



the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



SEPTEMBER 1972

THE PROGRAM OF THE INSTITUTE

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

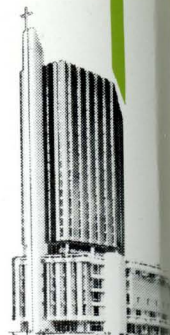
More than 753,000 such seamen of all nationalities, races and creeds come into the Port of New York every year. To many of them the Institute is their shore center in port and remains their polestar while they transit the distant oceans of the earth.

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

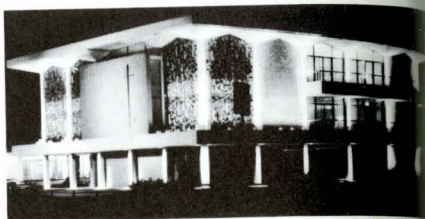
Each year 2,300 ships with 96,600 men aboard put in at Port Newark, where time ashore is extremely limited.

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

Although 55% of the overall Institute budget is met by income from seamen and the public, the cost of the special services comes from endowment and contributions. Contributions are tax deductible.



Seamen's Church Institute
State and Pearl Streets
Manhattan



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

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Singing Down to Rio

by Cecil Kent



From earliest times a hard, laborious task has been eased by the use of music or a song made or sung in conjunction with physical work.

It is pretty safe to say the first sailors aboard their vessels used the same means of lightening their jobs above decks.

But it is perhaps rather surprising, because of the thousands of years during which men have sailed the seas, that the true sea shanty was only sung first in the 18th century, and reached its heyday in the 19th century, during the peak of sailing ships total voyaging around the world, before the steamship finally ousted them.

Prior to this, of course, there were sailors' songs, these usually being folk songs brought aboard from the original homes of the crews and many of these still survive in the seaports of the world.

Also there are whalers', sealers' and fishermen's songs and ballads, some still popular, which were confined to and sung by their own particular community, but have not become universal among the world's seamen and were not classed as shanties.

The dictionary definition of a sea shanty is a rhythmical song, sung by sailors in time with the motions in-

cidental to their work.

The origin of "shanty", also known as "chanty" or "chantey", is supposedly from the French word "chanter", meaning "to sing", "to chant", which became corrupted with use by sailors' tongues from the English hard "ch" to the French soft "ch", which was spelled as "sh".

Sea shanties had two uses and purposes. They were sung to ease a hard task, turning a windlass, hauling sails, manning the pumps, turning the capstan to haul up the anchor, working with a halyard, and other mundane tasks. These were the sea shanties for working.

The second type were sea shanties sung for leisure and relaxation. After work on deck was done for the day the men in their quarters, or sometimes on deck, would gather for a sing-song to pass the time.

The shanties were humorous and comical, sometimes mocking unpopular officers, or sentimental, to fit the mood of the occasion, covering a very wide range of subjects associated with the sea and the sailors' life.

It has been said that none could be classed as beautiful, but there I beg to differ in opinion. Perhaps not aboard ship in a cramped forecabin by the

gruff, perhaps harsh voices of seamen rendering them, but "Shenandoah", sung by a trained and well-conducted male voice choir, can be a most moving experience to listen to.

John Masefield, the famous British poet-laureate and novelist, in his early life crewed aboard such vessels around Cape Horn and across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and describes such shanties in his book *Temple Bar*, published in 1906:

"The sea songs in general use in merchant ships are of two kinds. There is the working song or shanty, which is sung as an aid to labor during the performance of certain tasks. And there is the sea-ballad or sailors' folk song, which at sea is sung in the second dog-watch and in port at night after supper.

"The songs sung in the sing-songs or sailors' concerts have lost much of their distinction. The old sea songs, proper to the sea, have given place to a great extent, to the peculiar lyrical mechanics of the music-hall. The old songs may still be heard but they are dying out for the sailor has lost much of his individuality.

"The English sailor is generally to be found in steamships making short passages. He is no longer cut off from his fellow men for many months at a time. Music is the one enjoyment of the sailor at sea.

"In the second dog-watch, in sunny latitudes, after supper, when the work about decks has ceased, the sailing-ship's fore-castle hands hold a concert, or sing-song.

"Sometimes they gather together on the fore-castle-head, but more generally they sit about just forward of the fore-rigging, on the fore-hatch, to sing their longing songs of home.

"Their repertoires are limited but they never tire of the songs they have. They prefer a song with a chorus, so that all can take part in it. If the songs have no chorus, they generally repeat the solo part. Of the songs I have heard



in these sea sing-songs very few were beautiful.

"The old (British) naval ballad of "Spanish Ladies" was sometimes sung and this old song was certainly the best of all I heard. There are several versions of the ballad . . . They may be heard in ships of every nationality, but it is thought that they are most common on American and rarest in French ships.

"The most beautiful chanty I ever heard was sung by a Norwegian crew. I have heard two Greek chanties of great beauty, too, and I am told that the Russians have at least one as beautiful as any of our own."

Originally the shanty was begun and led by a crew member playing a fiddle, but if there was no crewman so talented aboard, a wind pipe instrument, such as a wooden whistle, perhaps even a flute or hornpipe, could usually be pressed into reasonable use by one of the crew.

Later this beginning of the shanties changed and a member of the crew, known as the "shantyman" with a reasonable, loud, strong voice, led with the solo of the shanty, the others following in chorus and working in time to the refrain. (Continued on page 12)

PAST PRESENT & FUTURE

by G. B. Hollas

The Rev. G. B. Hollas is chaplain-in-charge for SCI's Mariner's International Center of Port Newark; he came to the New Jersey post in 1962 from a similar experience in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Recently he addressed the Institute's Board of Managers on the work of the Center. Portions of his observations are given here.

— editor

During my ten years with the SCI at Port Newark there have been many important changes and developments, notably, the rapid increase in the size of the Newark-Elizabeth Port itself and also the unbelievably swift change to containerization of cargo.

It is this last factor which has had the greatest impact on the lives of the merchant seamen we seek to serve.

The distinctive silhouette of the mammoth container vessel has become an increasingly familiar sight. Through 1968 and 1969 more and more companies were investing in fleets of container-ships. Leading domestic and foreign lines formed consortiums and shared container-handling facilities in the Elizabeth Terminal.

