HISTORIC MARITIME RESOURCES

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It should be clear to anyone who was near a television set on the 4th of July 1976 that there is a great fascination with the sea. The brilliant success of the Op-Sail program as part of this nation's bicentennial celebration is evidence of this interest. This country's relationship with the seas and waterways is as old as settlement of the continent. We know that the American Indians used the waterways for travel and as a source for food, and water transportation became even more important to the European settlers as they came to the new world. A simple study of the distribution of early settlements along the coast and up the navigable rivers indicates this early significance.

It has only been within the last few decades that immigrants to this country have come by any means other than ship, so for the great majority of Americans, their ancestral origins on this continent began with a sea voyage. While we often think of maritime history as a separate, somewhat esoteric subject, a closer examination reveals that it is woven into the fabric of our nation's history.

For purposes of this paper, maritime preservation will be treated in broad terms, touching on at least 10 manifestations of the effort, excepting underwater archeology, which is being treated separately at this conference.

Maritime Museums

The tradition of the American maritime museum has its origins nearly 200 years in our past. In 1799 the East India Marine Society in Salem, Mass., was established and began what was to develop into the Peabody Museum of Salem, one of our leading maritime museums. This Society was composed of men who had sailed around the Horn to the Pacific and who brought back all manner of exotic items. Obviously their wives said "You're not bringing that stuffed penguin into my house," and so the collection at the Society's headquarters grew.

Now, in addition to the requisite stuffed penguin, the maritime museums of this country have developed rich holdings in many traditional museum categories. The maritime collection ranges from dramatic seascapes by highly skilled painters to primitive ship portraits by self-trained pier-head artists. Maritime subjects were favorites among printmakers throughout the history of this nation, and our collections are strong in this category as well. The maritime museums also abound with historical artifacts, items used by sailors in their daily lives, oil lamps, uniform items, sea chests, and ditty boxes. Our exhibits and storage areas contain trade and exotic items from far off lands. Our museums deal with sculpture ranging from figureheads, which adorned the bow of ships and which acted symbolically as eyes for the vessels, in the forms of

builder's half models to complex and exquisitely detailed ship's models. The folk arts of the sailors also are represented — knot work, models in bottles, and perhaps the most distinctive form, scrimshaw, an outgrowth of the idle time aboard whaleships which resulted in exquisitely fashioned whalebone objects, some decorative and some utilitarian. Also among the items in our maritime museums are the boats themselves. These ethnographic documents reveal a great deal about the maritime characteristics of their region, the types of use to which the boats were put, and the skills and talents of the boatbuilders. Often they qualify as art forms in themselves.

There are several dozen good maritime museums functioning in this country. More than 30 of them belong to an organization known as the Council of American Maritime Museums, which acts as a forum for discussion among these museums, focusing on the unusual problems they share. The great majority of maritime museums in this country are either regionalized or specialized in that they treat a particular subject. There is, for example, the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath and the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michels, Md., each dealing with its particular geographic region. In addition, there are specialized museums, such as the Whaling Museum in New Bedford, Mass., and the new Yachting Museum developing in Newport, R. I. Each deals with a separate topic within the maritime preservation field.

Ship Preservation

It is in this field of the preservation of full size ships that the image of maritime preservation is perhaps most firmly seated. In and of themselves, they make dramatic statements, and there is a great deal of interest in acquiring square rigged vessels, in particular, to grace waterfront areas. Obviously notable among preserved ships in this country are the CONSTITUTION in Boston, still a commissioned vessel in the United States Navy, and in Baltimore, the CONSTELLATION, which is struggling to do an enormous preservation task without the support, resources, and facilities of the Navy. Another well-known vessel is the bark CHARLES W. MORGAN being preserved at Mystic Seaport Museum, as the last surviving example of more than 500 similar ships that dominated the whaling industry in the mid-19th century. Other notable successes include THE STAR OF INDIA, in San Diego, the recently restored ELISSA in Galveston, and THE DELTA QUEEN working on the Mississippi. In addition, there are sad failures. The bark KALULANI was to be restored some years ago and then brought to this country. After a number of disasters only a few fragments of this several hundred foot iron vessel were finally returned on the deck of a freighter.

Ships themselves create a discipline for those who are seeking to preserve them. If you don't care for them well, they will sink. It happened in New England with a coasting schooner, it happened in New York with a harbor vessel of considerable size, and it

happened recently in Seattle. Not only is there an interest in square rigged ships, but there seems to be a growing interest in anything that will float. Along the East Coast there is hardly a major city that does not have a light ship on exhibit, or for that matter, a World War II diesel submarine. Around the country there are several battleships, like the MASSACHUSETTS, moored in Fall River; the aircraft carrier INTREPID recently was opened as a museum in New York City. Preservation of these modern, often enormous, vessels, pose particular challenges to those caring for them. What is essential is a responsible approach to the preservation of any ship where its long term survival is the objective.

