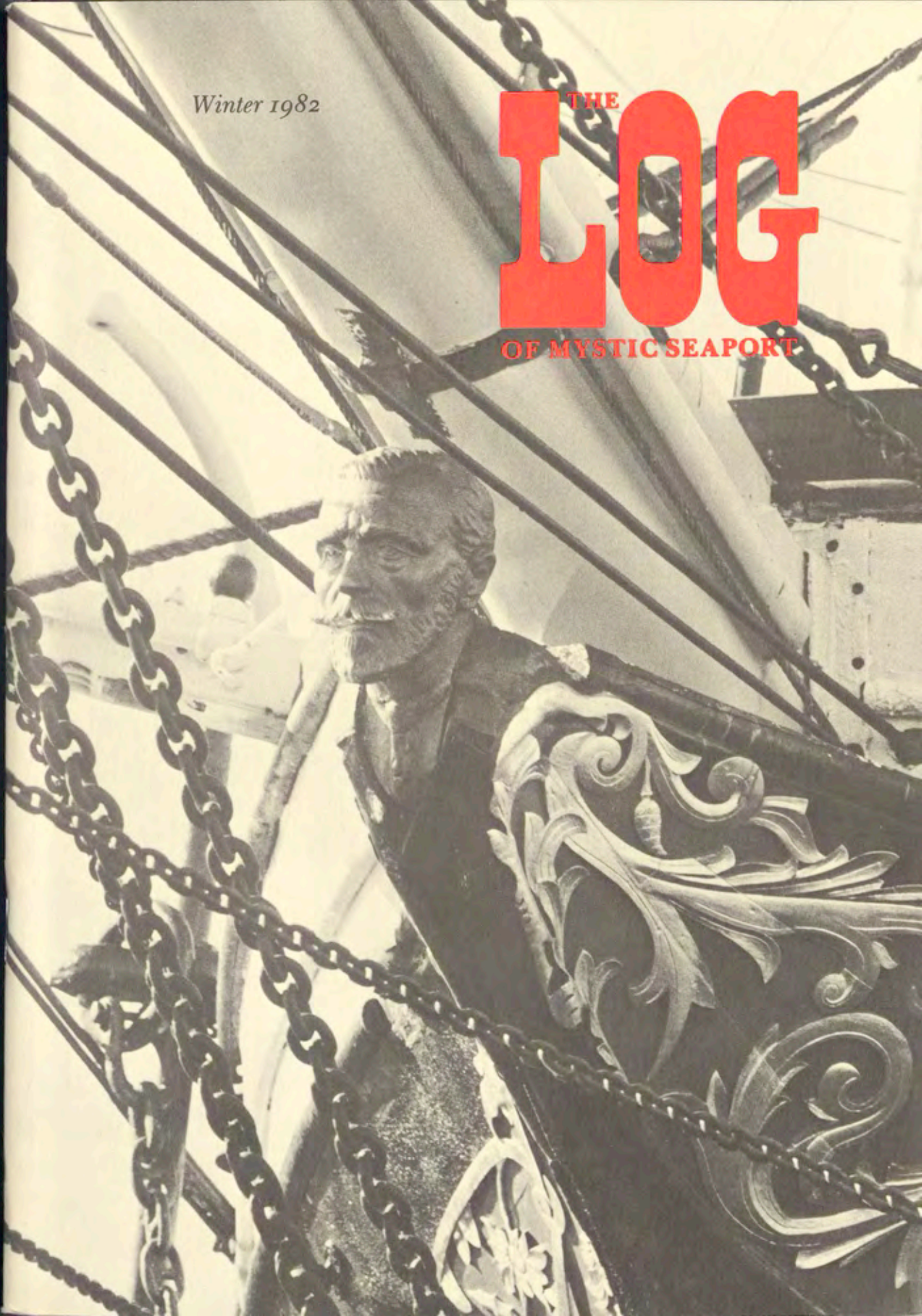
Winter 1982

THE LOG OF MYSTIC SEAPORT



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COVER: *Figurehead of Joseph Conrad by Bruce Rogers, 1934. (Photo by Claire White-Peterson)*

BACK COVER: *Charles Mallory Sail Loft building, painted white this fall, now more closely resembles its nineteenth-century appearance down river in Mystic. (Photo by Claire White-Peterson)*

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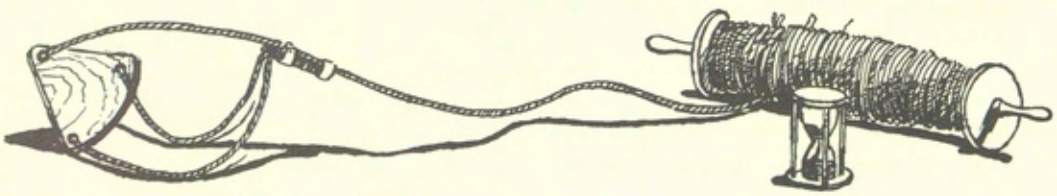
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SIGHTINGS



This year marks the 100th anniversary of the construction of the iron, full-rigged ship *Joseph Conrad.* Originally built as the Danish training ship *Georg Stage,* and a veteran of a round-the-world voyage in the 1930s, this handsome vessel has been part of Mystic Seaport since 1947, and has served the Museum well. During 1982, we intend to celebrate the centennial of the *Conrad* with a variety of programs, projects, and activities.

A few ships have survived for a century or more because of their roles in historical events. The U.S.S. *Constitution* in Boston, the U.S.S. *Olympia* in Philadelphia, and H.M.S. *Victory* in Portsmouth, England, are maintained and exhibited as symbols of their nations' naval successes. However, the great majority of ancient vessels have survived because of a combination of fate and circumstance working together without rhyme or reason. This was the case with the *Joseph Conrad.* Throughout the last century, there have been numerous moments when, because of her apparent obsolescence, or because of accidents at sea, she might have been given up. Each time, however, she was saved and continued to serve her owners.

It should be said that this ship certainly would not have survived had she not been so well built originally by Burmeister and Wain, shipbuilders in Copenhagen. The fact that this firm remains in business today bears testimony to the quality of their work for more than a century.

Having served as a training vessel for the U.S. Maritime Commission during World War II, she was given to Mystic Seaport by the United States Government, to resume her training service. In 1949 the *Conrad* began to serve the young people of this country as the focal point of the Seaport's sail training program. Over the last thirty-three years, more than 20,000 young men and women have had the experience of living aboard this ship, absorbing its history and traditions, and learning to sail in small boats on the Mystic River. In addition, millions of visitors to the Museum have had the opportunity to walk the decks of the *Conrad,* look aloft into the maze of rigging, and experience a tall ship firsthand.

Mystic Seaport Museum is committed to the preservation of the *Joseph Conrad.* Shortly, her worn teak deck will be meticulously replaced with new teak by Seaport shipwrights who respect the craftsmanship that went into her original construction. The *Conrad* will continue to serve both the young people involved in the sail training program, and the visitors to the Seaport for many years to come, and her image will continue to grace the Mystic River.

In the July 1978 issue of *The Log,* a capsule history of this ship was presented. In this issue, we once again focus on *Joseph Conrad,* in this case a bit more broadly, looking at Conrad the author as well as *Conrad* the ship. As we celebrate this year of the *Joseph Conrad,* I hope the attention that is focused on her will make many more people conscious of the contribution the ship has made in preserving maritime tradition.

J. Revell Carr

Sail, Steam, and Lamentation

Joseph Conrad Confronts the Machine Age

EDWARD W. SLOAN

Joseph Conrad was a troubled man. Vexed with infirmities, exhausted and depressed by the artistic demands of his literary vocation, dissatisfied with his quest for the elusive essence of human experience, Conrad found further aggravation in a world increasingly alien to his sense of fitness and purpose. Conrad was confronting the world of the machine.

While Polish-born and raised, Conrad nonetheless had early developed a mastery of the English language together with an unerring sense of its particular subtleties and nuances. To his remarkable sensitivity for this adopted tongue he fused an acute perception of the human condition and an artist's skill in rendering his view. The result was a display of literary quality which had won him international acclaim by the close of the nineteenth century. Celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic as a major writer, enjoying the friendship of such notables as John Galsworthy, Stephen Crane, and Henry James, by conventional measures Joseph Conrad was a success. Yet he was not at ease with his world, as his writings persistently revealed.

Conrad may appear, upon superficial examination, to be one of those late-nineteenth-century literary romantics, such as Rudyard Kipling, who evoked the mysterious and the exotic through tales of high adventure and of noble, if occasionally tragic, purpose. But Conrad was no conventional romantic; regardless of what he might profess, his darker views of man and the universe often led him in different directions and to decidedly unromantic conclusions. Thus, while Conrad, along with a number of predecessors and contemporaries, might choose to draw literary inspiration and philosophical message from a youthful period at sea under sail, the resulting prose was a far cry from customary sea tales. Moreover, these distinctively maritime stories of Conrad betrayed his troubles with the turn-of-the-century Western world.

Conrad lived at the time when machine-powered industrialization had intruded with crushing force on Western society. Nowhere was its impact more startling, more perplexing, more traumatic than on the maritime world. For centuries, seagoing enterprise had operated in terms of sail. Social and economic elements of seafaring activity, vessel technology, modes of maritime work – all had changed little, and at most gradually, from one generation to the next. Patterns of seafaring life, derived from seemingly immutable traditions of sail, had persisted reassuringly over the generations. Then came steam.

Steam imperiled that elaborate system of human relationships and values basic to the life of sail. Moreover, the men of sail now had to contend as well with the disturbing intrusion of that noxious newcomer, the marine steam engineer. Reviled though he might be, the engineer could not be ignored; this "greasy mechanic," as men of sail contemptuously regarded him, was

Edward Sloan is Professor of History and Department Chairman at Trinity College, Hartford, and Assistant Director of the Munson Institute graduate program, where he has lectured since 1963. A 1953 Yale graduate, with graduate degrees from Yale and Harvard, he has published primarily on nineteenth-century maritime and naval steam technology.

essential to the later-nineteenth-century maritime world, for it was the engineer who controlled the new motive power, the steam engine and its conjoined machinery. In defiance of wind and wave, in an assertion of power that celebrated mankind's Promethean daring with a cloud of filthy smoke and greasy vapor, the engineer and his steam engine thus went to sea. And with its shuddering, thrashing, wallowing assault on the heretofore pristine waters of the globe, the steam-propelled vessel heralded a revolution, the maritime revolution in steam.

The implacable and ultimately triumphant challenge of steam to sail might stand for progress, but such progress exacted a price. Of those who paid this price, no group was so keenly aware of maritime steam as a threat than the men of sail. Among these men who literally had "learned the ropes" in sail was Joseph Conrad, one who shared fully the apprehensions and distaste of his fellow seafarers. Appalled at the onrush of machine civilization and lamenting the vanishing maritime world of his youth, a world comparatively undefiled by steam, Conrad turned to his own sailing-ship experiences as a narrative source. Moreover, he sought in that earlier life as a sailor the justification for his most profound assertions on the human condition. In particular, he expressed in several of his short stories and novels the conviction that sailing-ship life could provide a meaning, even a fulfillment of existence for those who so committed their lives and fortunes to the sea.

Stokers tending their fires in the superheated gloom of the stokehold, by Edwin B. Child. (*Scribner's Magazine*, April 1903)



But steam threatened to change all this, even to do away with such meaning altogether. As Conrad perceived it, the presence of steam was no mere addition or elaboration in the world of sail; rather, steam was an alien intrusion, a threat to that treasured and meaningful life which he chose to portray in some of his most eloquent prose. But how could he express the power of his feelings, the depth of his convictions about this threat, this destructive impact of steam? His solution, as it appears in both private correspondence and published work, was to employ a variety of arresting and suitably provocative incongruities in prose whereby, through the skillful use of metaphor, he could achieve his purpose. If reality, as Wallace Stevens once remarked, "is a cliché from which we escape by metaphor," then Joseph Conrad was the literary Houdini of his age.

For most of his twenty years at sea, from 1875 to 1894, Conrad worked in sailing vessels. This was an era when ocean-going steamers for the first time were becoming competitive with sail. Steam propulsion was still so unreliable and costly that a fully-rigged steamer powered by sail and steam together was a customary sight on the high

seas.[1] But by the end of the century, when Conrad left the maritime life to become a writer, the transitional period was over: steam had triumphed. Sailing ships had been driven off the seas or, at best, into marginal trades. With increased power, improved economy and reliability of operation, and larger cargo capacity, the steamer had divested itself of sails and assumed its modern form. Such a vessel was the *Nan-Shan*, that "full-powered steamer" which stolidly batters its way through one of the great storms in literature, Conrad's *Typhoon*.

