berg of this type that is reported to have sheared through the bottom of the liner *Titanic* in 1912, causing the worst peacetime marine disaster on record.

NIGHT AND DAY

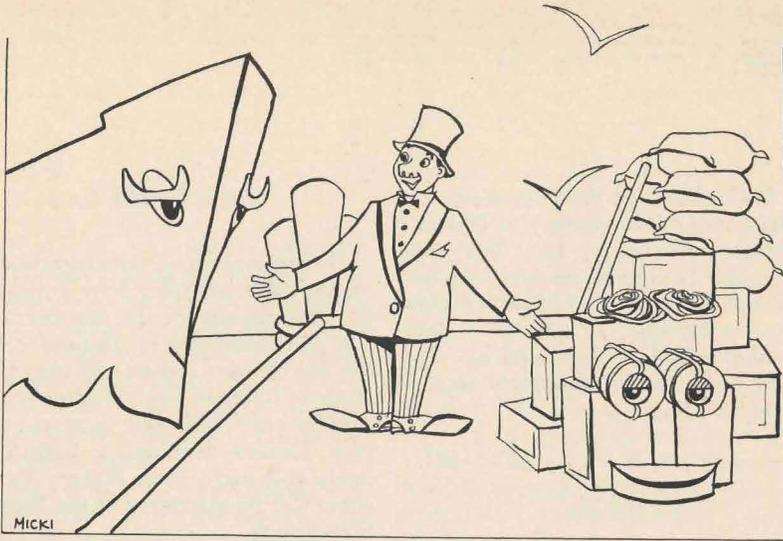
Nineteen excursion steamers and sight-seeing boats will offer New Yorkers local daytime cruises for the summer months. The old sidewheelers *Alexander Hamilton* and *Robert Fulton* will churn up the Hudson River to Bear Mountain and the smaller craft will take vacationers for a spin around Manhattan Island. Some boats will leave from Battery Park and some will be quartered at the West 42nd Street piers.

Incurably romantic, all pleasure boat companies will schedule moonlight cruises, subject, of course, to the vagaries of the weather and the coyness of the moon. The sightseeing companies do some of their liveliest business on trips scheduled for hours when hardly a sight can be seen.

SHIRTSLEEVE DIPLOMAT

Speaking at Kings Point during World Trade Week, Comdr. L. C. Kendall, head of the Academy's department of ship management, described the American merchant marine officer as an "unofficial ambassador," a shirtsleeve diplomat who wins many friends for the United States.

To the steamship agents, the customs brokers, the port officials, the stevedores and laborers of distant lands, the merchant officer *is* America, observed Comdr. Kendall, and his ship is an island of American customs as real and unpretentious as those found on Main Street. "Without diplomatic passport, without government fanfare, the American merchant officer takes with him a touch of the American way of life and he interprets America to the business men with whom he deals abroad."



The Matchmakers

A Glimpse into the Ritual of Ship Brokerage

By Richard F. Shepard

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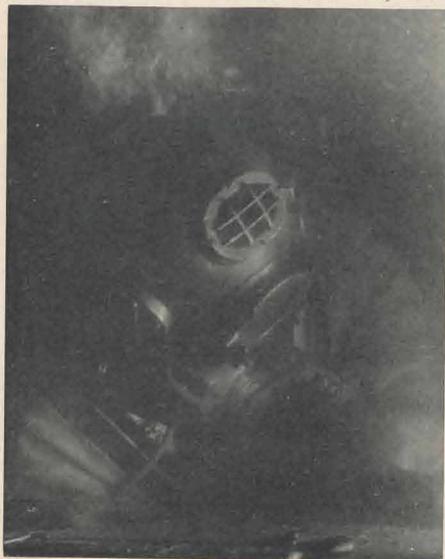
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— Courtesy The New York Times



Up
•
From
•
the
•
Deep



U. S. Navy Photo

WHEN the *Normandy* burned and capsized at her New York pier in 1942, the United States Navy was shocked by the realization that it lacked the salvage divers needed to raise her. Virtually every underwater specialist in the Navy was at that time busy resurrecting vessels from the bottom of Pearl Harbor in the wake of the Japanese attack on that Pacific Fleet base. Furthermore, the Navy had no program for training salvage divers.