The change to intermodal shipping was so rapid that by the end of 1969 almost half the cargo arriving in the Newark-Elizabeth port was containerized — and the containerized cargo was carried by *one-third* the number of vessels required by the break-bulk operations.

Employment for conventional break-bulk freighters became steadily less

available on the major Atlantic and, later, Pacific routes. The efficiency of this new mode of shipping was demonstrated dramatically in the very fast turn 'round of the ships — tonnage which would have taken three or four days to discharge was now handled in 12 to 24 hours.

Furthermore the operation of the ships themselves was so automated that crew size in relation to deadweight tonnage was cut *in half*.

This is a change that has been compared in importance to that of steam replacing sail, and it is still continuing. The long line of cranes beside Elizabeth Channel are now being joined by a comparable number of the big hoists on the east and south sides of this mammoth terminal and will be completed next year — two full years ahead of the original schedule.

The ships linking these facilities with similar installations around the world will be headed by jet-turbined vessels, *making in excess of 30 knots*, and of mammoth proportions — Seatrain's *Euroliner* is a prototype of this new breed of ships. Sea-Land will soon take delivery of the first of her new fleet — a containership that is a scant 17 feet shorter than the *Q.E. 2*.

So this is the situation with which we are faced — fewer ships with smaller crews staying in port for a much shorter time, or, more correctly, that is the situation with which the seaman is faced.

There is no doubt that one of the compensations during the lonely days at sea was the prospect of a few days in a foreign port — a welcome break from the endless routine of shipboard life.

It is true, of course, that the accommodation of seamen in these new vessels is vastly superior to that which obtained in the older ships — many of the foreign ships have a crew's bar, recreation lounges, comfortable berths, sometimes a swimming pool. But even

under these improved conditions, when a man sails for months on end with a handful of other men of different ages, interests and outlook, he needs the refreshment of body and spirit which can only come by getting ashore and meeting a wider community. This has brought a change for us — not in what we seek to do — that remains the same: to provide for the legitimate social and spiritual needs of the visiting seafarer.

But we have had to change or modify some aspects of our program. Take ship-visiting for example. Because of its brief stay in port a ship can only be visited once, so a greater concentration of effort had to be made.

When the seaman does come ashore we have to be very sensitive to his needs and his own inclinations. Too often in this work have we thought that we knew what was best for our visitor but the truth is that their interests are as varied as they would be with any other group of individuals.

Quite a lot of men when they come to the Center want most of all to be left alone — to sit and read or to write their families and friends. Others enjoy the entertainment we offer in competitive games of darts, ping-pong and billiards.

Our film shows continue to be very popular with many of the seamen and, provided we have the ships, we generally get a very good response to our invitation to the Tuesday and Thursday dances at the SCI International Club in New York.

In the arrangement of soccer games we enjoy the fullest cooperation and assistance of the Norwegian Government Seamen's Service who brings teams from ships in Brooklyn and Staten Island to compete at the Center with men from ships in New Jersey. Because of smaller crews and fewer men able to come ashore, the soccer teams are often a composite of men from two or more vessels.

Increasingly I see the dominant role of the Center as a "meeting place" providing for friendly encounters between seafarers of different nations and between seamen and sympathetic landmen who are prepared and willing to understand and sometimes assist them.

In the immediate future we see the possibility of offering our services to the crews of the container-ships which will be using the new piers in Jersey City. Jersey Port will harbor ships of several different flags and as they will be only 20 minutes drive from our Center we hope to attract many of these men to us.

In the reorganization which took place in Vancouver, Washington, a survey was conducted to ascertain what seafarers were looking for when they came ashore, and the indication was that the majority of them regard the provision of a shore center with a chaplain as essential to their welfare.

This is not surprising; whenever possible a seaman wants to have a break from shipboard life and, sometimes, from his shipmates. The chaplain is regarded by most seamen, particularly foreign seamen, as one of a vast company of such people in ports around the world who have, or should have, the best interests of the seaman at heart and one to whom they can turn if the need arises.

I would like to say a word about today's foreign seamen who constitute over 90% of the visitors to the Mariner's International Center. He is a young man of 20 to 28 years and unlike his predecessors he is more and more a technician rather than just a working hand.

He is career conscious but does not intend to spend the whole of his working life at sea and because of his new skills the transition from ship to shore jobs is far less difficult today.

He has a girl back home or he is married with a young family. He re-

(Continued on page 12)

THE WEATHER EYE



by H. R. Berridge

Mr. Berridge writes with manifest knowledge and authority on weather phenomena for very good reason: he was once a U.S. Navy weatherman and worked for a time at the National Weather Analysis Center in Suitland, Maryland.

—editor

Nobody was more observant of weather than the old-time seaman. No wind — no movement. Too much wind — dangerous work aloft. Too many clouds or too much fog — hazardous navigation.

It's little wonder then, that he has left us many bits of proverbial weather wisdom. What is a wonder, at least to some scientific cynics, is that investigation often proves these old sailor sayings to be truthful. In more than a few instances the old salt's "weather eye" was sharp indeed.

Take wind, for instance. To a sail ship, of course, wind was life. But it was more than this — it served as a good weather indicator.

One old saying states that a "veering" wind is a sign of fair weather, whereas a "backing" wind means foul. *Veering* here means that the wind is changing direction in a clockwise manner; *Backing*, just the opposite. In other words, a veering wind is one that has changed direction from southwest to northwest, while a backing wind changes from west to south and then

possibly to southeast or east.

Scientifically, this is sound advice. Any meteorology text will state that one of the most infallible phenomena associated with the coming of a high pressure area and a subsequent spell of brisk, clear, dry weather is a wind shift from southwest to northwest. Likewise, wind blowing out of the south or southeast is a good indicator of an impending low pressure system often associated with rain and wind.

Another old sailor's sign involved with wind direction also concerns itself with a rainbow. It goes something like this: a rainbow to windward brings squally rain; rainbow to leeward, rain ends. This, too, is true. Rainbows, of course, occur in showery weather and are the result of the sun's rays shining through water droplets which act as prisms in the sky.