While the *Nan-Shan* is the setting rather than the focus of Conrad's story, he quickly establishes her distinctive attributes as a steam-powered vessel. A sailing ship encountering such a great storm, as Conrad might argue, would properly yield to the tempestuous seas and winds by riding the waves under bare poles and sea anchor until it was safe enough to proceed under sail. More to the point, a sailing master would have the good sense to recognize the typhoon for what it was and avoid it if at all possible. Not so for the *Nan-Shan*. Like her commanding officer, the equally stolid and unimaginative Captain McWhirr, the steamer plunges directly into the worst of the typhoon. Steam power permits man to defy nature; man cannot shirk the obligation to so employ this power. Accordingly, as McWhirr explains firmly to his incredulous first mate, "A gale is a gale . . . and a full-powered steamship has got to face it." To avoid the storm, to go perhaps hundreds of miles out of his way, McWhirr considers inadmissable; such deviation from course would result merely in "a pretty coal bill to show." Thus faced with ominous seas and sky, and with the barometer plunging to an appalling level, McWhirr nonetheless steers the *Nan-Shan* straight for the worst. This slab-sided, metallic creation of steel mill and forge is no graceful, white-winged bird of the sea; nor does she skim the waves with a grace evoking the consummate, intertwined arts of shipwright and sailor. Instead, Conrad relates, this steamer meets the storm by "floundering towards it like an exhausted creature driven to its death."[2]

Encountering the inconceivable ferocity of an East Asian typhoon, the *Nan-Shan* bores on, steaming more *through* than over the waves, "like a rock that should have miraculously struck adrift from a coast and gone wallowing upon the sea."[3] But McWhirr will not diverge from his course, even if it would ease his vessel and crew in their torturous passage. Such are the imperatives of steam and the canons of men who live by steam.

Conrad then heightens the contrast further between sail and steam. In the midst of the furious, mind-numbing, demoralizing tempest he reveals quite another world; this is a world inside the hull of the steamer, the world of the machine. Surrounded by the blackness of the stormy night, by the "wild resonance" of the hurricane and the thunderous blows of the seas upon the metal walls of the steamer, there exists a vast and fitfully gleaming place of unnatural order. Here, as Conrad describes it, the white-painted iron walls of the engine room rise "high into the dusk of the skylight, sloping like a roof; and the whole lofty space resembled the interior of a monument. . . ."

The *Nan-Shan*'s chief engineer, Solomon Rout, is master of this world. So remote is he from that black and furious outside world of shrieking winds and pounding waves that he pads about the engine room in carpet slippers. At the center of it all the machine works in its massive, unhurried way, akin to a "living organism," as Conrad characterizes it. "The enormous crank-heads emerged in their turns with a flash of brass and steel – going over; while the connecting-rods, big-jointed, like skeleton limbs, seemed to thrust them down and pull them up again with an irrestible precision. And deep in the half-light other rods dodged to and fro, crossheads nodded quickly, discs of metal rubbed against each

other, swift and gentle in a commingling of shadows and gleams."[4]

Both alien and animate, the engine, far more than just an instrument to be manipulated by man, is an active partner of the engineer, sharing with him the arduous burden of keeping the steamer afloat by keeping her underway. Such partnership between man and machine evokes Conrad's respect, if not admiration, as he portrays with metaphorical flourish the engineer at the height of the storm:

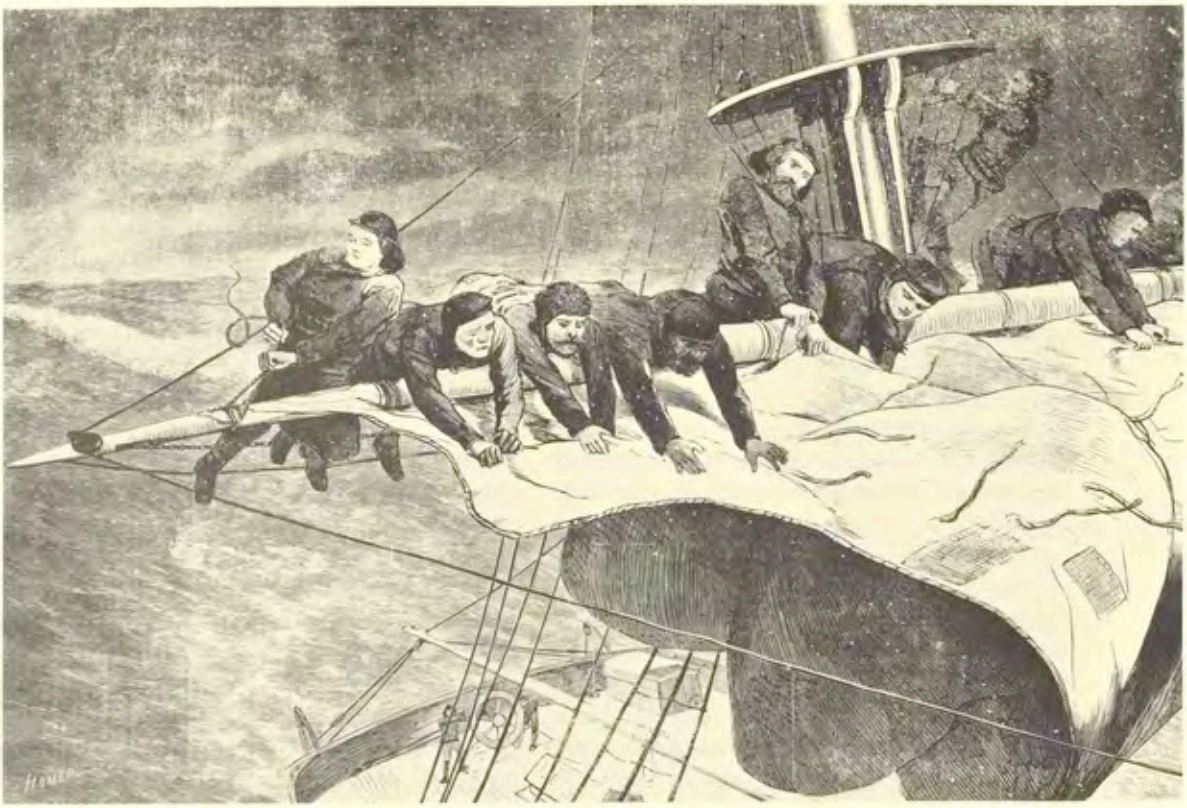
> Before his eyes the engines turned with slow labour that in the moment of going off into a mad fling would stop dead at Mr. Rout's shout,... They seemed to wait in an intelligent immobility stilled in mid-stroke, a heavy crank arrested on the cant, as if conscious of time itself being on their side. Then, with a 'Now, then!' from the chief, and the sound of a breath expelled through clenched teeth, they would accomplish the interrupted revolution and begin another.
>
> There was the prudent sagacity of enormous strength in their movements. This was their work—this coaxing of a ship over the fury of waves and into the fierce eye of the wind.[5]

For such a task the deck officer is useless, his presence below an annoyance to those who, with the engines, really run the ship. "Go away now, for God's sake," the chief engineer yells at the mate who has come below to observe the engines at the height of the storm. "You deck people'll drive me silly.... You fellows are going wrong for want of something to do...." The mate, hot with anger at such belittling treatment, retreats towards the ladder, only to be accosted by a fireman who cries, "Hallo, you wandering officer," and asks for assistance in the fireroom. Not trusting himself to respond, the mate rushes up the ladder towards the deck; the fireman pursues: "Can't you speak? What are you poking about here for? What's your game, anyhow?"[6]

For on a steamer what *was* the purpose of those men who had nothing to do with the machinery? Obviously, the deck officer of a steamer still navigated the vessel and supervised the cargo. But the real art of the sailor, the special skills required of those who must master the intricate, vibrant network of masts and sails, of yards and rigging, what of that? For Conrad, the fine art of sailing a vessel is a matter of love, "the love of perfected skill," as he explains it. And it is a matter of truth, a "genuineness of feeling," whereby a sailor, in his single-minded endeavor, must be unequivocally sincere in his work. No duplicity, no pretence is permitted with a sailing vessel; "A ship," Conrad declares, "is a creature which we have brought into the world, as it were, on purpose to keep us up to the mark." Such intimacy between man and sailing ship must be a matter of love, of fidelity, of commitment, in which one forgets one's self and surrenders all personal feelings in the service of that fine art, that perfected skill, that love of sailing a ship.[7]

Such is not the case, Conrad maintains, with man and steamship. Maritime life in a sense may repeat itself, insofar as there continue to be new ships and new men to work them, yet it is no longer the same. "The special call of an art which has passed away is never reproduced. It is as utterly gone out of the world as the song of a destroyed wild bird." The sailing ship evokes a special art; without the sailing ship that art is no more. "The taking of a modern steamship around the world," Conrad argues, "has not the same quality of intimacy with nature, which, after all, is an indispensable condition to the building up of an art." Because it is "less personal, more exact, less arduous, but also less gratifying in the lack of close communion between the artist and the medium of his art," the operation of a steamer, Conrad concludes, is "less a matter of love."[8]

For Conrad, the life in steam is emphatically a lesser life than that in sail. It is a life of content without enthusiasm, industry without affection. "Such seagoing," Conrad maintains, "has not the artistic quality of a single-handed struggle with something



The "fellowship of the craft" among sailors is exemplified in this view, entitled "winter at sea – taking in sail off the coast," by Winslow Homer. (*Harper's Weekly*, 16 January 1869)

much greater than yourself; it is not the laborious, absorbing practice of an art whose ultimate result remains on the knees of the gods. It is not an individual, temperamental achievement, but simply the skilled use of a captured force, merely another step forward upon the way of universal conquest." Clearly, for Conrad this is no cause for celebration. That special sense of identity and belonging among men of sail, the "fellowship of the craft," can never be achieved under steam. For Conrad, a glorious age is at an end; "The machinery, the steel, the fire, the steam have stepped in between the man and the sea."[9]

Some men might give up the sea to go into steam, as sailors caustically observed; Conrad preferred to go into writing. And when he sought inspiration for his struggles to portray the meaning of human existence, he looked back to his youthful years in sail. Thus, in *Youth*, a notably autobiographical short story, Conrad expresses through his narrator, Charlie Marlow, the rapture of those fleeting, glorious moments when he had joined the "fellowship of the craft" through a voyage to the Far East. "There are those voyages," Marlow explains, "that seem ordered for the illustration of life, that might stand for a symbol of existence. You fight, work, sweat, nearly kill yourself, sometimes do kill yourself, trying to accomplish something – and you cant." So it is with the *Judea*, a small, old, leaky sailing ship that is forced to carry a filthy cargo of coal from England to Bangkok in service to the demands of the machine age.[10]

After a series of mishaps, the vessel finally sets off for her destination, only to have her cargo of coal catch fire through spontaneous combustion and explode. Living up to her motto, "Do or Die," the *Judea* fails to

accomplish her purpose and dies – a magnificent, fiery death at sea at the conclusion of which she goes down, "head first, in a great hiss of steam." The brave old sailer, plagued by her cargo of smouldering coal, has been enveloped "in languid and unclean vapours, in a lazy cloud that drifted to leeward, light and slow; a pestiferous cloud defiling the splendour of sea and sky;" yet she perishes in a purifying fire which symbolically cleanses her of the stigma imposed by the purpose of her ignoble and final voyage.[11]

Thus the fire of youth which the old sailing vessel bore, as Conrad asserts, is similarly uncontaminated, not to die so long as the effort to achieve, to *do*, persists. For youth such a voyage as the *Judea*'s is no failure; "to me," Marlow insists, the *Judea* "was not an old rattle-trap carting about the world a load of coal for a freight – to me she was the endeavour, the test, the trial of life." From this endeavor, the unceasing effort of man and sailing ship to brave the oceans, comes the reward of the youthful quest: the touching innocence of romance, even a meaning for life itself. "Oh, the glamour of youth!" Marlow exclaims; "Oh, the fire of it, more dazzling than the flames of the burning ship, throwing a magic light on the wide earth, leaping audaciously to the sky, presently to be quenched by time, more cruel, more pitiless, more bitter than the sea – and like the flames of the burning ship surrounded by an impenetrable night."[12]

With the loss of youth, Marlow asks, what is left? What remains after "the good old time. Youth and the sea. Glamour and the Sea! The good, strong sea, the salt, bitter sea, that could whisper to you and roar at you and knock your breath out of you?" All that remains, he answers, is "our weary eyes looking still, looking always, looking anxiously for something out of life, that while it is expected is already gone – has passed unseen, in a sigh, in a flash – together with the youth, with the strength, with the romance of illusions."[13]

Those evanescent moments of meaning which Conrad had grasped through his life in sail became the source for that literary work which he intended to be his valedictory to the age of sail. *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* which Conrad wrote in 1897, he proclaimed to be "the book by which, not as a novelist perhaps, but as an artist striving for the utmost sincerity of expression, I am willing to stand or fall."[14] It also served as his most powerful statement of contrast between sail and steam.

Conrad's story concerns the homeward-bound journey of a sailing ship, the *Narcissus*, and the meaning of this journey to her officers and her crew. Their experience exemplifies that vitality which derives from human solidarity, a solidarity which, although tested to the limits, survives to declare a meaning for mankind in the face of a meaningless universe. Through the story of the *Narcissus* and her men, Conrad presents an allegory of human existence, whereby an "unrestful episode in the obscure lives of a few individuals out of all the disregarded multitudes of the bewildered, the simple, and the voiceless" becomes a powerful and transcendent assertion of human dignity.[15]

If the *Narcissus*, the sailing ship, is the setting for mankind's effort to wring out a meaning to life, as Conrad maintains, what then serves as the foil, as the symbol of that meaningless universe which threatens to disrupt the human solidarity essential to that meaning? While it may appear that Conrad believes the land itself to be the malevolent source of such disruption, his tale of the *Narcissus* suggests another and more specific object of dread. Throughout this story Conrad establishes striking contrasts between the ship at sea, the symbol and locus of human solidarity and meaning, and that special part of the land which displays industrial civilization, the product of the steam age and symbol of human disintegration, demoralization, and folly.

