



the LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK



JULY-AUGUST 1974

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.

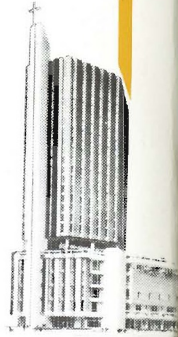
More than 753,000 such seamen of all nationalities, races and creeds come into the Port of New York every year. To many of them the Institute is their shore center in port and remains their polestar while they transit the distant oceans of the earth.

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.

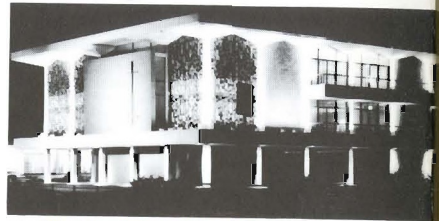
Each year 2,300 ships with 96,600 men aboard put in at Port Newark, where time ashore is extremely limited.

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 57% 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.

the LOOKOUT

Vol. 65 No. 6

July-August 1974

The Rev. John M. Mulligan, D.D.

Director

Carlyle Windley
Editor

SEAMEN'S CHURCH
INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK
15 State Street, New York, N. Y. 10004
Telephone: 269-2710

The Right Reverend
Paul Moore, Jr., S.T.D., D.D.
Honorary President

John G. Winslow
President

Published monthly with exception of July-August and February-March when bi-monthly. Contributions to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York of \$5.00 or more include a year's subscription to *The Lookout*. Single copies 50c. Additional postage for Canada, Latin America, Spain, \$1.00; other foreign, \$3.00. Second class postage paid at New York, N.Y.

Cover photo by Robert F. Campbell

© Seamen's Church Institute of New York, 1974

US ISSN 0024-6425



INSTITUTE AWARDS FIRST CERTIFICATE IN MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

Of the 96 students currently enrolled in SCI's Roosevelt Institute program, William P. Towner (second from left) surveyor for the American Bureau of Shipping, is the first student to earn the full six-course Certificate in Maritime Transportation.

Participating in the formal 1st certificate presentation were (left to right) Mr. Clifford Wise, Manager - Ship Repair/Sales, Bethlehem Steel Corporation and SCI board member; Dr. John M. Mulligan, SCI Director; and Mr. Robert T. Young, Chairman and President of the American Bureau of Shipping.

Towner, who logged 20 years at sea prior to coming shoreside, was, at 25 years of age, the youngest American merchant seaman to earn a chief engineer's license.

For the past eight years he has been at the American Bureau of Shipping as an outside surveyor often assigned to the Bethlehem Steel Corporation's Hoboken Shipyard in Hoboken, New Jersey.

He is a member of numerous professional organizations, serves as vice president of the New York Society of Port Engineers, and is a former board member of the Maritime Association of New York.

James Fenimore Cooper and his whaleship **UNION** By Frederick P. Schmitt

James Fenimore Cooper never intended to become an author, for as a young man he had resolved to earn his living at sea. Cooper began this lifelong infatuation first as a merchant sailor, then as a promising officer in the U.S. Navy. It must have been his love for Susan DeLancey that he resigned his commission in 1811, married and settled in Westchester County to enjoy an inheritance in the style of a gentleman farmer. But that idyllic life was short-lived, for in eight heart-rending years tragedies struck in shocking succession. All five of Cooper's brothers died suddenly, leaving the support of their family solely on his shoulders. He borrowed cash and reorganized and bartered their properties and farms, but it was impossible to meet expenses. Obviously he had to turn to a more lucrative calling.

Seeking relief from his financial burdens, Cooper went to Sag Harbor, where he visited Charles T. Dering, an in-law, and a prosperous shipping agent in the village's burgeoning whaling industry. The two men became fast friends. Cooper spoke his heart as they relaxed at nearby Shelter Island, cruising, fishing and swapping sea stories. It was obvious that he had never really lost his affection for the sea. He loved ships, the bite of the salt breeze and the thrill of life before the mast. But he was almost thirty and with

so many obligations he had to cast such dreams aside. From talking with Dering, however, he was intoxicated by the idea of perhaps accumulating a substantial nest egg as a whaleship owner.

By the summer of 1818 Cooper was convinced that he should enter the whaling business. But he knew that the initial investment — at least \$20,000 to get a ship under way for the whaling "grounds" — was staggering for such frugal times. Previously, Sag Harbor ships were owned either outright by individuals or in partnership by families or firms. Cooper knew none of these methods were possible for him, so he tried to introduce a system which had been employed successfully in Nantucket for years. Called "stock companies," these ventures enabled anyone with a little money to purchase a few shares in a company ship. This way risk and profit were spread among the group. Apparently, lacking anyone willing to buy shares in such a novel venture, Cooper assumed the gamble himself and purchased the 262-ton whaling ship *UNION*, then sold a third of the "outfit" or gear to his friend Charles Dering. Ironically, in later years, the company method of financing whale-ships became the most popular in the port.