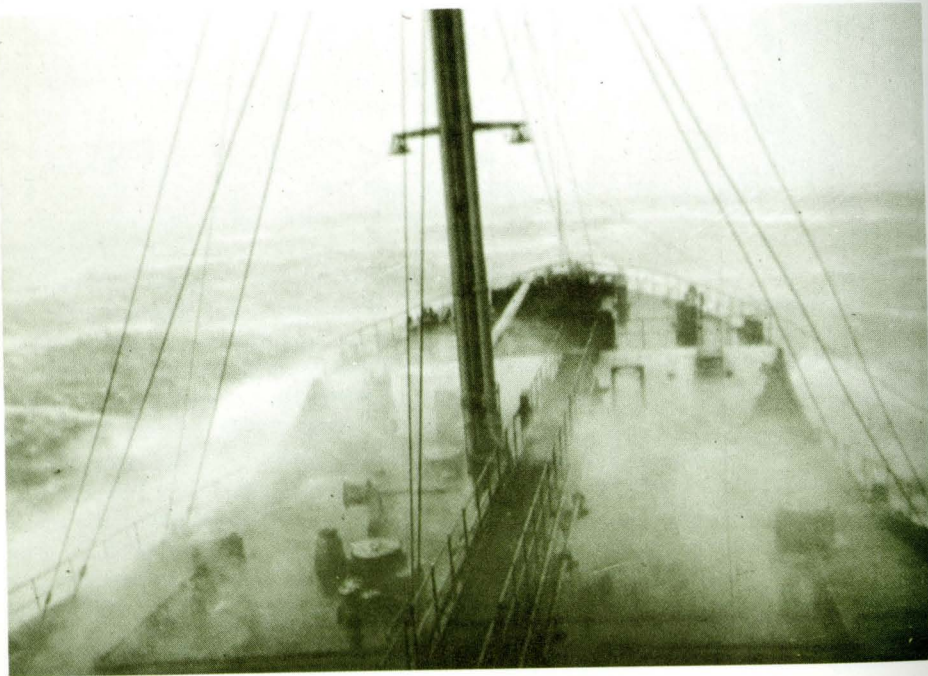
If then, a rainbow appears off the windward rail (the side of the ship toward which the wind is blowing), those water droplets, the rain squall, will soon be blown in the direction of

the ship. Conversely, a squall off the lee rail (evidenced by the rainbow over there) will only get blown further away.

There is, in addition, another similar saying involving the location of lightning in relation to a ship. The exact explanation of this is essentially the same as for the rainbow. Lightning to windward — squall; to leeward — no squall.

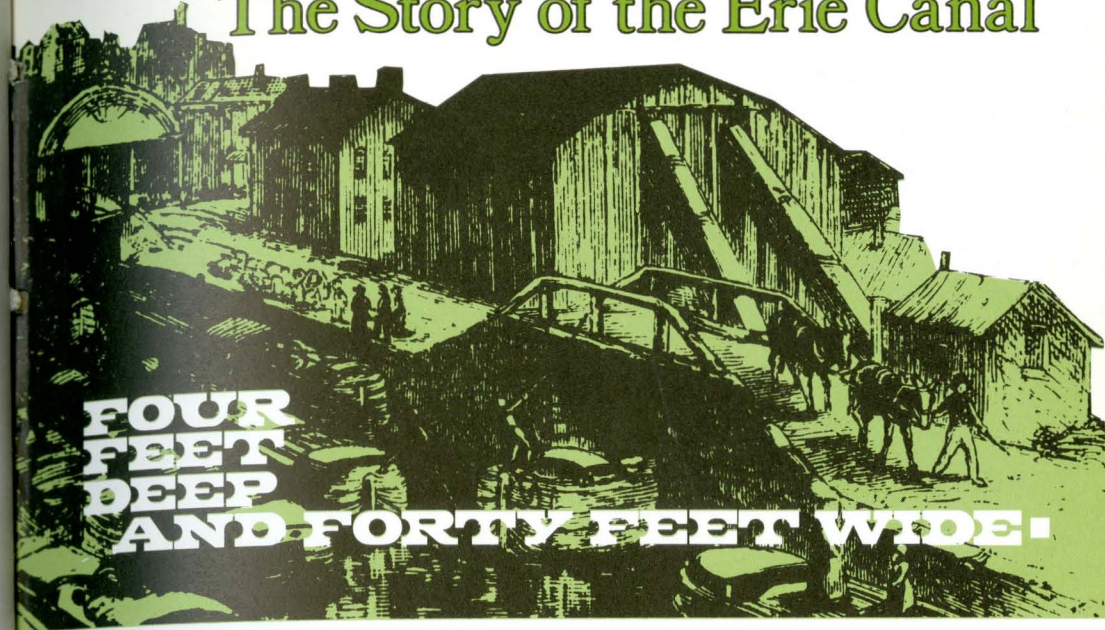
Another natural phenomenon used by sailors to foretell weather is, quite simply stated, the quality of the air. A number of sayings are connected with air characteristics.

The first of these could have been started by some weather-conscious ship's cooks keeping an eye on the smoke from his galley stove because it has to do with the action of smoke rising from a stack. Smoke that rises and disperses in the air means fair weather; smoke curling downward and remaining in a layer near the surface means a storm. This one is another scientific bull's-eye. (Contd on page 19)



The Story of the Erie Canal

(Continued from July-August Lookout)



by Raymond Schuessler

The celebration at Buffalo to mark the completion of the canal was a gay one attended by Governor Clinton and many other dignitaries. Then a string of cannons about 8 to 12 miles apart were fired in relay along the route until the noise traveled all the way from Buffalo to Albany and down to New York City in 55 minutes. It was probably the longest salute in history.

A fleet of ships carrying the governor and others traveled the entire route from Buffalo eastward as it was saluted by bands playing along the route and a cheering populace at every village.

At Albany there was a great celebration and in New York City the entire city plus thousands of visitors gathered to cheer the boat parade. Water from Lake Erie was poured into the Atlantic, truly a wedding of the lakes and the sea.