Historic Structures

In a number of locations around the country historic structures still exist in ways that serve the maritime needs of the nation. One impressive project is that being handled by the National Park Service in the Boston Navy Yard. There such distinctive buildings as the Chain Foundry and the 1,200 foot granite rope walk remain as significant documents of that yard's earlier operation. At the Mystic Seaport Museum historic structures from throughout the Southern New England region have been brought together, in many instances to rescue the buildings from destruction in the name of "progress". Visitors' understanding of the maritime picture has been served by bringing together representative elements of a maritime community.

Although it is desirable to preserve maritime structures in their original settings, this is not always possible. The structures may have to be moved to "maritime sanctuaries." Something similar is taking place on the Chesapeake at St. Michels and at the South Street Seaport area in Manhattan. At Bath, Maine, the Percy and Small Shipyard is being restored as part of the Maine Maritime Museum's efforts. The challenge here is to find a balanced approach to the long-term preservation of the structures and possible alternate use which insures their survival when pure preservation funding is not available.

Maritime Education

In our field, maritime education takes place both at sea and ashore, and I am referring now to the traditional education program operated in a fairly formal manner. Like most museums, the maritime museums are given the opportunity to work with tens of thousands of young people in school groups each year. Their interests seem strong both in the museums and in the ships, and, it is our hope that we will spark an interest that will be kindled into later curiosity in the maritime field. At Mystic we have a particularly fine opportunity with these young people in that we can provide overnight accommodations for them aboard one of our ships. A group traveling from some hours to reach Mystic does not have to rush and can fully immerse its members in the museum. The opportunities for undergraduate training in maritime subjects

is limited. Several colleges, particularly in the Northeast, offer some specific courses in maritime history, but this is not generally a detailed approach. There exists, however, the Sea Education Association which works out of Woodshole, Mass., with academic training ashore and at sea on their schooner, WESTWARD. Mystic Seaport Museum also operates what I believe is a unique program among museums of this country, in that a full academic semester of studies in maritime history, maritime literature, marine science, and a seminar on sea policy, is taught to students from 17 New England colleges with credit being awarded by Williams College. This was developed in recognition of the fact that these studies were not being taught in the traditional college atmosphere and they could be taught particularly effectively using museum resources.

On the college graduate level there are again individual opportunities at certain universities for some study in this field. Mystic Seaport is operating for the 29th year its graduate level program in maritime studies, known as the Munson Institute, which is conducted during the summer months. Finally, under the Education category, there are great opportunities in the field of adult education. Courses are being taught in navigation, boatbuilding, and a variety of other maritime skills or arts. In addition, academic symposia are offered by a variety of organizations. The Maine Maritime Museum has a symposium which draws an international group each spring. Mystic has begun a similar program focusing on southern New England maritime history with a symposium held in the fall, as well as a sea music festival. The Kendall Whaling Museum in Sharon, Mass., conducts a Whaling Symposium each year. The Mariners' Museum in Newport News, Va., offers a series of lectures throughout the year, and the United States Naval Academy focuses on Naval History.

Maritime Libraries and Publications

Maritime library support for scholars working in the field is found in maritime museums. The libraries at the Peabody Museum, in Salem, at Mystic, at Mariners' Museum, and at the Philadelphia Maritime Museum all serve well in this role. Their holdings are widely varied, but include in most instances not only imprints but enormous manuscript and archival collections as well as other related items such as navigational charts and extensive collections of ship's construction plans.

It is also within the maritime museums that a great deal of publication in the field develops. The books and monographs produced by the museums cover an extremely wide range of subjects — the museum's regional stories and their areas of special interest. At Mystic Seaport we not only publish under the museum's imprint, but also through a series known as the American Maritime Library.

A number of commercial publishers work in the maritime field; International Marine in Maine is one of the most active, along with the Cornell Maritime Press, and more recently *Wooden Boat* magazine. Also, there are several maritime book clubs functioning as the "book of the month club" does. Other mass publishing efforts, such as the *Time-Life* series frequently deal with maritime subjects.