Deciding that there would never be a bigger incentive than the *Normandy*, then the *U.S.S. Lafayette*, the Navy set up a salvage school on Pier 88, alongside the sunken vessel. The dividends were immediate and immense. During the war the 2,500 officers and men graduated from this school participated in every major invasion, clearing hulks out of harbors and attack areas and raising ships of every description. Most of these divers earned a million dollars apiece — for the Navy — in equipment salvaged. (A diver himself gets only \$12 a month extra pay plus \$5 an hour for hazardous dives.)

This school for salvage diving, the Navy's only one, is today located at Bayonne, New Jersey, where 16-week courses run all year around. Today the boys learn by refloating a vessel that, in a sense, is even more hapless than the *Normandy*. She is the water-weary *U.S.S. LSIL 978*, a landing craft that has made a career of being sunk and refloated in order that the skills acquired by student divers in the process may impart new life to more glorious vessels come hard upon the ocean floor. Salvage divers, like other people, learn by doing, and the *978* can be proud of the role she plays in the school's curriculum, although she can show her spirit only by varying the way she goes to the bottom — first capsizing to starboard, then to port, then settling on her stern. One suspects, however, that the Navy instructors may have a scheming hand in this, too.

Refloating the *978* is the culmination



U. S. Navy Photo

A student diver is gotten ready for a practice dive by his mates at the U. S. Naval School (Salvage), Bayonne, N. J.

of training in many phases of undersea work. The Navy men of many ratings who come to Bayonne to qualify as divers actually become amphibious "Jacks of all trades," for a salvage diver does far more than go down and look around. Under hazardous and difficult conditions he must be able to discharge all kinds of cargo, use pneumatic tools, rock drills, oxy-hydrogen or oxy-electric cutting apparatus. He must come to know underwater demolition and he must learn to cut, shape and patch metal plates and bolts under water.

These things he must do expertly while wearing a monstrously awkward garb in an environment that is totally strange. In the popular imagination divers walk an ocean bed that is a sheer technicolor delight, with exotic plants and strange fish. On occasion, this is the case. But

more often the salvage diver will be working in brackish water where he may not be able to see six inches. Inside a harbor the diver works in mud or silt that is sometimes over his head, and never less than waist deep. Even less pleasant circumstances exist in cases where the diver has to work inside a sunken ship with the dead crew adrift at his elbows. And in wartime, salvage divers are called upon to enter vessels that are likely to be booby trapped. While making his way blindly down a strange passageway the diver need only touch a fine wire and the show is over.

Be all this as it may, the Navy's school for salvage diving at Bayonne continues to play to a capacity house, each year graduating hundreds of these bold young men whose motto might well be, "What goes down must come up!"

South Street Becomes a Twin-Decker

Visiting the Institute Is Now Easier Still

THE South Street waggoners of yore could today put schooner bowsprits well beneath their iron-rimmed wagon wheels and roll smoothly along, safe from the vintage 1836 cobblestones that so rattled the teeth. Abreast of the Seamen's Church Institute the newly-opened South Street Viaduct lofts traffic like a magic carpet, its smooth asphalt pavement sweeping past the Fulton Market and the Brooklyn Bridge to join the East River Drive \$12,000,000 and one-and-six-tenths miles away.

The elevated highway spans a section of the waterfront which, if colorful, has for decades been snarlsome to traffic. Except for the area along the Harlem



Highway construction is discussed by Manhattan Borough President Hulan Jack and Institute Chef Gebauer, whose tablepiece is also admired by Clarence G. Michalis, President of the Institute's Board of Managers, at a luncheon in the Janet Roper Room following ceremonies that opened the South Street Viaduct.