Central to Conrad's purpose is the frequent display of contrasts between the sailer

and the steamer. Thus, as the *Narcissus* departs Bombay Harbor, Conrad develops an arresting image of opposition between the creature of industrialism and the creature of uncontaminated nature:

> Outside the harbour the measureless expanse of smooth water lay sparkling like a floor of jewels, and as empty as the sky. The short black tug gave a pluck to windward, in the usual way, then let go the rope, and hovered for a moment on the quarter with her engines stopped; while the slim, long hull of the ship moved ahead slowly under lower topsails. The loose upper canvas blew out in the breeze with soft round contours resembling small white clouds snared in the maze of ropes. Then the sheets were hauled home, the yards hoisted, and the ship became a high and lonely pyramid, gliding, all shining and white, through the sunlit mist.

As if unable to bear the sight of such beauty, the creature of industrialism scurries ingloriously back to its land-based lair, that murky land of the machine:

> The tug turned short around and went away towards the land.... her low broad stern crawling languidly over the smooth swell between the two paddlewheels that turned fast, beating the water with a fierce hurry. She resembled an enormous and aquatic black beetle, surprised by the light, overwhelmed by the sunshine, trying to escape with ineffectual effort into the distant gloom of the land. She left a lingering smudge of smoke on the sky, and two vanishing trails of foam on the water. On the place where she had stopped a round black patch of soot remained, undulating on the swell – an unclean mark of the creature's rest.[16]

But it is out at sea, Conrad then asserts, where the sailing-ship *Narcissus* expresses her true meaning: no mere hauler of cargo for a freight, she has become "a fragment detached from the earth,... lonely and swift like a small planet...; and, like the earth, she was unconscious, fair to see – and condemned by men to an ignoble fate. The august loneliness of her path lent dignity to the sordid inspiration of her pilgrimage." Surmounting the mundane, economic purpose of her voyage, the *Narcissus* for a time is free from the ignoble imperatives of a mechanized age.[17]

The crew of the *Narcissus*, in comparable fashion, cast off the burdens imposed by their special part of the land, the seaport, that "frontier of infamy and filth," as Conrad describes it, "that border of dirt and hunger, of misery and dissipation, that comes down on all sides to the water's edge of the incorruptible ocean." Far from sight of this land and freed from its baleful oppression, the crew submit to "the immensity of the sea and the exacting appeal of the work." Accordingly, Conrad maintains, they become "healthy and contented – as most seamen are, when once well out to sea." Conrad insists that "the true peace of God begins at any spot a thousand miles from the nearest land;" for here men can forget themselves, discard their selfish sentimentalism, and achieve true brotherhood, that fellowship of the craft which evokes a meaning to human existence.[18]

Yet this voyage of the *Narcissus* is not one of contentment. Two strangers intrude their disruptive presence. One is James Wait, the malingering West Indian black man who appeals to the soft-hearted compassion of the crew. In so doing he awakens their self-awareness, self-pity, and self-doubt; and in their concern for him they endanger their own selfless solidarity.

The other new man to the crew is a disreputable, tattered malcontent named Donkin. Emerging as self-proclaimed conscience of the crew, he throws them into confusion and for a time destroys their trusting acceptance of that unremitting hardship demanded by the sea. A loathsome creature, Donkin is, above all, a child of the city slums, the quintessential spawn of that grimy industrial civilization so antithetical to the unspoiled, elemental life of the sailing ship. Donkin, with "shifty eyes and a yellow hatchet face... looked as if he had known all the degradations and all the furies;" he is a type all too familiar to the



Joseph Conrad found meaning and dignity in the do or die efforts of men of sail, such as these, "aloft in a gale," drawn by Sol Eytinge, Jr. (*Harper's Weekly*, 20 December 1873)

rest of the crew. "The independent offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea," Donkin parasitically flourishes on unenlightened, soft-headed solicitude; he is "the sympathetic and deserving creature that knows all about his rights, but knows nothing of courage, of endurance, and of the unexpressed faith, of the unspoken loyalty that knits together a ship's company." Insinuating himself into the midst of the crew's life, Donkin personifies the debasing yet seductive menace of the seaport, that special part of the land which mankind has rapaciously converted from pastoral innocence into a corrupt and demoralizing center of industrial exploitation and human degradation.[19]

In contrast to Donkin and all that he represents stands the old seaman, Singleton, the patriarch of the crew, who embodies the simple virtues and strengths of those who devote their lives to the sea. Donkin and Singleton together illustrate the irreconcilable clash between industrial civilization and uncontaminated nature; or, as Conrad would have it, between steamer and sailing vessel. Donkin suffers at sea and looks to the land for his sustenance; Singleton suffers ashore where the "dissolving contact of the land," however brief, reduces him to a sorry, stumbling wreck.[20] As it is for Singleton, so it is for his fellow men of sail once they come ashore and succumb to the distractions and confusion of the seaport. Their solidarity, both emotional and physical, crumbles; their simple wisdom disappears in a haze of confusion. And so it is for their ship as she, too, comes within the clutches of the machine-infested land.

The completion of the *Narcissus*' voyage, her arrival in port, is a tragic scene of surrender into devitalizing captivity. While employing the familiar metaphor of sailing ship as bird, Conrad injects a portentous tone in describing his vessel's approach up the English Channel: "Under white wings she skimmed low over the blue sea like a great tired bird speeding to its nest." Along her homeward path appear signs of the industrial world: "inshore, a string of smoking steamboats waddled, hugging the coast, like migrating and amphibious monsters, distrustful of the restless waves." Then the sails are furled and she picks up a tow from a steam tug: "shorn of the glory of her white wings, she wound obediently after the tug through the maze of invisible channels." The further upriver she goes, the more the *Narcissus* relinquishes her freedom and succumbs to the menace of a steam-powered world:

> Further on, the tall factory chimneys appeared in insolent bands and watched her go by, like a

straggling crowd of slim giants, swaggering and upright under the black plummets of smoke, cavalierly aslant. She swept round the bends; an impure breeze shrieked a welcome between her stripped spars; and the land, closing in, stepped between the ship and the sea.[21]

This land is no idyllic pastoral setting, such as that land of waving leaves and dancing sunshine for which the mate of the *Narcissus* had yearned when in Bombay, so far from home. Nor is this land that final destination of the vessel's captain who "wished to end his days in a little house, with a plot of ground attached – far in the country – out of sight of the sea."[22] *That* kind of land is land uncontaminated by industry and removed from the city which finds both its form and its purpose in fulfilling the dictates of such mechanized industry. So for Conrad it is a particular part of the land, the unnatural land of the machine, so opposed to the sea, which now confronts the *Narcissus*. She enters this land as if moving ever further into some Hell on earth, where madness, desperation, confusion, and meaninglessness reign:

the shadows deepened; on all sides there was the clang of iron, the sound of mighty blows, shrieks, yells. Black barges drifted stealthily on the murky stream. A mad jumble of begrimed walls loomed up vaguely in the smoke, bewildering and mournful, like a vision of disaster. The tugs backed and filled in the stream, to hold the ship steady at the dock-gates; from her bows two lines went through the air whistling, and struck the land viciously, like a pair of snakes. A bridge broke in two before her, as if by enchantment; big hydraulic capstans began to turn all by themselves, as though animated by a mysterious and unholy spell.[23]

And what is this if not the civilized human condition without the redeeming grace of the sea? As Conrad insists, the burden of existence is never greater than when men become fully aware of "the complicated and acrid savour of existence." Far better, then, to submit to the mind-numbing but soul-purifying exactions of life at sea where one may achieve, if not peace, at least unreflecting acceptance of one's fate. For Conrad, the greatest delusion, that which men of the city profess, is that there is an ultimate, objective meaning to life; a final, comprehensible rationale to human existence. Far better is it to turn one's back on such delusion, if possible, and seek that peace which only can come through submission to the ordeal which nature, "in its justice," remorselessly imposes upon men at sea.[24]

The alternative Conrad portrays is the frightfulness which greets the *Narcissus* in the dock:

Brick walls rose high above the water – soulless walls, staring through hundreds of windows as troubled and dull as the eyes of over-fed brutes. At their base monstrous iron cranes crouched, with chains hanging from their long necks, balancing cruel-looking hooks over the decks of lifeless ships. A noise of wheels rolling over stones, the thump of heavy things falling, the racket of feverish winches, the grinding of strained chains, floated on the air. Between high buildings the dust of all the continents soared in short flights; and a penetrating smell of perfumes and dirt, of spices and hides, of things costly and of things filthy, pervaded the space, made for it an atmosphere precious and disgusting.

Her voyage terminates with impersonal and merciless dispatch:

The *Narcissus* came gently into her berth; the shadows of soulless walls fell upon her, the dust of all the continents leaped upon her deck, and a swarm of strange men, clambering up her sides, took possession of her in the name of the sordid earth. She had ceased to live.[25]

On this somber note, Conrad leaves the sailing ship to the world of steam and concludes his novel by relating the dissolution of the crew's solidarity as they go ashore. "I never saw them again," he says. "The sea took some, the steamers took others, the graveyards of the earth will account for the rest": death, either figuratively or literally, in each instance. Singleton, he assures us, perishes at sea where he belongs. And there

will be no more seafaring for the seaport's own kind, Donkin, "who never did a decent day's work in his life, no doubt earns his living by discoursing with filthy eloquence upon the right of labour to live. So be it! Let the earth and the sea each have its own."[26]

Conrad, at the end, reflects on the voyage of the *Narcissus* and asks, both as narrator of the tale and as one who has shared such experience, "Haven't we, together and upon the immortal sea, wrung out a meaning from our sinful lives?"[27] This insistent question he yearned to answer with a ringing "Yes!" Yet even if one might wring out such meaning from the sailing experience, what of the rest of life? And what of the times when sail would be gone? Here, Conrad the pessimist – or realist – could give no assurance. For, by the time he was writing, steam power had come to displace sailing ships and the men who served in them. Conrad, a man of sail, might briefly command steamers in his career at sea, but he never could come to accept them. They had no part of his world, even when that world was slipping away.

In his memoirs Conrad relates how an examiner for his Master's certificate assured him, "'You will go into steam presently. Everybody goes into steam.'" "There," Conrad states flatly, "he was wrong. I never went into steam – not really. If I only live long enough I shall become a bizarre relic of a dead barbarism, a sort of monstrous antiquity, the only seaman of the dark ages who had never gone into steam – not really." By 1903 Conrad would assert, "I consider myself to be the last seaman of a sailing vessel. Anyway, no one will be writing any more about that old sea-life." For Conrad, his *Nigger of the 'Narcissus'* had put "a seal on that epoch of the greatest possible perfection which was at the same time the end of the sailing fleet." This was painfully clear, he gloomily observed, when "each time I look at the British Channel . . . nothing but smoking chimneys are to be seen nowadays."[28]

Machinery was not only an indisputable fact of Conrad's times, but even an occasional help, as he reluctantly conceded. Conrad once remarked to his friend, R. B. Cunninghame Graham, "I hate machinery but candidly own that it seems to me that in most cases steam's the thing for that work."[29] What so deeply troubled Conrad was not just the machine itself but that which lurked in the *idea* of the machine. It was this latter sense, or apprehension, of the machine which led Conrad to express a deeply pessimistic view of man and the universe.

Writing to Cunninghame Graham in December 1897, shortly after the publication of *The Nigger of the 'Narcissus,'* Conrad gently accused his friend of being "a most hopeless idealist" with "irrealizable aspirations." Conrad insisted that, from men, Cunninghame Graham wanted "faith, honor, fidelity to truth in themselves and others. You want them to have all this, to show it every day, to make out of these words their rules of life." But to insist upon such capacities for mankind and, accordingly, make such demands, Conrad maintained, was as unwarranted as it was idealistic. Though he might regret it, Conrad felt he knew better than to expect these ideals as either realizable or manifestations of objective truths. So between Cunninghame Graham, the idealist, and Conrad, the pessimist, where lay the crucial difference? The answer, Conrad decided, was that "I do not believe. And if I desire the very same things no one cares."[30]

Yearning as he did for such ideals to serve as objective standards for human behavior and as the criteria for a meaningful, purposeful human existence, why did Conrad deny the possibility of realizing them? In a striking and revealing choice of metaphor, Conrad attempted to explain:

> There is a – let us say – a machine. It evolved itself . . . out of a chaos of scraps of iron and behold! – it knits. I am horrified at the horrible work and stand appalled. I feel it ought to embroider – but it goes on knitting. You come and say: "This is all right: it's only a question of

the right kind of oil. Let us use this–for instance–celestial oil and the machine will embroider a most beautiful design in purple and gold." Will it? Alas, no. You cannot by any special lubrication make embroidery with a knitting machine. And the most withering thought is that the infamous thing has made itself: made itself without thought, without conscience, without foresight, without eyes, without heart. It is tragic accident–and it has happened. You can't interfere with it. The last drop of bitterness is in the suspicion that you can't even smash it. In virtue of that truth one and immortal which lurks in the force that made it spring into existence it is what it is–and it is indestructible.