In the field of maritime periodicals, a number of the museums have their own journals, such as the *Log* which is published quarterly for Mystic Seaport's 18,000 members. The most scholarly of the maritime publications for a number of years has been *American Neptune*, published by the Peabody Museum in Salem and supervised by a broad based editorial board. The National Maritime Historical Association, an organization which has been based in Brooklyn, publishes a magazine known as *Sea History*. In addition, various special interest maritime groups are represented by publications. The Traditional Small Craft Association, primarily about rowing, publishes a journal called *Ash Breeze*, which gets its name from the fact that most oars are made of ash and the boats are propelled by this "ash breeze." Through these publications and periodicals a great deal of maritime history and tradition is being preserved.

Sail Training

The maritime preservation field is not content simply to preserve the objects, but feels that a major emphasis should be placed on the experience of going to sea; this is done primarily through sail training programs. While most of these programs are aimed at young people, there is an increasing interest among aduits. Many opportunities exist for adults to go to sea in large vessels under educational programs. The focus of this activity is the American Sail Training Association, to which the member vessels and their supporting organizations belong. This group monitors the activity in the field and organizes joint projects among the various sailing programs. The vessels involved range in size and configuration from small sloops to large square rigged vessels, such as the United States Coast Guard Academy's EAGLE.

At Mystic Seaport our program has two aspects, one in which young people live aboard the JOSEPH CONRAD, a square rigged ship at the museum, and learn sailing in small boats, and the other in which young people and some adults go to sea for extended trips in the museum's training schooner BRILLIANT.

In this field, stringent government regulations, originally intended to protect the American shipbuilding industry, have in the past restricted these programs. The law provided that in traveling between American ports as a paying passenger you had to travel in a ship that was built in America. This meant that superb foreign-built sailing vessels could not be used in these sail training programs. Recent modifications seem to be easing this restraint.

Skills Preservation

In addition to preserving the experience of going to sea, the maritime preservation field recognizes also the necessity to preserve the skills that are needed to build and maintain historic vessels. In some instances this commitment has been made out of necessity. At Mystic Seaport, where there are eight major vessels and more than 300 small craft, it was mandatory that a ship conservation facility of considerable size be developed as well as the staff to carry out the work. The facility currently has the ability to lift a 375 ton vessel from the water and has 35 full-time staff members working in ship preservation.

A key element of this program has been the passing on of skills from one generation to another. This effort which has been underway since 1970 recently has proven its value. Two of the most experienced men from the older generation, who had spent their lives actually working in square rigged vessels, turned over their responsibilities to a new generation of younger craftsmen who have been studying rigging and complicated shipwright work at the Seaport for more than a decade.

On another scale, an operation known as the appricticeshop has been functioning at the Maine Maritime Museum in Bath, its primary emphasis being the transfer of skills, with the construction of vessels as a secondary element. In a number of other ship preservation programs and maritime museums, skills preservation is being carried out to one extent or another.

Oral History

For the maritime museums the great majority of oral history work is classified as applied research rather than theoretical. As the museums seek to interpret the American fisheries industry, the life of the deep sea sailor, and many other subjects, interviews are being held with those few remaining individuals who have had these experiences. In a number of instances, audio and video tape and film are being used to record current activities and to assist with proper interpretation of our on-going maritime story.

Maritime Festivals

The success of the "Op Sail" program in New York in 1976 and more recently in Boston and Philadelphia gives clear testimony to the interest of the American people in the sea. These maritime festivals bring hundreds of thousands of people to the water and give them a greater awareness of this part of their history. While these major events, focusing on the square rigged training vessels of the world attract enormous publicity, there are numerous smaller programs being carried out around the country. In Newport, R. I., an annual classic yacht gathering and race is held. At Mystic we conduct an annual Antique and Classic Boat Rendezvous.

On the Thousand Islands in Clayton, N. Y., a gathering of those specialized craft takes place annually. Again at Mystic in June of each year we conduct a Small Craft Workshop which brings 500 individuals and more than 100 boats. All along the West Coast, from San Diego to Port Townsend in Washington, similar small maritime festivals draw Americans to the waterfront.

Urban Waterfront Restoration, Preservation and Revitalization

Within American cities there has developed an increased awareness of the waterfront as a major asset. Unfortunately in most instances years of neglect have taken traditional maritime structures such as warehouses and port facilities to irretrievable states of deterioration. In some instances these original buildings can be salvaged and restored whereas in others, wholesale clearing of waterfront areas and revitalization projects incorporating commercial development and non-profit maritime oriented activities can be seen. In New York at this time a $250 million project is taking place around the South Street Seaport Museum...a combination of federal funds, state, city, private investment and museum resources. In Baltimore, the Rouse Company, which is spearheading the New York Project, has drawn the city back to its waterfront with its "Harbor Place" development. Around Harbor Place the new National Aquarium and several ship preservation projects have been developed. In Hartford, on the Connecticut River, a group is working to develop that riverfront. Philadelphia has an impressive Penn's Landing Development on the Delaware River. Newport has an extremely lively waterfront focusing primarily on the city's activities as a yachting center. In Seattle, Lake Union is being recognized as a major maritime asset, located precisely in the middle of the city. As each of these projects proceeds, more Americans will be drawn to the waterfront and to their maritime traditions.