One writer said: "The completion of the Erie Canal has been celebrated with greater eclat, pompous show and parade, not unlike those triumphal games

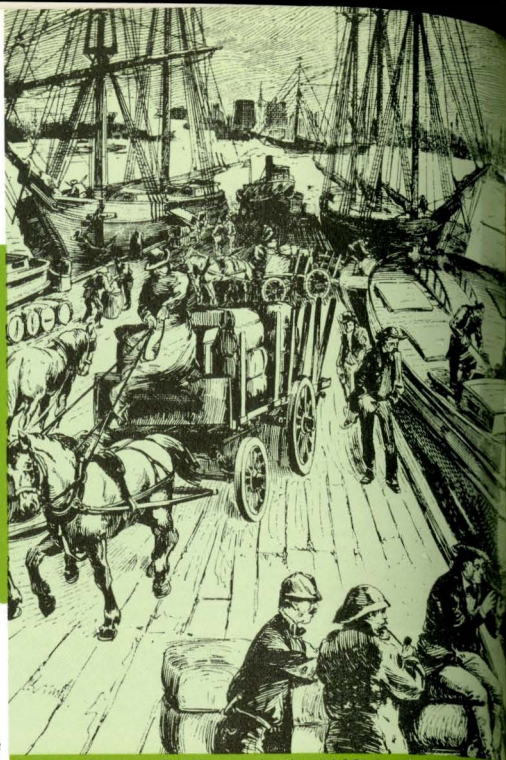
and processions that were given to some of the Roman Emperors."

Another writer exclaimed in awe: "After Alexander of Macedon had carried his arms into India he did not descend the Indus with greater triumph or make a prouder display."

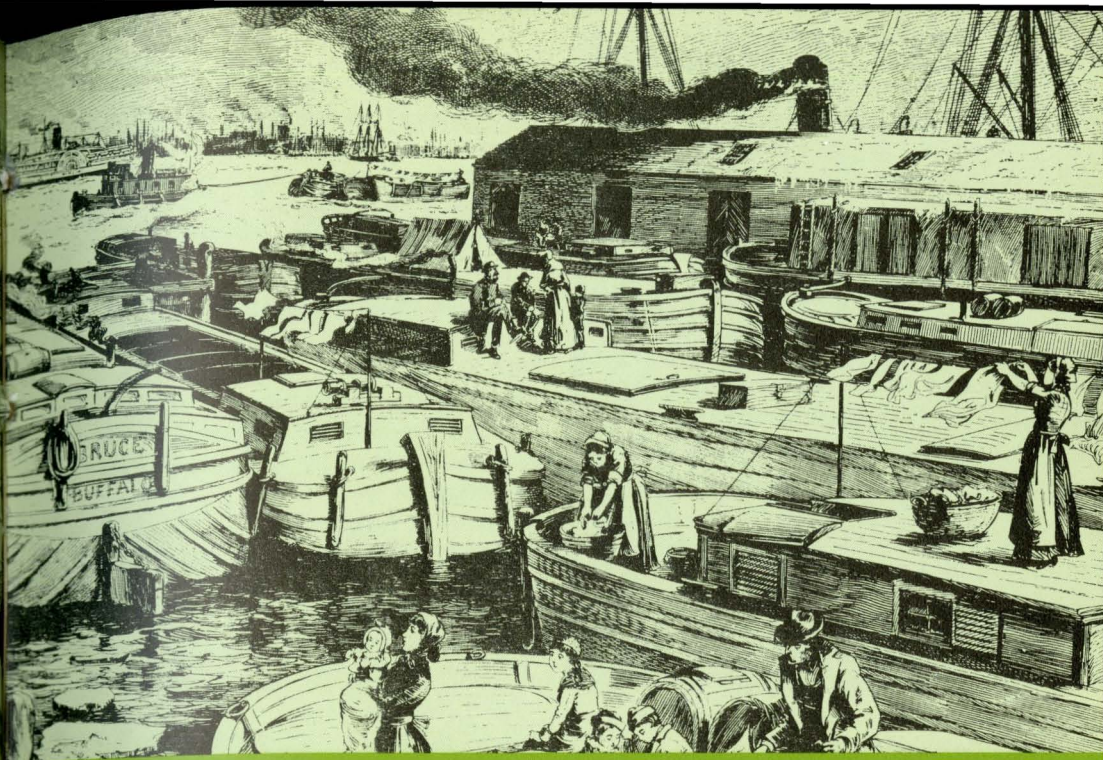
The printers' guild had a float in which it printed and distributed poetic cards that prompted many mothers to tear them out of their blushing daughters' hands. One read:

*"The monarch of the briny tide
Whose giant arm encircles earth
To virgin Erie is allied
A bright-eyed nymph of mountain
birth
... She meets the sceptred father of
the main
And in his heaving bosom hides her
virgin face."*

The Erie Canal might not have been much in terms of the gigantic Panama Canal, but it was something in its day. Financially, it was a complete success. Even before it had been completed it



Coenties Slip, now filled in, nearby the old SCI South Street building



began to make money. In fact, its tolls were more than the interest charges before it was completed.*

And in 12 years its capital costs, which included improvement and the construction of branch canals, had been paid off. Albany had increased its business four times in two years — freight rates between New York and Buffalo dropped from \$100 per ton by land to \$10 a ton through the canal.

In 1835 business was so good that the Ditch was ordered enlarged for bigger boats. It was then widened to 70 feet and deepened to 7 feet and the locks doubled to handle two way traffic.

Probably no one has really assessed the tremendous influence of the canal.

Cities boomed on its arteries. Buffalo now became the greatest grain holding center in the nation. New England shipped its lumber West, and manufactured goods flowed back and forth.

Towns like Lockport, Middleport and Shelby Basin and others grew into existence. Wherever the canal turned or had branches, civilization came to life like a fertilized beanstalk. It contributed not only to the growth of the region through which it passed but to the growth of such states as Ohio, Illinois, Michigan and Indiana.

Lake freighters now hauled supplies for settlers, machinery and other goods for European markets. For everyone it meant better, more comfortable living.

People flocking West spurred industry and farming and opened the heart of America clear to the Mississippi and even California when the Gold fever struck. Many New England towns were nearly emptied by this easy access route to the West. Moreover, it spurred other communities to build canals and increase their capacity to work and im-

prove the land.