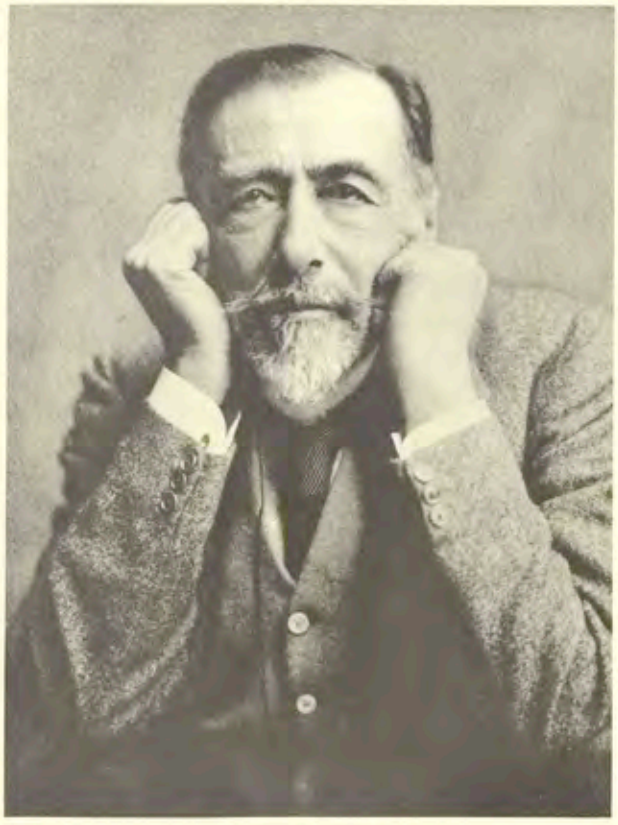
It knits us in and it knits us out. It has knitted time, space, pain, death, corruption, despair and all the illusions–and nothing matters.[31]

To express the utter absurdity and the ultimate futility of the human condition, Conrad called on that which had ripped away his last illusions, on that which symbolized the purposeless universe: the machine. The machine as fact and as metaphor confronted Joseph Conrad to mock his pretensions of human significance. And Conrad in his darker moments acknowledged such pretensions for what they were. Less than a month later he again cried out hopelessly to Cunninghame Graham:

Life knows us not and we do not know life–we don't know even our own thoughts. Half the words we use have no meaning whatever and of the other half each man understands each word after the fashion of his own folly and conceit. Faith is a myth and beliefs shift like mists on the shore: thoughts vanish: words, once pronounced, die: and the memory of yesterday is as shadowy as the hope of to-morrow–only the string of my platitudes seems to have no end. As our peasants say: "Pray, brother, forgive me for the love of God." And we don't know what forgiveness is, nor what is love, nor where God is.

"Salvation," Conrad added in a rueful postscript, "lies in being illogical."[32]

So with grim acceptance of his illogicality, Conrad persisted in probing the essence of the human condition while clinging to his faith that the experience in sail revealed, or at least produced, some meaning, some saving grace for a threatened and troubled humanity. For Joseph Conrad, the last man of sail, there would never be a reconciliation with the machine at sea, any more than with the ultimately meaningless universe which the machine symbolized. In 1923, only a little more than a year before his death, Conrad twice crossed the Atlantic Ocean in large, modern steamships. Upon his return home he caustically remarked of these vessels, "those are not ships, my dear! They're locomotives."[33]



Joseph Conrad (1857-1924), from a photographic portrait by Malcolm Arbuthnot. (frontispiece in Joseph Conrad, *The Secret Agent* [London: privately printed by T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1923])

Conrad's last literary effort, on the day before he died, was to write a few paragraphs of an article which he intended to be the forerunner of another volume of sea memories, a celebration and re-creation of the life in sail and the men with whom he

had shared the fellowship of the craft.[34] Only in death, then, did Joseph Conrad cease his efforts to express "that solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts." Such solidarity could ennoble and justify humanity in the midst of a futile existence. For Conrad, this solidarity had flourished among those men of sail who, at least for a while, had withstood the dehumanizing menace of the machine.

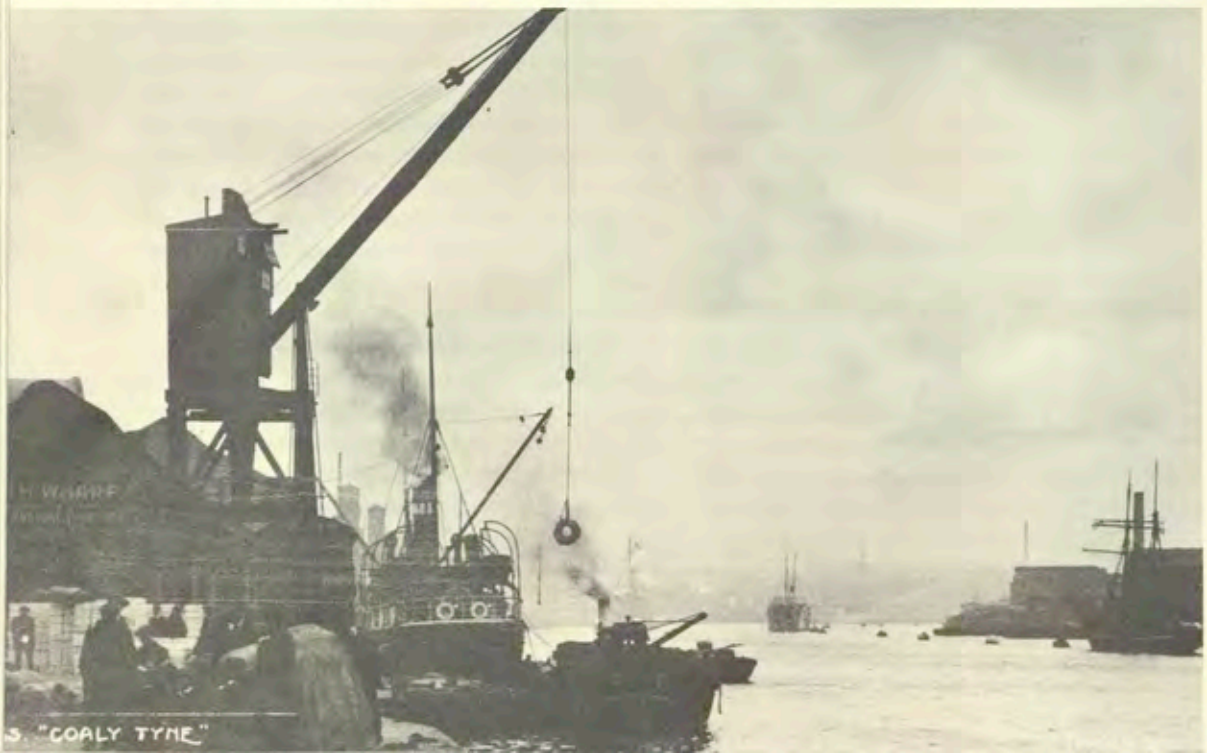
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The essence of steam power and the industrial age at Newcastle on the "coaly Tyne" is seen in this postcard by Judges' Ltd., of Hastings, ca. 1920. (78.64.40)





The machine age on the lesser London docks at Lambeth, ca. 1920. This postcard was issued by Judges' Ltd., of Hastings. (78.64.14)

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The *Joseph Conrad* as a Square Sail Laboratory

The diminutive iron vessel launched by Burmeister and Wain in 1882 was, in many ways, an anachronism. Many iron sailing vessels of the day were over two hundred feet long. At just over one hundred feet on her waterline, the *Georg Stage* would have made a trim little East Indiaman – eighty years earlier. Her 'tween-deck hammocks and her topsides brightwork were reminiscent of a man-of-war. But she had no armament. She was a single-topsail, full-rigged ship. With its maze of spars and its full-cut sails, this rig would have better suited a Nelsonian ship of the line or a graceful clipper of the gold rush era. All of these anachronisms, however, were perfectly suited to the *Stage*'s purpose. Designed and built as a training ship, she was as well-planned as she was well-found. In fact she was a well-conceived laboratory: a laboratory in which cadets could learn about the complexities of handling a vessel in the days of square rig.

Our *Joseph Conrad* still serves that purpose today. The sail-setting demonstrations that are viewed by hundreds of thousands of visitors annually make good use of our laboratory ship. As the demonstration squad moves through the process of setting the fore-topsail, our visitors grow to under-



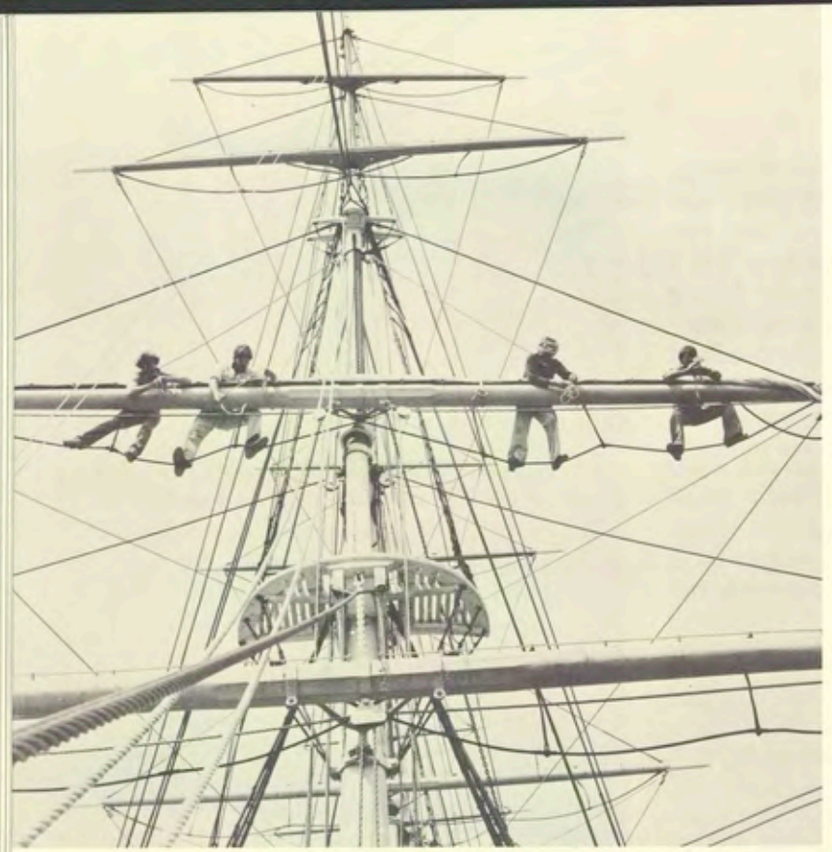
stand sailing technology, much as young Danish boys did one hundred years ago. Many Seaport members have seen this demonstration, and hundreds have lent a hand during Member's Weekend or during the annual Sea Music Festival. As with other complex procedures, however, the details of it are half forgotten with time, and one can only remember the general pattern of things. Here then is a description of how a square sail is set.

Interpretation by Glenn Gordinier
Photos by Claire White-Peterson
and Mary Anne Stets

Opposite: Much of the work of handling the sail is done with lines from the deck. The lines that are belayed and coiled on the wooden fife rail at the foot of the foremast control the *Conrad*'s fore-topsail. The pair of lines in the center of the picture work in conjunction with the pair to the far left to control the starboard side of the sail. Their opposites, coiled to the viewer's right, control the port side of the sail. The two lines with the space between them on the front side of the rail are the sheets. They run up the mast and out under the lower yard to the yardarm on their respective sides. From there they run up to the lower corners (clews) of the topsail. The sheets are used to pull the clews down to the yard below. The lines immediately outboard of the sheets are the clewlines. They pull the clews back up when the sail is furled. The lines on the sides of the fife rail are the buntlines. They pull the middle of the sail up just as the clews pull up the corners, thus spilling the wind out of the middle of the sail when furling. (These lines were often led to a different place on deck in vessels at sea. Where they were led was a matter of convenience and workability. Their functions, however, were as described here. For our purposes, leading them to the fife rail is most workable.)



This view shows the ultimate destination of the fore-topsail sheets and clewlines. The starboard sheet is visible running up from the foreyard (the lower of the two) to the clew of the sail, which is hanging just below the topsail yard. The clewline, which has been hauled taut for furling, is the short line attached to the clew and running up and slightly outboard to a block, from which it is led back inboard and down the face of the mast to the fife rail.





The first step in setting sail is to send crewmen aloft to loosen the sail and drop it from the yard. In this scene one can see the furled sail and the light lines (gaskets) which are passed around the canvas and the yard to hold the sail in place. The crew is already unwrapping some of the gaskets, which will be made up into small coils hanging down a short way in front of the sail once it is set. While the people aloft loosen the gaskets, others on deck are busy at the fife rail throwing lines off their belaying pins so they will run free.

"Ready below?," shouted from the crew on the yard, tells those on deck that the sail is free of its gaskets. The deck crew responds, "Let fall!" With that command, the people above simply push the bundled canvas from the yard. Those on deck haul in on the sheets, drawing the clews down to the foreyard, thus sheeting home the sail.



Before returning to the deck, those on the yard must overhaul the buntlines, that is, secure the buntlines aloft with extra slack so they will hang well below the bottom of the sail. The buntlines are overhauled so they will not tighten down on the canvas when the sail is hauled up and fills with wind.

The next step of the operation requires the combined weight of our small crew as they tail onto the halyard. The yard that the sail hangs from moves up and down the mast for a distance of ten feet or so. When the sail is furled, the yard is lowered to make the vessel more stable by lowering the center of gravity. Consequently, in setting sail the yard must be hauled aloft to stretch the sail out vertically. The halyard, the heavy line that accomplishes this, runs through a set of blocks for mechanical advantage, then up through a sheave in the mast and down the face of the mast to attach to the top of the



yard. By hauling on the halyard, the crew pulls the yard up the mast. (On a single-topsail vessel such as the *Conrad,* all square sails except the lowest, or courses, were normally set with halyards in this manner).