It can not be said that there are not problems within the maritime preservation field. Certainly there are differences of opinion, factions, and politics, the same as those found throughout any field. At this point I think I am obligated to comment on what is the most sensitive topic in American maritime museums, which is the National Maritime Museum in San Francisco. I fully realize that the National Park Service inherited that museum with that name when it developed the Golden Gate National Recreation Area. The American museums, however, are frequently in contact with the National Maritime Museums in other countries, which are sponsored by their national governments and tell a national comprehensive story. San Francisco museum does not begin to measure up to this standard and it is my understanding that it is intended for this museum to remain a regional Pacific coast and San Francisco museum. None of the other American maritime museums fulfills the national role or deserves the title, but we are disappointed by the name being used in San Francisco. I would personally be

happy to see the development of a truly National Maritime Museum. It could be in Washington or it could be in San Francisco, but it should represent the nation in its scope, and should be overseen by an objective national advisory board.

I realize also that in developing the San Francisco operation, the Park Service inherited the responsibility for the ships that are there. However, I must express my concern over their preservation. The Park Service is currently ill-prepared to carry out the mandatory restoration and preservation work. It appears that the burdensome, bureaucratic systems under which the Service must function will make it difficult to develop the needed facilities and staff. The prognosis for those ships is grim.

However, it is my belief that within the maritime preservation effort there are some very encouraging prospects. The National Trust for Historic Preservation recently sponsored the second National Maritime Preservation Conference. After two days of discussion and reports on various projects, a nominating committee was established to make recommendations for a National Trust Task Force, focusing on our maritime heritage. This group, with 17 members representing not only a geographic spread with members from all regions of the country, but also representing the major types of projects as described earlier in this paper, met in Washington earlier this month. I was most encouraged by the sense of unity that pervaded the meeting and the willingness to work closely together to establish a clear set of National objectives in maritime preservation. The Group suggested that National Trust Grant funds could be more effectively used in bringing together the various elements of the maritime preservation field, rather than small individual grants for specific projects. During the next eight months three sub-committees of the task force will work to encourage establishment of professional standards in all aspects of our work and to address major preservation and education issues as well as major business and political issues relating to maritime preservation. The objective is to have a position paper on standards and priorities prepared for the annual meeting of the National Trust in May of 1983.

I feel I should also mention the international situation that exists in this field. For more than a decade there has been an organization known as the International Congress of Maritime Museums which functions as a vehicle for coordinated international efforts in the maritime field. This group meets every three years, with an executive council meeting annually to carry on the business of the Congress. Within this group a committee has been working to develop an Historic Ships Evaluation Program, intended to serve both preservation groups and potential funding agencies, whether they be organizations such as the National Trust or Federal Governments in whatever country is involved. The concept behind this would be an objective evaluation of a ship restoration project with a priority classification given. This classification, coming from an international organization, should encourage the

support of significant preservation efforts.

Certainly there is a great deal of work to be done. New museums are needed. There should be, for example, a museum of the fisheries. Certain regions do not have maritime museums telling their stories. There are other ships to preserve and efforts are moving forward there. The endangered historic structures need to be recognized and adopted by preservation organizations. There is ample work to absorb the energies of many individuals and organizations.

It is apparent that in maritime related efforts there are some needs at the national level. The submerged archeological sites, consisting primarily of ship wrecks, are among the most endangered of our cultural resources since they are essentially at the mercy of treasure hunters and souvenir seeking divers. National leadership is required to bring about strong legislation to protect these resources and enforcement of this legislation is also necessary. It also seems that within neither the Department of the Interior nor the National Park Service is there an office with particular maritime cognizance. I would suggest that such an office be established so that staff members with particular sensitivity to the protection of maritime resources be able to review other service or department projects.

It is my opinion that maritime preservation in this country is coming out of its adolescence. It has survived its difficult early years. It has come through the growing pains and the projects that have failed. All that experience has created a new awareness of what is needed within this field. As I look to the future I see high expectations in the maritime preservation field and an awareness of the benefits that can come when a mature, rational, organized approach is clearly defined.

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The Papers from the Strategy Conference

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will be continued in the Winter 1983 FORUM