But it wasn't long before the railroads intruded and slowly took away some of its cargo until by 1869 it carried as much as the canal. In 1882 the canal was made a free canal but even so its days were now numbered as the trains usurped more and more cargo.

In the 1880's a large barge colony formed on South Street and Coenties Slip, nearby to the SCI headquarters station, particularly in the winter when ice prevented use of the Canal; the Institute found itself drawn into ministering to many of the family groups which lived aboard — some 200 families, it was estimated.

Some of the bargees attended religious services in the chapel. And there were the emergencies when the Institute supplied blankets and other articles to the distressed barge families during bitter weather.

By 1898 traffic was so lean and the railroad's political power so great in opposing any improvement to the canal that it became rundown from disuse

and neglect.

In 1903 the State decided to get some use out of it by turning it into a "barge canal." It was widened to 75 feet and deepened to 12 feet so tugs now could replace the mule and push the huge barges through. Many parts of the old canal were relocated.

Historians and canal enthusiasts have tried to preserve relics of the old canal and have succeeded at times in turning some old locks into picnic areas. But mostly the relics — a broken aqueduct, a grass covered ravine — are being bulldozed and run over with highways and shopping centers.

Yet you can still find remnants of the old Erie Canal if you care to drive the backroads of central New York. Many are visible in corn fields, meadows and orchards or abandoned near the edges of small towns. So sturdily was the old ditch built that many locks and inlets still stand solid and straight after almost 150 years — a monument of another era.



*Tolls were profitable. In 1836 the toll on wheat was 4 1/2 mills per 1000 pounds per mile and double that for merchandise. Passengers paid two mills apiece. The boat *Venice* that year carried 38,000 pounds of merchandise between Troy and Buffalo and paid \$12.50 for the boat and \$124 for the cargo. Some larger ships could carry as much as 120,000 pounds. It may be surprising to modern readers to discover that way back in 1825 hydrostatic weight locks that could weigh the boat and cargo were in use. But they were and they worked night and day sometimes and had a line of 50 boats waiting.

Singing Down to Rio (Continued from page 4)

A good shantyman often invented his own shanties. He would hear a phrase of speech, covering a wide range of subjects, but usually appropriate to the seaman's life or past, and to this added more new lines.

Also he sometimes took the first line or theme of a folk song or hymn from his homeland or a country visited by him and adapted this as a shanty for a particular task or mood, but the words and tune had to be such that they could be heard above a raging sea or roaring wind.

The shanties' uses also varied. On one ship a particular shanty may be sung while hauling sails, but among another crew would be used for turning a windlass. Such shanties were most numerous in their heyday, in the mid-19th century, among American and British sailing vessels.

Eventually the introduction and dominance of the steamship and the changing types of jobs aboard them killed

the "shanty" as a means of making lighter work among the crew, but they could still be heard in surviving sailing ships well into our own century. And they did not die out.

Fortunately, before they could be forgotten and lost forever, a number of people interested in this type of song, such as Cecil Sharp in England, either wrote down the words or music, or through the medium of records, have recorded the shanties being sung by old sailormen.

The BBC frequently broadcasts programs of folk songs which include sea shanties and the latter, such as "What Shall We Do With the Drunken Sailor?", "Blow The Man Down", "Shenandoah", "Bound for the Rio Grande", "The Liverpool Girls", "Johnny Come Down to Hilo", "Lowlands Away", "Whisky Johnny", "Sally Brown", are very often still among the repertoire of male voice choirs in Britain.

PAST PRESENT & FUTURE (Continued from page 6)

guards his job on a containership as a good opportunity to save money, like his tankerman counterpart, but he has little enthusiasm for the seafaring life as such.

He continues to be a tolerant and good-natured individual, still a conservative wary of change or innovation, but he feels the deprivations of the seafaring life more than in the past because his voyage of several weeks or months will afford him just a few hours in each port of call to get away from shipboard life and routine.

The loneliness and boredom of the seaman's life can be even worse today than in the past. Because of his brief shore leave he is more dependent than ever on the services we offer. His need for quick and dependable information and assistance is more acute than ever. The material services which we offer

to our merchant seamen must always be an outward manifestation of a deeper reality and concern.

This fact was summed up by the late Archbishop Temple in the following words: "No one can dispute the claim of our seamen to the best we have to give them. And if we are Christian people then the best we have to give them is fellowship in the Spirit of Christ; a fellowship that will express itself, no doubt, through a great many material forms — canteens, beds, pleasant sitting-rooms, club-rooms, and the like — but which will all the time be inspired by that Spirit, alike in its depth of true charity and love, and in its desire to share with them the thing which we know to be the best thing in the world — the Gospel of Christ and the love of God which it proclaims."

THE OVERLOOKED TRAGEDY

by Joseph C. Salak

The entire world was stunned on April 15, 1912 when the *Titanic* went down with a loss of 1,517. But when the German liner, *Wilhelm Gustloff*, sank on January 30, 1945, and carried between 4,000 and 9,000 people to watery graves, it received only token attention.

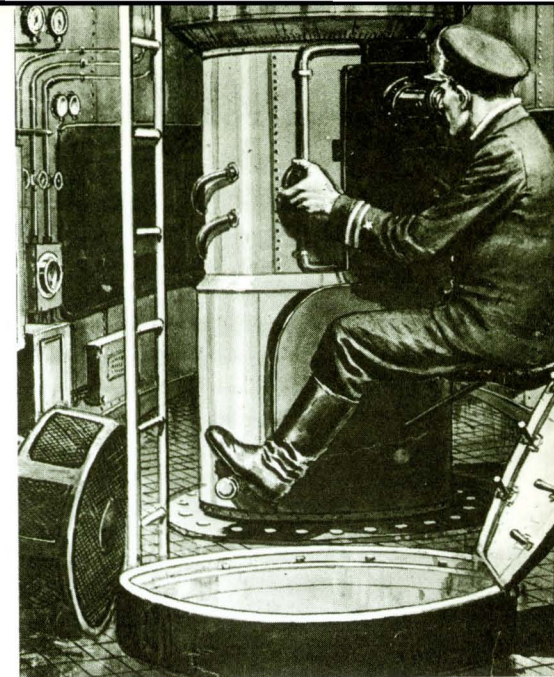
Russian soldiers entered Warsaw, Poland, on January 11, 1945, this relentless Russian invasion threatening the large numbers of German mechanical and engineering talent building submarines in Polish ports.