During demonstrations this task is always accompanied by a halyard chantey: a type of work song that has two pulls to every chorus. The person on the end of the halyard watches to see when the leech (the vertical edge of the sail) is stretched taut. At that point they shout, "Belay!," and the hauling and the chantey stop instantly. Almost immediately, the crew member nearest the belaying pin calls, "Come up!" With that, the rest of the crew drops the halyard, allowing it to be secured to its pin on the port rail.



Depending on the direction of the wind, the next step is not always required. Usually, however, it is necessary for some of the crew to gather at the main fife rail and brace the sail around to catch the wind. Bracing is the act of swinging the yards around so they are at a sharper angle to the hull. The lines used to accomplish this (the braces) run from the main fife rail, up the mast, and out to the tips of the foreyards. Each yard has two braces, one to port and one to starboard. In order to pull the port brace the starboard must be let go, and vice versa. In this photo the crew members on the starboard side are hauling in on their lee braces to make the sail fill properly.

The only step remaining is the vital one of making ship. The thirteen lines that have been used to set the sail must be carefully coiled down and returned to the proper belaying pins.



The sail is now drawing well. As the wind is coming from the port side, the sail is braced to starboard. Many of the lines referred to earlier are visible in this shot. The braces can be seen running horizontally from the ends of all the *Conrad*'s yards. The clewlines are visible running down the leech of the sail, and the four buntlines are hanging loosely down the middle (or bunt) of the sail. The gaskets hang in their small coils, ready to be used when the sail is furled.

Furling a square sail is essentially the reverse of the setting process. The sail is braced square to the ship, and the halyard is slacked away to allow the yard to slide down the mast. The wind is then spilled from the sail as the sheets are thrown off their pins and the clewlines are hauled up. The middle of the sail is then bunted up, and the crew lays aloft to roll up the canvas and pass the gaskets for a good, clean harbor furl.

Although she no longer puts to sea, the *Joseph Conrad* remains a laboratory where the sail handling of the last century comes alive. Now entering her second century, she remains an oasis where members, visitors, and students can come face to face with the technology of another era.

In the Tracks of Tradition

GEORGE CONLEY

Alan Villiers has recorded his famous circumnavigation of the world aboard the Joseph Conrad (*ex*-Georg Stage) *in books, articles, and on film. A different perspective on the trip is offered by George Conley, an Englishman who accompanied Villiers on the passage from England to New York. Quite candid, even skeptical, in his opinion of the voyage, and decidedly offended by Villier's low opinion of yachtsmen, Conley nevertheless presents an evocative description of the trip, and cannot help admiring Villiers and his determination to follow in the tracks of tradition. This article is condensed from a series published in the venerable British magazine,* The Yachting World, *between 13 December 1935 and 3 January 1936.*

"Well, that's settled," said Captain Villiers. "You look pretty hardy – you'll do." So I became a member of the *super* crew of the *Joseph Conrad*, miniature full-rigged ship bound from Ipswich to New York, the first leg of her voyage round the world. The word *super* was not defined exactly. It might have meant superior or just special, but later I gathered it really meant superfluous.

Had I paused to consider, I might have realised at this early date various other points about the trip to New York. The stressing of the necessity for hardiness and the very obvious enthusiasm of Captain Villiers for his ship might have warned me. Really, I suppose I came under the spell of glamour that accounts in great measure for most people going to sea at all. I consider myself a fairly canny individual, not easily subscribing to mass enthusiasms. Considerable knocking about in all sorts of corners of the world has taught me just what is the reality that lies behind the first enticing smile of adventure. It must have been the ship.

She would have gladdened anybody's heart even if he had no prior knowledge of the sea and seamen.

There is a further point, too. Captain Villiers, in spite of considerable experience of the harder side of seafaring that has made him a real seaman, has managed to retain most of the sort of illusions with which inspired youth sets out on its first voyage. The combination is dangerous. Enthusiasm allied to experience is catching.

Tradition dies hard. It is traditional that the hard life aboard a sailing ship develops manliness and self-reliance. Captain Villiers sees his voyage as a gesture to tradition, with considerable stress on the hard life. That is all very well, but to train hard cases without the real necessity that developed them in the old days of sail savours rather of the "tail wagging the dog."

In the days of sail, if legend and story and the more modern films are to be believed, mates and crew were all hard cases. They had to be. It was the way ships were run. In many of them crews were rarely paid. Skippers and mates worked up and hazed the hands so that they skipped ship at the first port and a new lot were shipped. Even when this financial aspect was not at stake the driving, often at racing speed, of a thousand or so tons of clipper developed hardness among the officers to counterbalance the general roughness that the water-fronts of the period bred in their crews.

In the *Joseph Conrad* this deliberate cult of hardness was for its own sake. There was no other reason. There was no question of wage-saving. Most of her company had

paid quite handsomely for the privilege. The professional crew were sailor lads from the Baltic getting in sea time before sitting for tickets. In fact, I believe the only people to receive real wages in cash were the first mate and the third.

Neither was there any question of cargoes for delivery at an early date. On the passage from Ipswich to New York, by way of Madeira and Nassau, we took a comfortable sixty-nine days. Small yachts have crossed in a third of the time, so the hard-case cult did not result in any great speed. I mention this comparison with yacht passages partly because Captain Villiers on several occasions had expressed his contempt for yachtsmen, again following, I believe, a tradition among some seafarers.

Here are his own words on the subject of yachtsmen after passage from Copenhagen to Ipswich: –

"The North Sea passage was not easy. Those yachtsmen I had picked up did not take kindly to working a square-rigged ship under grain-shipmates. They were a few from among the great number who had written me craving the boon of a short passage under sail. Maybe I was no yachtsman (I never had been) and did not understand their ideas of aesthetic enjoyment; their idea of sailing seemed to be to set the sails and then loll around. Maybe they were lousy yachtsmen. I don't know. But they were lousy sailors, anyway."

The reference to the grain shipmates is typical. Again, the worship of the "tough out loud" school is apparent in another comment printed in the same American magazine: –

"there were some young fellows whose haw-haw spirit needed calming down. We calmed it down – the ship and my Cape Horn mates – I learned to be a bit cautious about yachtsmen."

One further and equally illuminating comment. At a later date Captain Villiers referred with unmistakable pride to the reputation his ship had earned in Ipswich.

"There were rumors of all kinds spread concerning the ship, from the charge that she was to be used for gun-running to the accusation that she was a blood ship where the crew was brutally hazed."

Yet in my own mind I am quite sure that the hard-boiled attitude of the mate, particularly admired by Villiers, was carried out in a spirit of fun. He was Finn. I first met him on joining at Ipswich complete with "Foldbot" canoe. He grinned affably enough with almost the air of an amiable dog. These hefty, fair-haired northmen are usually easy-going enough. Then, as if remembering what was expected of him, he spread his legs on the deck, straightened his back, and thrust his jaw aggressively forward.

"V'at the hell have you got there?" he demanded. "For Got's sake tell me."

"A canoe," I said, neither liking his tone nor really impressed by his toughness.

Snapshot of the *Joseph Conrad* in Butterman's Bay, Ipswich, England, before she left on her passage to New York in October 1934. (Seaport Photo Archives)



There was too much sparkle of mischief in the blue eye.

"Vell, I go to hell," he said. "Vot the devil vill they bring to sea next. Valets or such. Vot are you going to do with it?"

I told him that I intended to fix it and go overboard with it when we were becalmed. This really floored him. He was suspicious of a leg-pull.

"Vell, I go to two hells," was his final comment. This was too good to keep to himself, and he called another fair-head with the sort of face that could have come only from the Baltic. The average Teutonic sailor-man is not exactly subtle in his sense of humour. Various possible uses for the bundle of canvas were suggested.

With something of an effort he remembered he was mate again. The smiles vanished.

"Sling it below," he ordered, "and report forward to the Captain."

Below decks Captain Villiers was eating his evening meal in company with the officers. I reported to him and was directed aft to my cabin under the charthouse. This was far from inviting.

In the saloon, grand name for a dark den, there was a table. I looked this over, noting the paraffin hurricane lamp, which provided a dim light, and the pile of dishes dirty and clean which decorated the oilcloth covered table. While I was pondering I met the next disciple of toughness for its own sake. A small urchin strutted in, nodded knowingly, looked me up and down with a certain contempt in his manner, the sort of studied insulting appraisal I used at school to put new boys in their places.

"Just joined, eh?" he said. "If you want anything to eat, help yourself," and swaggered off with a roll that could have been acquired only by years and years of ships' forecastles. He had joined the *Conrad,* his first ship, the day before.

In the saloon I found another small boy. He, too, was an ardent cultivator of toughness. He gave me a sample when I asked for tea. "What do you think I am – a nurse? You should have brought your sister to sea with you," was the answer I got.

These two youngsters had been selected by Villiers from the waterside boys of Ipswich. Following tradition they were nicknamed Hardcase and Stormalong. Both were quite pleasant little chaps, but, having achieved the mature ages of fourteen and thirteen respectively, they took to the atmosphere of the ship with joy.

Getting under way seemed to call for the expenditure of an inordinate amount of energy by everybody. It gave me my first real understanding of why so small a ship should carry so large a crew. One after another, courses and topsails were set when we cleared the entrance to Harwich, and really began the passage.

The *Joseph Conrad* is rigged in the fashion of an ancient frigate with single topsails. Actually, she is so small that these sails are not unreasonably large to handle. The professional crew were well up to the work, the cadets not so good naturally. In the easy sailing down towards Dover Captain Villiers had set only the lower courses, the topsails, and topgallants. This was because of the greenness of the boys, just about the only allowance I ever saw made for them at all. I made my first sally above decks. It was quite a scramble to get over the tops, but the yards were worse for the foot ropes were too high. The stirrups had been set for boys, and not very large boys at that. The professional crew managed by a sort of crouch over the yard, one leg stretched sideways so that a boot heel was on the foot-rope while the knee of the other leg took most of the weight on the rope.

Fate was not too kind to us. Before we had even shaken down, almost before we had got to know one another, the little ship fought a succession of gales in the Channel.

The wind, which had given us an easy sail into the North Sea, decided to test us. Instead of the smooth, delightful movement

of the ship that had pleased us at first, things began to happen.

At daybreak the third day out, the wind began to freshen, the *Joseph* booming along. Then the wind changed, giving promise of a deadbeat all the way down Channel. This was not so good after the first exhilaration of really sailing hard had passed.

Big hissing seas flung the ship about. Occasionally she would stick her nose into one, sending a creaming torrent aft along the decks. Clots of water came flying aboard.

Steering lessons were halted. It needed good men at the wheel. On one occasion, when Captain Villiers himself took over, he managed to get the ship aback. That raised some joy among the more ribald. The professionals were serenely at home. I watched the quartermaster of one watch. With the wheel kicking in his hands he crooned away to himself, meeting the tug of the rudder as the ship climbed clumsily over a sea. He was imperturbably happy.

Sail work was hard. Somehow the changes were made to meet the varying conditions. Some nights, reduced to topsails and inner staysail, we hared across inky seas, the hull a clamour of noise and the slice of the forefoot seeming to throw up a boiling white lather that looked as solid as curd. An easing of wind, and there was more sail to be spread, the cadets herded to the yards, their wild yells clear and shrill. For forty hours or more at one time I know that Captain Villiers kept the deck. He certainly applied the hard tradition to himself. It was needed, for we had four gales in succession.

On one occasion word came up that some of the cadets were too ill to muster for their watch. Captain Villiers fixed that with castor oil – a drastic remedy, but it worked.

With the super crew things were not too cheery either. One of the girls – we had two of them on board in spite of tradition – thought she was due to die. A deputation demanded that the *Conrad* be run for shelter. The hard tradition was given scope now, and the ship held on. It was weary work. We stood on each tack right across the Channel. Times without counting we saw the Casquets on one side, Portland Bill on the other. It seemed we never would get clear of that particular portion of heaving, angry sea.

Usually we wore ship; it was easier than tacking under the shortened canvas. Food there was for such as could eat, but it was cold, for the cook was injured in one wild swoop when the ship lay right down.

It took us eleven days to get down from Ipswich to the north of the Bay of Biscay. We crossed the Channel from side to side; we tacked thirty times between Portland and the Start. I believe we would be beating back and forth in the Channel now but for a shift of wind that just enabled us to lie our course for the open.

On reputation we expected a still rougher time in the Bay of Biscay. Compared with the knocking about given to us by the Channel it was an easy time after all.

It was still blowing a gale when we saw the Ushant light. To a last gust of spite from the narrow seas our foretop gallant, a taut and shapely bulge, changed in one thunderous burst to a thing of tatters flogging in the wind.

In the open water of the bay work and life were generally easier. Plenty of sea room meant fewer tacks. There was an easing of tension obvious among those in charge of the watches. The seas seemed to run longer and truer, to suit the little ship better. She was happier in her movement, a regular dip and roll to the hurrying hills of green and grey water. She lost the jerky, hesitating pitch and smash characteristic of her in the Channel gales.

We were a company of thirty-one on the *Conrad*, including the two girls, and a real "league of nations" at that. Captain Villiers and his brother Frank were both Australians. Frank Villiers rated as one of the two quartermasters, combining the duties of junior officer and boatswains. The chief

mate, the carpenter and the steward were Finns. The second mate was Swedish, the other quartermaster and one A.B. were Danes, and the two sailmakers hailed from Germany. Two cadets, one of the girls and Mr. Dyer were from the States, the rest of us English.