River, New York is now ringed by expressways, sections of which become obsolete in comparison with the new highway. With its mercury-vapor lights, the South Street Viaduct at night becomes a white-hot whiplash along the waterfront, making all else gleam a mildly old-fashioned yellow. The only light able to compete comes from the Titanic Memorial Tower atop the Institute.



Speakers at the opening of the South Street Viaduct May 28 included Mayor Wagner, John D. Butt and Fred R. Fehlhaber. The benediction was given by Chaplain Francis D. Daley of the Seamen's Church Institute.

DERELICT

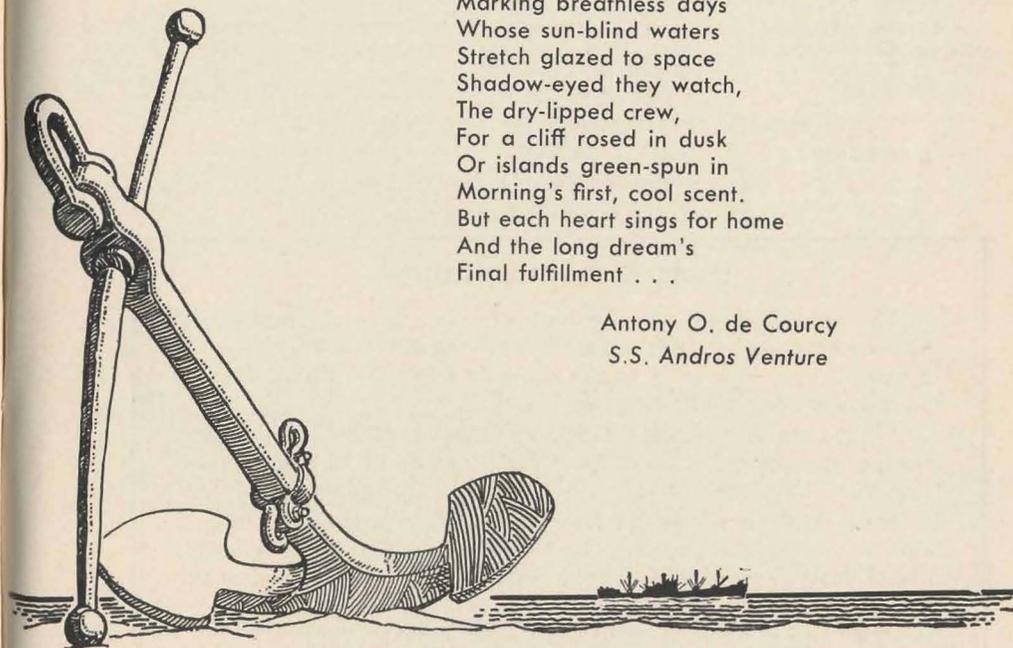
A sober tide brought in at last
The wrecked and tangled beams;
The shattered mast; the ancient hull,
Ripped open at the seams —
And winds and gulls, that love a ship
And follow it in flight,
Moved slowly up and down the shore
And talked into the night.

Iva Poston

TANKER FROM THE GULF

Through an infinite sea
Slides the ship. Laden,
Brimmed deep to its breast
With the dark, rich oils.
Marking breathless days
Whose sun-blind waters
Stretch glazed to space
Shadow-eyed they watch,
The dry-lipped crew,
For a cliff rosed in dusk
Or islands green-spun in
Morning's first, cool scent.
But each heart sings for home
And the long dream's
Final fulfillment . . .

Antony O. de Courcy
S.S. Andros Venture



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LEGACIES TO THE INSTITUTE

You are asked to remember this Institute on 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 suggest 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 ofDollars."

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."

Contributions and bequests to the Institute are exempt from Federal and New York State Tax.