Unless the technicians were evacuated at once by sea they would be captured. And so it was agreed, on January 22, 1945, that all naval vessels not needed for vital strategic operations be assigned to carry refugees out of the threatened ports.

One of those chosen for the mass exodus was the relatively new 25,484-ton *Wilhelm Gustloff*. Built for the passenger trade, launched in 1938, it was converted into a troop carrier.

It was from Gdynia, on that frigid January morning that the *Wilhelm Gustloff* steamed away with a headcount of 3,700 highly skilled U-boat personnel and several thousand refugees from eastern Germany. Though jam-packed, all felt confident that their escape would be successfully accomplished.

Two hours later, in the icy waters of the Gulf of Danzig, the ship took a direct hit by a torpedo fired from a lurking Russian submarine and plunged



below the surface, taking to the bottom nearly three times as many victims as the *Titanic*. No other ship in history had ever carried so many people to their death.

This the outside world did not learn until February 18 when the Finnish radio in routine reporting announced the sinking. No details were given other than an estimate of "about 7,700 casualties."

The *New York Times* published one day later a short piece — want-ad size — of the catastrophe. On February 20, the Stockholm paper, *Svenska Dagviadet*, briefly commented that the *Wilhelm Gustloff* had been stuffed with about 10,000 persons — of whom about 950 survived.

Not a single news magazine of the time gave so much as a line to the world's worst sea tragedy. The news wire services were not the least sensitive to what had happened.

Much later, the *Guinness Book of World Records* viewed the sea tragedy as if it didn't quite believe it, and sharply downed the casualty list to a death toll of 4,120.

ADULT STUDY COURSES BEGIN

The Institute announced its schedule of fall adult study courses, most of which began September 18.

Announced, also, was that these adult courses would now become known as the Franklin D. Roosevelt Institute of Maritime and General Studies in honor of President Roosevelt who was a member of the SCI Board of Managers from 1908 to 1925 and a vice president from 1929 to 1945.

All courses are open to the general public as well as seamen.

Subjects include painting and drawing, creative writing, understanding opera and instruction in the musical instrument, the recorder.

Other subjects offered are: Beginning Spanish, the sea as an inspiration for literary expression, rapid reading, sociology of western man and a series of films depicting the literature and performing arts of six countries.

A condensed course in International Marketing Management in the form of

seminars is taught through the International Executive Association, New York Regional Export Expansion Council and the United States Department of Commerce.

Another series of seminars termed Business Partners Around the Globe, is conducted under the joint auspices of the New York State Department of Commerce — International Division, United Nations Association and the Roosevelt Institute.

A laboratory course in the techniques of personnel supervision will begin October 31.

Two subjects, Maritime Law, and Human Factors in Marine Engineering, are taught under the auspices of the State University of New York. Evening courses at SCI plus some Saturday classes at Fort Schuyler, New York, lead to the academic degree of Master of Science in Transportation and Management.



New Resident Chaplain

The Rev. Douglas Wolfe became the resident chaplain for the Institute July 6.

He was formerly a chaplain for the Cook County Jail in Chicago and at St. Leonard's House there. Born at Port Jervis, New York, Chaplain Wolfe was educated at Hobart College and Berkeley Divinity School. He has two children, a girl and a boy.

Chaplain Wolfe succeeds the Rev. Henry H. Crisler who has joined the staff of Trinity School in New York. Calling on ships in port will be among the new chaplain's assignments.

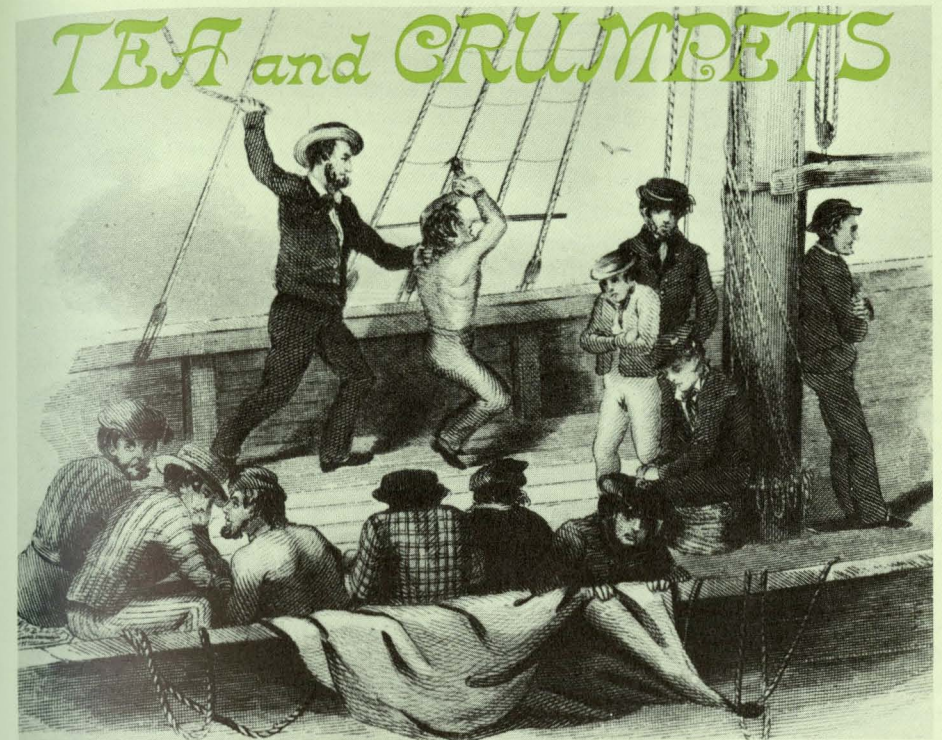
Ocean and Land

In storm the long sea weed,
Having been torn from the ocean floor,
Is green whips,
Cracked above the rolling tops,
The white, flying manes
Of the wildly-plunging waves —
The untamed stallions of the sea.