Life aboard the *Conrad* settled into an almost clockwork routine. True to traditions of the big square riggers, Captain Villiers kept himself aloof from the rest of the ship, modelling himself on the legendary shipmaster. I suppose it was necessary, but again the futile and exaggerated seemed to enter into things. This high position was somewhat elaborately arranged and upheld. For instance, any orders to the crew were given through a junior officer, never direct.

Captain Villiers messed forward with the professional crew. On his entrance all stood up until he was seated. I have always understood that a ship's fo'c'sle is very much the men's own private domain. Tradition apparently can be violated when convenient.

The cadets had their wardroom and messroom amidships, we, the super crew, aft again in the saloon from which our cabins opened. It is significant of the manner in which small things begin to assume undue proportions on a voyage like this that our own conjecture on the Captain feeding forward was that the food was better than that served to us. Actually I believe the food supplied had been very carefully based on the "Board of Trade" scale, which indicates enough to anybody with experience of the sea. Pea soup, salt horse, etc., however, eat quite well with sea appetites for sauce.

Another point of ship etiquette; Villiers had the strongest possible objection to being called skipper. I addressed him so on one occasion. It rankled. After informing me that he was not in charge of a darned barge he went into so much of a huff that he did not speak to me again for days.

A certain pettiness, smallness of outlook, are developments I hold against this sort of expedition. One is so cut off from the world that I suppose it is inevitable. I haven't the convenient temperament that submits easily to preconceived notions, yet I found myself subscribing to the slightly unreal atmosphere. I admit to a feeling of malicious pleasure when I scored rather heavily. It seemed a score at the time anyhow and serves to illustrate the kind of thing I mean.

It is always accepted that the captain cannot be wrong. This, I believe, is a tenet of the sea, necessary to discipline and all that, but it is liable to help enlarge a man's conception of himself. One day I expressed surprise that the mizzen mast should be of wood when the hull and the other masts of the *Conrad* were of iron.

It was galling to be flatly contradicted as I was, so, in front of everybody, I stuck my sheath knife into the mast. "Can you do that to iron?" I demanded.

As was perhaps inevitable, since the work of the ship devolved mostly on the boys and professional crew, a shadowy sort of barrier was built up between them and us of the super crew. The work of the *Conrad* was hard, wasteful of high spirits. The workers were bound to feel that we were loafers, the more so since we were neither passengers nor working crew, neither fish, flesh nor good red herring. Sometimes that developed into a sort of stealthy hatred that showed itself in small ways.

On a trip like that one gathers impressions at the time without realising them until later. I had no romantic illusions, did not enjoy the voyage merely because we were following tradition, I must state the fact that I did enjoy myself, found it well worth while, and have the memories of bright-coloured days, cheery shipmates and something of the romance and interest of sea life. If I do not subscribe to all his ideas I can appreciate the urge that has sent Villiers sailing round the world, and the immensity of the undertaking.

Sea pictures remain. Peaceful nights of haunting beauty when with a steady beam

wind the *Conrad* tore off the miles, a steady stream of bubbles like fire marking her passage through the velvet darks of the water. Thundering, gusty days, sunlight brisk and invigorating, with just a little slop of water boarding, the lively dip and roll of the ship, the crash of her forefoot into the bright seas and the hum of industry about the deck as the boys got busy, some of them perched out on the bowsprit netting, others chipping ironwork.

Barber operations, the boys all glorying in shaved heads. A boxing match between the star toughs, Stormalong and Hardcase. For all these things I am grateful to Villiers and his ship.

One grey, blowey day a big steamer ploughing up from the south stopped her engines, and she lay lifting her quarter to us as she slanted to the run of the seas. Her smoke blew away in a horizontal banner at a queer sort of angle with the low-hung streaming clouds. Her hull was one with the hard tones of sea and sky. As we rolled to windward we could see the shoulders and heads of oilskin-clad figures peering in our direction from her bridge. Aft, sheltering from the wind under her superstructure, the white flutter of an apron marked a cook, who had left his galley to join another little knot of men staring across at us.

It was one of those days of deceptive lights. Between the two ships the sea ran in furrows as hard defined as if they had been ruled. Where the pale light of sky indicating the hidden sun caught the lifting seas they appeared thickish, the pale green colour and consistency of pea soup. On the slope away from the light the water appeared thin, oily and grey.

On board the *Conrad* all on deck had their eyes on the steamer. As she staggered and fell down the slope of a high one she spoke us: "Is that the *Georg Stage*?" It was a question we were to meet often. One of the Danish boys explained it. In her years of service, over fifty of them, a considerable number of ships' officers had been trained on the little ship, and almost every Danish ship afloat carried one or more of her ex-cadets. Satisfied at last, the steamer went on, a white plume of steam following her smoke stack as it swung in arcs across the grey horizon.

So we carried on across the bay. Somewhere in the neighbourhood of Finisterre we had excitement again. The chief mate had just come off watch and was talking at the bottom of the ladder, easing himself to the roll and pitch of the ship, his face reddened by the wind. Half his attention was still on deck. A vivid flash of lightning seared across the sky. Then I saw how quickly this ordinarily quiet and slow Finn could move. He fairly leaped up the ladder towards the deck. It must have been half-instinct that first set him moving. After he had moved there came a rending crash from forward, and then the sound of flogging bangs that set the whole hull aquiver. I followed up the companion-way.

Somebody yelled the jibboom had carried away. The man at the wheel was heaving down on it, trying to bring her to the wind.

The mate swore. "Let her off – run before it," he ordered, and then went forward to give a hand. Under his directions the boom and gear was got alongside and, with the help of the carpenter, lashed along the port bow. He was a seaman all right, that Finn, only grinning when he discovered he had lost most of his watch below.

Just before daylight the twentieth day out, we picked up a light. As the dawn came up the high land of Madeira took shape from the clouds where sea and sky met. By eight o'clock we were standing in towards Funchal in bright sunlight with the pilot signal flying. No pilot came off, and we finally anchored in deep water. Sails were stowed, and the *Joseph Conrad* swung to her anchor and about seventy-five fathoms of chain.

Our stay at Madeira was brief, but refreshing. That one spell ashore worked

wonders. There was quite an air of holiday when at six o'clock we began to get under way again. Somebody started a chantey, and in real deep-sea style the boats were hoisted. Then the capstan was manned, and the wearying work, an hour and three quarters of it, of heaving in the seventy-five fathoms of cable began.

Our cadets might have been old salts from the manner in which they stamped around. One, in particular, I saw, yelling away, brown of face, and with the self-reliant manner of one who hasn't a care in the world. He looked a seaman bred and born. Yet a short week before, while we had been having a bad time in the Channel, that same little cuss had asked me forlornly whether he could get ashore if he jumped overboard with a lifebelt. Strangeness, the discomforts, and the not-too-happy atmosphere of the ship had worked on him. He was not coming to sea any more. I suppose atmosphere and unhappiness do work mightily on adolescents. Luckily they are resilient, recover high spirits as easily as they lose them.

Funchal had become so many bright beads of light against the blue-black mass of the island before we were really standing out to sea again. Once off shore our course lay to the southward where, with a fresh breeze lifting the ship along, Villiers headed to pick up the Trades.

Part of Villiers' idea in planning this voyage was to follow as closely as possible in the tracks of Columbus, but although in a day or so we were in the regions where the Trades should have been picked up, the wind stayed in the north-west.

In a few days we got the real trade winds weather for which ships like the *Joseph Conrad* were designed. With stu'nsails set to extend our spread of canvas she would log off the miles, climbing and swooping over the swells. Until now I had not thought of a sailing ship as rolling very much. Pitch and corkscrew at times, yes, but I now discovered the *Conrad* could roll. With a slow sickening sort of lurch she would swing her masts through a great arc, creaking and groaning through her whole fabric.

Work aloft and on deck was continuous. These sort of conditions are bound to result in chafe, a trouble particularly watched for

The *Conrad* at anchor in southern climes. Can anyone identify the headland in the background? (Seaport Photo Archives)



and guarded against by the officers. The crew and cadets had plenty of practice aloft.

They were sunny, happy days, however. When not aloft there was always the eternal chipping and painting and scrubbing to be done about the decks.

In light airs the *Conrad* would roll so much at times that all the wind was spilled out of the stu'nsails by their movement through the air. Then they would fill again with a sort of muffled roar.

The worst rolling was in the calms, particularly during a period when we were getting really terrific swells from the north with practically no wind at all. By wireless reports these were judged to be a sort of long-distance hate from a gale that had raged a few hundred miles further north. Luckily the swell was all we got of it.

On some calm days, in spite of the rollers that marched endlessly across the ocean's face, we rigged the boat booms and went swimming. On one occasion, to the accompaniment of much sly comment and unkind advice, I got out my Foldbot, rigged it, and after a tricky business, getting it safely afloat went paddling around.

A few days later, when the *Conrad* was becalmed on the edge of the Sargasso Sea, Captain Villiers ventured into the Foldbot with me. Ostensibly our trip away from the ship was to inspect the masses of Sargasso weed that were floating around. Villiers was more interested in the ship and the graceful picture she made with all her canvas set. Even the arrival of a school of dolphins, cavorting and splashing in lively fashion as they swooped around the Foldbot could not distract this man from the realisation of all his dreams and yearnings that wallowed there in the stately swing of the seas.

In this manner we carried on across the Atlantic, day following day with little to mark the march of time. About the decks the work of the ship went on. The boys and crew, down to light weather undress chipping iron, learning to mend sails, trying their hands at needle-and-palm fancy work on ropes. They had become brown and hard-looking, in fine fettle physically. By the time we reached Nassau I really believe most had taken to the life aboard completely, and were perfectly satisfied with a future that held nothing but sailing. At that time the memories of the Channel gales had become mere shadowy impressions in the background of their thoughts. No one who had shipped for the world voyage had any idea of leaving.

In making for Nassau Captain Villiers' first landfall was San Salvador, traditionally the first landfall of Columbus. It took us a week to reach Nassau from this, following the coast line round as far as Cat Island. We hove-to off Nassau late on Sunday evening, but got no reply to our signals for a pilot until the next morning.

After revictualling and taking on fresh water the *Joseph Conrad* left Nassau. This time she was breaking with tradition by going to New York. Frankly, none of us were looking forward to that passage in December. As was to be expected, some of the professionals who had already made a North Atlantic trip in mid-winter were inclined to enlarge on the tribulations in store for us. In the result there was a poetic sort of justice in their faring even worse than they had described.

For a short time we carried the almost tropical sunshine of Nassau with us. Then we reached the colder northern waters and strong winds. The Atlantic really gave us "sailors' delight"–cold sea fogs that swathed the sea and ship and chilled right through thick clothing and oilskins, and, as a change from the fog, gales of wind, some of them ahead. Sometimes, under reefed topsails only, we seethed through cold, green seas, slashing rain squalls making the visibility almost as bad as the fog.

Christmas Day, to which we had looked forward, expecting to celebrate in style, we spent in a gale off Cape Hatteras. There was not much sign of festivity.

Farther north still we fetched into head



Captain Villiers brings the *Conrad* into wintry New York Harbor, 31 December 1934. (Seaport Photo Archives)

gales, and with them came real cold. The ship was knocked about more than she had been in the Channel. Villiers himself described it as worse than Cape Horn and a sight colder. Rigging, sails and decks were coated in ice. Work, already heavy enough, became harder still. Frostbite was no uncommon thing after a watch on deck, and there was little comfort below decks.

Eventually we made out Long Island, only to lose the land and ourselves in another thick fog that froze on the rigging and shut the ship in a small circle of sea. When the fog lifted the wind came howling out of the north-west again, and under shortened canvas we began to beat in.