In calm this kelp is arms,
Long stretched-out arms
Trying to bind the ocean,
The waves, the tides,
And all the mystery of water
To the stolid, unimaginative land.

Enola Chamberlin

IT WASN'T



by Ken Canterbury

The notion fostered by many a movie film of life at sea in the 16th century Elizabethan period being a carefree existence of plundering and raiding enemy treasure galleons and ports is but fiction.

It is equally untrue that the brave crews feasted and drank the best food and barrels of brandy or rum, sleeping off their excesses in their sumptuous quarters aboard a clean, well-run ship.

Life as a ship's crew in Queen Elizabeth I's reign, whether on an "official" vessel or on a privateer, free to gain spoils where they could be obtained, was rough and tough.

The same applied to the crews aboard other countries' vessels, such as the Spaniards, French, Portuguese and Dutch. A landlubber's life-span was about forty years; on board ship it was

considerably less. If he did not die in battle or a brawl, disease or starvation killed the seaman, and it was normal for only one-third of a ship's crew to survive a long voyage.

There were no proper accommodations in most of the men-of-war or merchant ships simply because the vessels were of 1000 tons or less and were so small every inch of space was needed for stores, guns and equipment.

A few of the seamen may have had hammocks; those who did not slept on the bare boards or any reasonably flat surface where they could find it.

Here the men also ate and lived, when not on duty, with the rats, lice, bugs, cockroaches, beetles and smell from the bilges. The crew received a pound of bread or ships' biscuits each day. With this went a gallon of beer.



But the biscuits were often drilled by weevil beetles and the beer so sour it gave the men dysentery. Salt meat was a meal on four days a week and salt fish with several ounces of oil or butter and fourteen ounces of cheese was provided on Saturdays and Wednesdays.

If any man had money to spend he could buy extra food of better quality, from the "petty tally", which was organized by the captain, the profits supposedly going to benefit the crew and ship, but usually lining the captain's pocket.

The seamen could buy bacon, the best cheese, rice, prunes, even wine — but on an ordinary seaman's pay of about three shillings and four pence a month, these luxuries were beyond him.

So it was understandable that when an enemy ship was seized or port plundered, the obtaining of food and drink was equally as important to the half-starved crew as treasure or goods.

Even though the food was poor the crew used to gamble with dice for each other's rations. This was not condoned and if caught the offender was flogged, the number of lashes depending on whether a first or frequent offence.

Other offenses against the law of the ship also had severe punishments. Mutiny or defying an officer meant the offender could be hanged or flogged to within an inch of his life.

The stubborn or lazy man was keel-hauled, dragged under the keel from one side to the other, his body often being gashed and torn by the barnacles on the ship's hull. If the offense was more severe a cannon was also fired over the man's head as he was hauled from the sea.

If a crew man drew a weapon on board ship against another man, or even worse, an officer, his left hand was amputated by the ship's surgeon in front of the assembled crew.

Those who complained against orders or swore about an officer, or who took the Lord's name in vain, had their tongues scrubbed with sand and canvas, or some other nasty tasting, foul substance; so they remembered their offense for several days afterwards every time they tried to eat.

If caught asleep while on duty the offender was hung up by his wrists or thumbs with a bag of lead shot hung around his neck to add to the agony. Any man who told a lie and this discovered was given the worst tasks in the ship. Those who did not keep a proper lookout were tied to the bowsprit and food placed just beyond their reach. Here they stayed until thought to have had their wits sharpened. But many died before then.

Superstition also caused some "offenses" aboard ship. If a man whistled, or accidentally left a bucket upturned, mentioned pigs in conversation, or did other things to provoke bad luck on the vessel, he was flogged. Alternatively he may have been towed behind the ship on a rope, until, half-drowned, he was hauled on board.

Curiously, if the ship did become becalmed there were several ways to encourage the wind to rise again; one of these was to tie one of the "grummets" or ship's boys over a cannon to be beaten by the boatswain with his cane. Or the ship's boys were all tied together in a circle on deck and made to strike each other with knotted ropes until the winds rose again.

If the boys and men survived all this, and when too aged to sail the seas, they probably spent their last days in the world's port taverns regaling any who would listen with tales of life aboard ship in the "good old days."

NEPTUNE'S DAUGHTER

by George R. Berens

Ever since men started to venture on long ocean voyages some three thousand years ago there have been reports of mysterious creatures sighted at sea. Most of them were horrible monsters.

They will be found embellishing the crude marine charts of past centuries. The actual existence of any of them has never been proven. Nor has that of an entirely different denizen of the deep, that ravishing female, half human, half fish — the mermaid.

These beautiful creatures with a human female torso and a scaled fishes' tail have been sighted by hundreds of seamen, and supposedly reliable reports of such sightings are in existence.

During many years at sea I have always had an eye open for mermaids. Never did I see one, but scanning the ruffled sea surface assiduously I have seen many interesting and weird marine creatures in their natural environment.

No, I never saw a live mermaid, but once a most beautiful one came into view in the Panama Canal, of all places. She was a carved daughter of Neptune gracing the bows of the ship *Burrard*.

The owner of the Danish fleet of Fred Olsen and Company has a taste for art, and for old traditions of the sea. His smart ships are all adorned with fine figureheads; and surely the ravishing beauty of the *Burrard* was the finest of them all. Our crew surely thought so. They lined the rail and stared at that lifelike mermaid until the ships had passed each other, and she was no longer visible.

But I do recall a lovely tropic night when I was on lookout on the forecandlehead. That is a beautiful place to be in good weather, with nothing to do but survey the sea aglitter under a silver moon moving slowly across the star-studded dome of the sky. We were bound from Balboa to Manila, and that is a long haul across the Pacific. We were already almost a month at sea. A few more days should see us docked in Manila.



A gentle breeze drifted over the ship. The only sound that broke the stillness of the star-crowned night was the soft "shush-shush" of the bow wave, as the froth-topped sea rose up the ship's bow, and fell away again.

The small triangular space of the fore-castle-head rose and fell gently in the swells. Up there in the very front of the ship it seemed to be remote from everything, a quiet, isolated spot just right for dreaming.

Leaning on the apron, lulled to an almost semi-conscious state by the serenity of this perfect ocean night, my thoughts flew ahead to Manila. There was a favorite rendezvous of seafarers there known as the 'Mermaid Bar'.