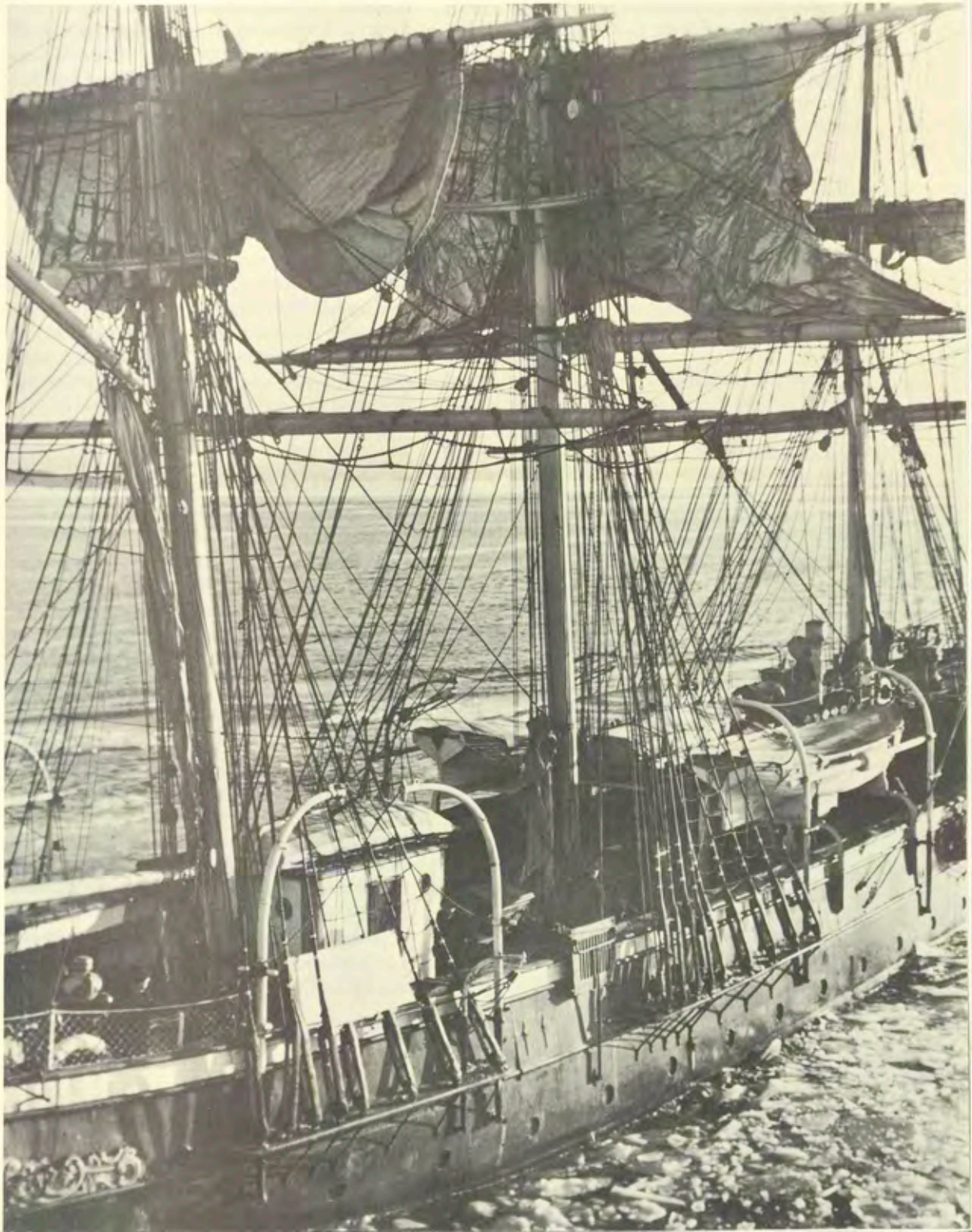
Once more the square rig showed up to distinct disadvantage. Fourteen or fifteen times we saw the Ambrose light as the ship was tacked. In that wild weather I suppose we were lucky that we were not actually blown out to sea again. I admired Villiers and his officers. They certainly knew just how much sail the little ship could carry, but it was wearying sailing, and sailing hard, yet getting nowhere.

Villiers was hard all right. He must have been as weary as the rest of us when at last a tug came alongside, yet he refused to be towed in at the exceptionally high price suggested.

After we had the pilot aboard another tug took us in tow, and then on the sixty-ninth day from Ipswich we dropped anchor off Brooklyn. Shore never looked more welcome to sea-weary men than did the jagged heights behind the ship, nor sounded sweeter than the ferries and trains across New York's harbour.

That was New Year's eve. Nearly the

Amid pan ice, the *Conrad* is towed in New York Harbor forty-seven years ago. (Seaport Photo Archives)



whole ship's company went ashore to visit Times Square and celebrate the New Year as only Americans know how. We had a good time. Our troubles were over – so we thought.

The sea had not finished with us yet, however. On the second night the wind hardened again into a full gale from the north-east, and many of us, still on shore, were unable to get out to the ship. She rode snubbing hard to her anchors. Eventually she broke her cables and went ashore on the rocks, lying right over with a hole in her plating amidships. She was almost under water, her masts at an impossible angle, and altogether a most distressing sight. Fortunately, her watertight bulkheads had been closed, and this and her position right in harbour helped to save her. Before the breeze had blown itself out a salvage party were aboard and a huge pump coughing and shuddering in an endeavour to cope with the water. Divers fixed a matting across the hole, and at high tide the *Conrad* was refloated and towed off the rocks.

Even now, however, our troubles were not finished. While the towing operations were in progress the wind strengthened to full gale again. Low in the water, unhandy and clumsy, the ship broke her towing hawser and began to drift off fast. In spite of frantic efforts, the tow rope was not replaced before she had drifted on to the quay near the 63rd Street Ferry.

The "collision mat," adjusted under difficulties when the ship was careened right over on the Brooklyn rocks, had worked, and the *Conrad,* making water fast, sank lower and lower until her decks were awash. However, we managed to hang on to the ferry quay until a fresh hawser had been passed to another tug, and then, at last, the old ship was hauled into dry dock for repairs.

Below decks things were in a terrible state. Villiers lost most of his notes and practically all his photographs. It seemed a particularly unkind fate which could give us all that hardship and bad luck in harbour after the long and stormy passage.

When it came to saying good-bye I did not altogether like parting with the *Joseph Conrad* and her crowd. We had got to know each other, to accept one another as companions; learned to tolerate each other's little idiosyncrasies. There was something of the unhappy atmosphere of breaking up a family at the last, and I still like to hear of the old ship. Villiers managed to ship enough young Americans to replace those of his apprentices who left, and just before Christmas [1935] I heard that the *Conrad* had been sighted off the Australian coast on a passage from Singapore. Villiers is still succeeding in driving his ship on his long voyage in the tracks of tradition.

A forlorn sight, the *Conrad* is battered against a seawall in New York Harbor during a northeast gale, 1 January 1935. (63.219)



BOOK REVIEWS

Basil Greenhill. *Schooners*. Annapolis, Maryland: Naval Institute Press, 1980. 160 pp., illustrations. $24.95.

Basil Greenhill, director of the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, England, and a prolific writer of marine books, has put together a wonderful picture book of schooners, with 141 plates plus a frontispiece. Each photograph is explained, and the reader's attention is directed to many fine details of rigging, hull construction, sails, or cargo which were characteristic of each of these representative vessels.

It is an interesting experience to read about what we usually think of as an American institution, the schooner, from a European perspective. For one thing, we don't find that silly story about "see how she scoons," which I seriously doubt ever happened. In showing "How the Schooner Began," Greenhill traces its orgins back through two distinct lineages. One, the North American version, evolved from the shallop, a two-masted vessel with spritsails or gaff sails, and had no square topsails. Such gaff schooners "began to appear in illustrations very early in the 1600s. Such vessels probably existed therefore in the late 1500s. They were common in the late 1600s both in Britain and in Holland..." The other evolutionary line came down from the small two-masted square-rigged vessel, and became the schooner with square topsails which were set from the fore-topmast only. This vessel became the mainstay of the British merchant shipping industry in the middle of the nineteenth century, especially in the three-masted version. Northern Europeans also preferred the square topsail schooner rig.

No schooner yachts will be found on these pages because the author excludes them by definition. As far as he is concerned, the schooner was "a merchant sailing vessel, a vessel which earned a living for master, crews and investors by carrying cargoes from port to port in return for freight, that is, agreed sums of money, equipped as her main canvas with fore and aft sails, which, like the principle sails of a modern yacht, could be trimmed only abaft the masts."

One long chapter describes "The British Merchant Schooners," built between 1849 and 1913. All shown have square topsails, except the ones built in North America. The great majority of British schooners were under 120 feet and 200 tons gross. Prior to the 1870s the typical British schooner was 80 to 90 feet, 100 tons, and had two masts. After the 1870s the three-masted rig became normal for vessels of this size.

In the chapter on "The North American Schooners" Greenhill admits that "the schooner was really a North American creation," in spite of its European heredity. The East Coast settlers developed and refined the rig as far as the technology of the day allowed, and then exported it back to Britain and Europe. Originally, because of lower construction costs and smaller crew requirements, the schooner became the merchant sailing vessel of the fledgling United States and English Canada. America's merchant fleet, which had grown to the point of challenging British supremacy in the 1850s, was decimated during the Civil War. It was not until the late nineteenth century that the demand for coal by booming New England factories created the demand for more and larger sailing vessels, and the four-masted schooner of 750 to 1000 tons gross became the preferred size.

In addition to what we may think of as "traditional" schooners, the author shows us examples of the skonertskepp (with square yards on the fore-topmast) of the Baltic, the galeas of Scandinavia, a French Breton schooner with roller-furling square fore-topsail, a Syrian schooner with low aspect Bermudan sails, a Greek pole-masted schooner, and a New Zealand scow schooner.

The final chapter, "The Last Days of the Schooners," shows us many of the pathetic, decaying hulks of former grand schooners that litter so many of the tidal creeks of the world—abandoned when they could no longer pay their way. Many New Englanders will recognize the *Luther Little* and *Hesper* of Wiscasset, the *Cora F. Cressy* of Bremen, and the *Lois M. Candage* of Damariscotta, Maine. In contrast, we also see the still working *Mattie* and the *Mercantile* of the Camden, Maine, cruise fleet. The *Mattie* will be 100 years old next year! Illustrated examples of

preserved and restored vessels are the *C. A. Thayer* in San Francisco, the *Kathleen & May* in London, and the three-masted slettop-skonnert *Fulton* in the Danish National Museum.

I think this book is a significant contribution to the marine literature. The author has done a fine job in collecting, organizing, and presenting the material. I have only one minor complaint, and that is that the pictures are not all of uniform quality. I realize that some of them date back to the infancy of photography, but I still have the haunting suspicion that their printing might have been handled just a little better.

Miner K. Brotherton
Bristol, Rhode Island

Sylvia Thomas. *Saga of a Yankee Whaleman*. New Bedford, Massachusetts: Old Dartmouth Historical Society, 1981. 132 pp., illustrations. $10.00.

The Old Dartmouth Historical Society has recently published this account of Albert Thomas's whaling career. Between 1853 and 1876 Thomas made five whaling voyages from New Bedford to the Pacific Ocean, the first two aboard the ship *Franklin* as carpenter and later as fourth mate and boatsteerer. He then shipped as first mate on the ship *Daniel Wood*, and followed that with voyages as master of the barks *Albion* and *Merlin*.

Written records of all but the second *Franklin* voyage have survived in collections located at Old Dartmouth Historical Society, Providence Public Library, and Mystic Seaport Museum. Sylvia Thomas, the author and granddaughter of Albert A. Thomas (1833-1915), collected information from these sources, and traced her grandfather's footsteps in some measure by visiting the Azores, the Chatham Islands, Hawaii, and New Zealand.

This is not simply an edited reproduction of logbooks and letters, but rather a factual account in which the author's imagination and personal knowledge of her subject "has been brought into play to tie together the factual parts so that the story may flow more freely." She also states that there has been no "misconstruction of any facts," and that her primary purpose has been to "create an identity for my grandfather."

Overall we must assume that an accurate account of the events that were described in the source materials has been achieved. Here, however, a statement relative to editorial guidelines used to select information, quotes, and other facts for this volume would probably have supported this assumption. What the reader finds throughout the book's seven chapters are descriptions of events common to the whaling industry and familiar to those of us who follow its literature. Accounts of shipwreck, mutiny, desertion, stove boats, death at sea, and encounters with the inhabitants of far off islands, occupy more than a few pages.

In addition, however, there are less familiar incidents that together help create the book's identity and value. The friendship established between Albert Thomas and Frederick Hunt, of Pitt Island in the Chathams, is developed through information gathered from correspondence and related photographs. Hunt had assisted the *Franklin*'s crew after the vessel was shipwrecked off Pitt on Thomas's second voyage. Thomas subsequenty called on Hunt not only to re-supply his ship, but also to enjoy the hospitality of his friend's family.

The story of the growing conflict that developed on the *Albion* between Thomas and his second mate, George L. Bowman, based on Bowman's journal of the voyage and letters from Thomas to the *Albion*'s agents in New Bedford, is really good stuff. The reader is privy to the thoughts of both men over a period of several months, without the author's bias interferring to any great degree.

Later on the same voyage, Captain Thomas was ordered by the agents to sell the *Albion* and her cargo immediately. The description of how an American shipmaster at Russell Island, New Zealand, goes about selling a vessel with a British registry and no readily available title, while also paying off the crew, is one of the more unique features of the book.

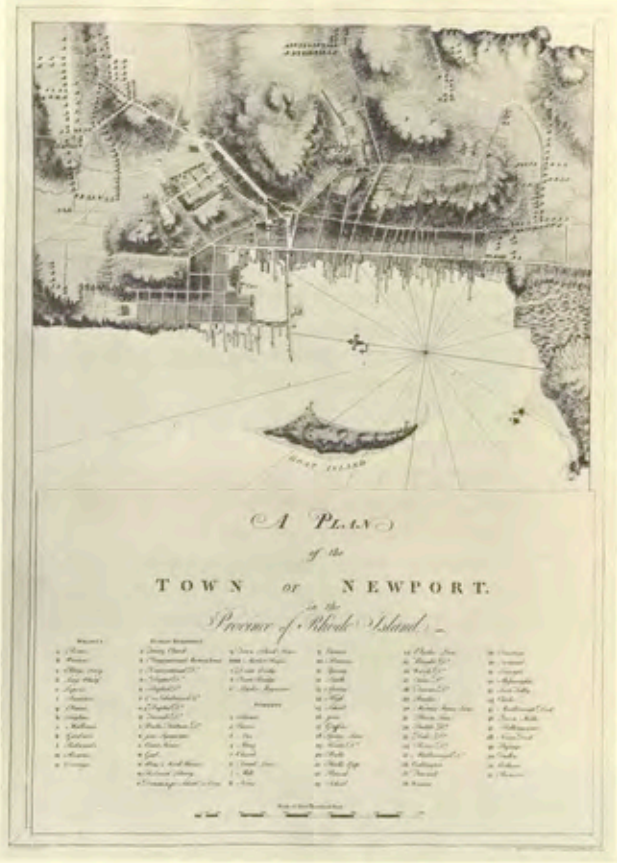
The description of the four-year ordeal at sea of Albert's wife Emma and their son Ernie in the bark *Merlin* is most informative. The relationship between husband, wife, and son is developed to a reasonable degree, and it offers insight into the unfortunate deterioration of their marriage, a union which ended in divorce a few years later.