Behind the bar, above stacks of liquid refreshment, atop the long mirror there was a lifelike mermaid. She reclined in a provocative position, and smiled down on the patrons.

Staring over the seas as the bow plunged rhythmically into the gentle waves, that seductive mermaid became real before my eyes. Not only real, but alive. She clung to the stem, her hair streaming in the breeze, and smiled up at me. For some time I was lost in the soft beauty of the night, all my thoughts centered on this enticing sea nymph.

Then, suddenly, the telephone bell rang, jarring me back to the world of the ship. Opening the watertight box under the apron I put the receiver to my ear.

"What are y' doing up there — asleep?" I heard the angry voice of the watch officer on the bridge say. "Why don't you answer the bells?"

That is one of the lookout's duties, to repeat the strokes of the bell on the bridge as it marks the passing half-hours. I wondered what bells had been struck — what time it was.

"Report on the bridge as soon as you're relieved," came over the phone. That meant I was due for at least a salty reprimand. And all on account of that mermaid!

This incident convinced me of the

real origin of the sailor's girls of the sea. These theories advanced by the scientists that big, ugly sea animals, like the manatee, or the dugong, or even the fairer-looking seal were reported as mermaids were all humbug.

The beautiful mermaid is merely a product of imagination, despite all the sightings reported, even those of recent times.

Glancing over such reports one will notice that all these ocean sirens were sighted by men!

Think, if you will, of the old wind-jammer sailors. They led a hard life. A sailing ship is propelled through the waters by her sails, but the sails require the constant energy of her crew to keep them functioning. It is very rigorous work continued for long periods, and often performed under severe weather conditions, too.

Living conditions aboard those ships were primitive, comfort non-existent. The food was poor. Voyages often took months. Companionship was strictly male, and seamen were, in general, crude and unsympathetic. They had to be so to exist under the harsh conditions of sea life.

So it is readily conceivable that the seaman's thoughts often wandered when he had the opportunity to relax, as, for instance, when his ship was sailing smoothly along in the trade-wind regions, at night when all was quiet and peaceful.

Perhaps on lookout, away from his shipmates, or a tyrant officer, his thoughts would turn to affection, female companionship, the lures of the shoreside world.

Then, if he had a good imagination, he would probably conjure up visions of exquisite mermaids, for, of course, no other females of the human type could exist out there on the open sea.

But, despite this conviction, whenever I am at sea, I'll still keep up the search. The mysteries of the ocean are far from being all exposed. Perhaps there really are mermaids!

THE WEATHER EYE

(Continued from page 8)

Dry, unstable air, or with upward movement which would disperse smoke, is associated with fair weather. Humid, stable air, or air that sits in horizontal layers, invariably leads to a weather disturbance.

Two old sailor signs are sound indicators of the phenomenon of "thinning" air just before a storm. Low pressure or thin air is one of the weatherman's most reliable bits of evidence for forthcoming bad weather.

The old sailor "saw" his thin air in two ways. The first had to do with birds, particularly coastal birds. They tend to roost just before a storm — probably because they find it harder to fly in the rapidly lowering pressure and hence take a rest rather than expend more energy in staying aloft in the thin air.

The second sign of thinning air is a visual phenomenon. The sailor states that distant shores seem nearer just prior to a rain. What actually happens is this: The usual salt haze which tends to obscure horizons, even in good weather, disappears when turbulence mixes it just before a storm, thus giving the mariner a short spell of good visibility or nearer shores.

Still another category of old weather signs is that of cloud and sky observations.

A widely-known saying concerns itself with a particular cloud form. It goes — Mackerel sky and mare's tails make tall ships wear short sails.

This saying describes what the weatherman calls a cirrus overcast occurring atop a thickening layer of altocumulus clouds. Cirrus clouds are high, wispy and hairlike (mare's tails); altocumulus look like the ribbed side of a fish (mackerel sky). This sky condi-

tion is a pretty sure indicator of an approaching warm front and attendant rain and wind.

The same condition is also easily observed at night and its appearance then is one of the best-known of the folk weather signs. When the moon shines through this type of overcast, it produces a halo or the ring around the moon that seafaring men have long associated with a forthcoming storm.

All other signs and sayings notwithstanding, probably the most widely known one is this — Red sky at night, sailor's delight; red sky in the morning, sailor take warning.

And like the others, this, too, is scientifically sound. The reasons lie in weather movement. In most areas, weather moves from west to east. And if a sailor sees a red sky at night, what he's observing is dry, dust-laden air to the west of him through which the setting sun glows red. If that air (which is moving his way) were wet, the sun would appear as grey or yellowish.

The second part of the saying is, of course, the reverse. Red sky in the morning or the sun rising in the east and shining through the dry air out there means that dry air, moving eastward, will only be further away as the day progresses. And as it moves, it will probably be displaced by humid air from the west, bringing the strong possibility of foul weather.

So, by the simple (but often repeated) expedient of close observation of winds, air and clouds, the old salt has left us moderns a body of pretty sound weather advice. In this case, as in many others, old ways, when investigated, very often turn out to be good ways.



TAIL OF THE HURRICANE

Pitching in the swirling storm
then lulled by its eerie eye,
in gusts of feral force
we come majestically home
steady on course . . .
Ahead, the Palisades,
freighters at anchor
off the Jersey shore,
ferries churning as before.
Small boats bare their hulls,
ships from Netherlands, Bombay
slow their harbor pace.
Immigration stops us —
not so, the wind-blown gulls.

Louise Scott

PEBBLES

On the great beach
When once you spot
The pebble of your
Choice, don't turn
Aside to watch a gull
Who runs like blowing
Sand, for in the instant
Some gaudy little wave
May snatch your prize.

D. J. Holland

REQUEST

Turn my face to the sea.
Let me know now the peace of a calm
sailing.
Give me one last glimpse of the far
horizon,
Of sea and sky and ship.
Turn my face to the sea.
It has been my life, my beloved.
The lonely silence of its darkness
Has been even as still as this . . .
Turn my face to the sea.
The tide, I know, has been ebbing . . .

Edith Roberts Langenau