Perhaps in a well-intentioned effort to tell the whole story, facts seem to be included which in many cases only serve to pad the narrative. These "so what" paragraphs cannot be completely avoided in a publication of this kind, but their frequency should be monitored. Person-

ally, I would not have included the statement that the cannibals of the Fiji Islands used whales' teeth "to buy a bride or a man to eat" without listing a definitive source. Generally, footnotes were scarce, and an index of some kind would have been useful.

Saga of a Yankee Whaleman does not break new ground, yet it represents a conscientious effort to tell an accurate story based on well-defined sources, in a popular style. In this it has succeeded, and in so doing has contributed a valid addition to the literature of the American whaling industry.

Douglas Stein
Curator of Manuscripts, M.S.M.


A Plan
of the
TOWN of NEWPORT.
in the
Province of Rhode Island.

ACQUISITION

The Atlantic Neptune has been called "the most splendid collection of charts, plans and views ever published" (Rich, *Bibliotheca Americana*). It is the foundation for any collection of charts of American waters. Consisting of 158 large sheets, the collection contains navigational charts, headland views, and maps of cities. Although several complete sets exist in the United States, no two are alike, since it was published over a number of years, 1777-1784, with changes occurring and new charts and views appearing. Many of the views are hand-tinted, accounting for further differences.

The charts were published in London, for the use of the Royal Navy, by Joseph F. W. DesBarres (1721-1824) under the direction of the Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty. Had it not been for an impending revolt in the Colonies, such an ambitious project would, no doubt, have been delayed. However, the needs of war made accurate surveys and sounding of American waters urgent. Thus, upon returning to England in 1774 after many years of extensive surveying in America, DesBarres was ordered to produce and publish a new set of charts based upon his work and that of other surveyors, notably DeBrahm and Holland. Even though it is a composite work, final credit must be assigned to DesBarres for actual production, and the artistry and superb craftsmanship with which it was presented.

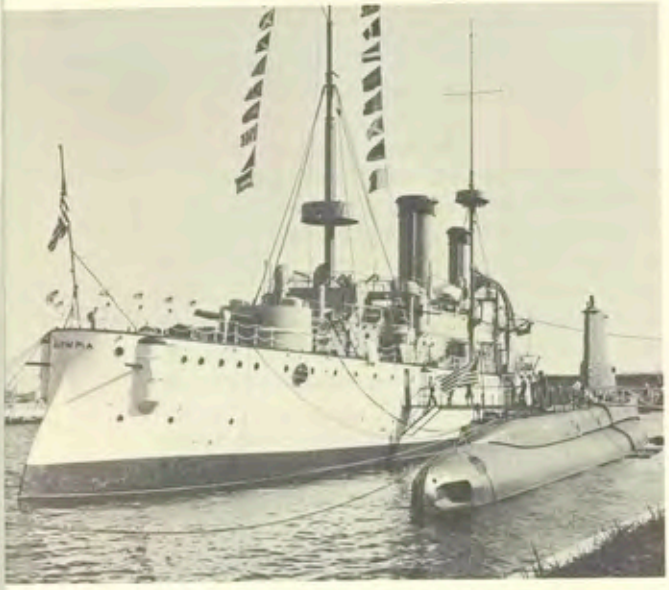
The fine collection at Mystic Seaport was presented to the Museum by Pierre S. duPont of Wilmington, Delaware, in December 1980. It is unusual in that the entire set is bound under one cover in contemporary tooled calf, and has the bookplate of the Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III.

After being displayed with other library materials in the Schaefer Building this winter, *The Atlantic Neptune* may be seen in the Reference Room of the G. W. Blunt White Library. [80.1265]

U.S.S. *Olympia*

As the United States Navy entered the 1880s with an obsolete fleet of wooden auxiliary warships and aging monitors, it became evident that a new technology was needed. Despite limited production facilities in the United States, naval policymakers decided to follow the lead of European navies and build armored steel, steam-powered warships. The first of these vessels, the *Dolphin*, launched in 1883, heralded the growth of a completely new navy.

As the modernization program continued, authorization was received in 1888 to construct a protected cruiser at the Union Iron Works in San Francisco. The keel was laid in June 1891, and in November 1892 the 344-foot-long vessel was launched. Christened *Olympia* after the capital city of Washington State, she was commissioned in 1895. With her protected deck, heavy guns, 21-knot top speed, and 6,000-mile cruising range, the *Olympia* was considered an ideal blend of protection, armament, speed, and endurance. Crossing the Pacific in 1895, she cruised the waters of the Far East for three years as flagship of the Asiatic fleet.



Stern view of U.S.S. *Olympia* and U.S.S. *Becuna*. (Courtesy of Cruiser *Olympia* Association)

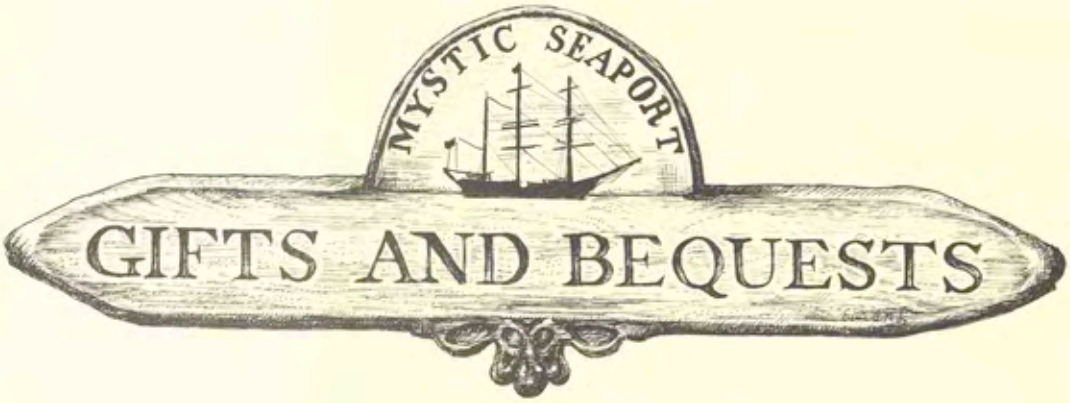
When tensions between Spain and the United States flared into war in 1898, Commodore George Dewey and the *Olympia* led the fleet into Manila Bay to engage the Spanish. "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley," Dewey informed Captain Charles Gridley, and when the day ended the Spanish fleet lay in ruins. On the basis of that battle, the United States replaced Spain as a force in Asia, and began to emerge as a world power.

Decommissioned for overhaul between 1899 and 1902, the *Olympia* joined the North Atlantic Squadron until 1906. During the following ten years she was decommissioned, and then served as a barracks. In 1916 she was designated flagship of the Atlantic Fleet Patrol Force in the North Atlantic, serving as an escort for allied shipping. When the United States entered the First World War she patrolled the coast between New York and Nova Scotia. In 1918, she carried a force to Murmansk, Russia, as the allies occupied it during the civil war following the Russian Revolution. In 1919 and 1920 she made two cruises in the Adriatic and Black Seas, policing those strife-torn areas and aiding refugees.

The *Olympia*'s final overseas duty came in 1921, when she was selected to carry the body of the Unknown Soldier from Le Havre, France, to Washington, D.C. As the body was piped over the side at the Washington Navy Yard, the *Olympia* fired a last salute.

After a training cruise in 1922, the *Olympia* was decommissioned in Philadelphia. Reclassified as a naval relic in 1931, she lay in obscurity until her release to the Cruiser *Olympia* Association in 1957.

Today the U.S.S. *Olympia*, last survivor of the "new" American steel navy of the 1880s and '90s, lies on exhibit at Penn's Landing, at the foot of Spruce Street in Philadelphia. Also on exhibit is the World War II submarine *Becuna*. Both vessels are normally open for visitation daily, except Christmas and New Year's Day. The nonprofit Cruiser *Olympia* Association is funded largely by the admission fee.



GIFTS AND BEQUESTS

The development of the museum–the buildings, ships and wharves, the exhibits, books and manuscripts–give eloquent testimony to the generosity of members and other friends of Mystic Seaport Museum. There are continuing opportunities for gifts and bequests which will help assure its future strength and development.

Members of the Seaport who have not already done so are urged to perpetuate their interest in the work of the museum through a bequest. Some members will want to make a specific bequest while others may want to designate Mystic Seaport Museum as a residuary or contingent beneficiary of all or a portion of their estate.

Mystic Seaport Museum is a nonprofit institution publicly supported by gifts and grants. Contributions are deductible within legal limits for Federal income tax purposes. Inquiries regarding gifts and bequests are encouraged and may be directed to the Director of Resource Development.

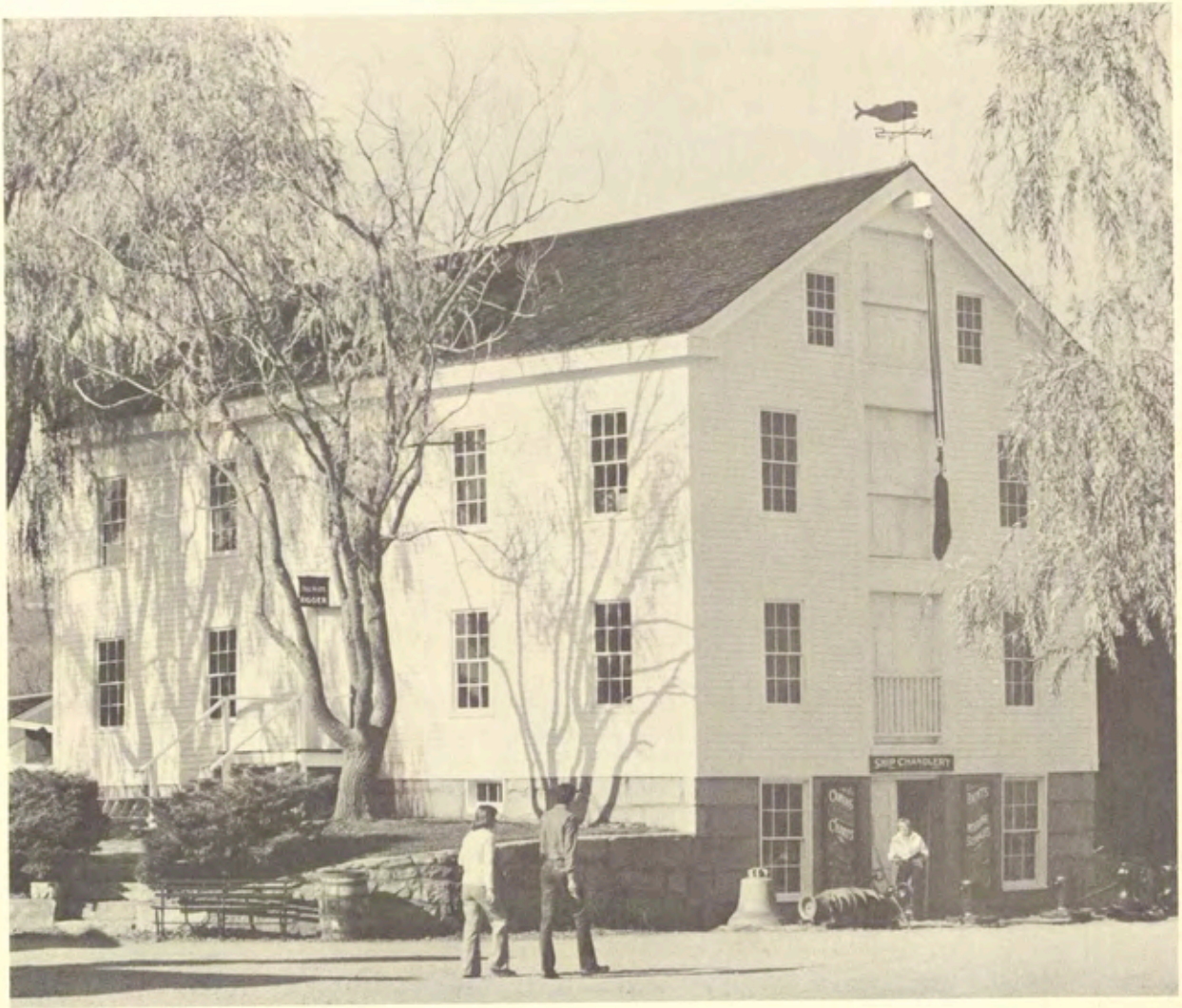
SUGGESTED FORMS FOR BEQUESTS

General

I give and bequeath to Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., a corporation existing under and by virtue of a charter granted by the State of Connecticut, and located in Mystic (Town of Stonington) in said State, $ . . . . . , to be used (or the net income to be used) at the discretion of the Trustees of said Corporation.

Residuary

All the rest, residue, and remainder of my real and personal estate I devise and bequeath to Mystic Seaport Museum, Inc., a corporation existing under and by virtue of a charter granted by the State of Connecticut, and located in Mystic (Town of Stonington) in said State, said estate to be used (or the net income to be used) at the discretion of the Trustees of said Corporation.



THE LOG
OF MYSTIC SEAPORT

Mystic, Connecticut 06355

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