Most of the task of selecting a crew, outfitting the ship for a year at sea and

Images and/or text cannot be displayed due to copyright restrictions

Courtesy Nassau County Historical Society

Lithograph of an unidentified Sag Harbor whaleship, looking much the same as James Fenimore Cooper's *UNION*.

hopefully selling the oil upon her return would fall to Cooper, who obviously had no experience. Luckily, Dering had a fine recommendation for captain, Jonathan Osborne. A resident of nearby Waincott, he was an old-timer with a reputation of being a bit crusty yet experienced whaleman. After all, wasn't it he who had bragged of killing some 150 whales? He certainly was daring, risking his own life for the sake of the chase on at least several occasions. Cooper probably could not have found a better man to fill the billet.

Spring and early summer passed quickly as Cooper, undoubtedly with considerable advice from Dering, prepared *UNION* for sea. The ship was sturdy enough, even though she had been built in New Bedford in 1804, but it cost \$10,000 to fit her out completely. She sailed, probably in mid-August, to reach the relatively safe coasts of Brazil and Patagonia for the start of the whaling season; a conservative, but poor decision, considering these grounds were almost "fished" out. By then, other Sag Harbor ships were venturing around treacherous Cape Horn into more fertile Pacific grounds. *UNION* cleared port with a 22-man crew, four whaleboats and enough provisions for twelve months. During the final days of outfitting, Cooper returned home to Westchester, where he received frequent and detailed

reports from his partner. "The ship appeared in fine order and trim," Dering wrote from his Sag Harbor office describing her departure, "...and went with every prospect of a successful voyage which I cordially wish her."

FIRST BOOK

While *UNION* was on her first voyage Cooper embarked on his literary career, but curiously it began by mere chance. Cooper and his wife were visiting one of her cousins at Shelter Island, when Susan, his wife, became ill. One quiet evening he began reading a sentimental English novel to her and after a chapter or two he threw it aside, remarking disgustedly, "I could write you a better book than that myself." Susan, knowing that he hated writing even a letter, first laughed, then half-heartedly challenged him to do something better. But the jest soon turned to encouragement, as Cooper began to weave a long, cumbersome moral tale. Dissatisfied with this flimsy pot-boiler, he tore it to shreds and supposedly developed the plot for his first published novel, *Precaution*, at "Duke" Fordham's tavern on lower Main Street in Sag Harbor. Said to imitate Jane Austen's work, then popular, Cooper's book was a contemporary ladies' novel, full of caricatures of proper English gentlemen and women in a gushing romantic setting. By June, 1820, the book was

Images and/or text cannot be displayed due to copyright restrictions

Woodcut entitled, "Just Landed." The scene is typical of an old whaling port such as Sag Harbor during the heyday of the industry.

completed and off to the printer. Soon Cooper was needling him: "Hasten the first proof sheet, as it may suggest some alterations . . . I hourly expect the *UNION* in, and must go to Sag Harbor as soon as I hear of her arrival."

UNION arrived on July 15 on schedule with a fair catch, worth perhaps \$17,000, yet nowhere near enough to cover expenses. Cooper reinvested part of the proceeds to publish *Precaution* and the remainder in refitting *UNION*, which had arrived home grimy, disheveled and in need of paint and repairs. Still, this was not enough to discourage Cooper's ambition. He met the challenge; supervising the refitting when he could and even occasionally sailing his ship on Long Island Sound in the style of the grand yacht — once even as far as Newport — or just sitting, "gamming," and chatting with her skipper and men.

UNION set sail for the coast of Patagonia again under Captain Osborne in the summer of 1820. This voyage was a success, for when she returned home in July, 1821, her cargo of whale oil tallied a tidy profit of approximately \$8,000. Dering and Cooper were so satisfied with *UNION* that they even considered buying another whaler. Then, they spoke of fitting out a ship under the French flag, for the cost compared to an American registered whaler was minimal. The idea

was sweetened by the promise of a substantial French subsidy. Some said the profits alone in such a venture could have reached \$45,000. Why Cooper or Dering never pursued these avenues is unknown, but the final voyage of *UNION* under Cooper's ownership in the summer of 1821 may have been a key factor, for when she returned home in June, 1822, no one even bothered to record the results.

REAL-LIFE REFERENCES

While *Precaution* received lukewarm critical reviews, Cooper began to realize that his career lay in novels rather than whaling, anyway. His next book, *The Spy*, a tale of the Revolution, was well received and fueled more encouragement. But his greatest works — the immortal Leather Stocking Tales of the Western frontier — and some eleven sea fiction books were yet to be written. For many of these works he drew heavily on his Sag Harbor impressions and reminiscences. Even before his literary aspirations, he became attracted to the local color of the village and its characters; visiting ships, seeking out captains and mates and always listening intently to their briny yarns.

"Sagg," as it was then nicknamed, was and is one of the best harbors on the eastern end of Long Island. It was a simple village, quaint with a decidedly Yankee

(Continued on page 8)

Images and/or text cannot be displayed due to copyright restrictions

Engraved portrait of James Fenimore Cooper about the time that he was owner of the whaler *UNION*.

Yankee whaling scene of the period when UNION sailed from Sag Harbor under Cooper's ownership.

Images and/or text cannot be displayed due to copyright restrictions

Courtesy Kendall Whaling Museum

(Continued from page 6)

air. Cooper threaded his way through its two or three sandy, unpaved lanes, past clutches of neat, thrifty cottages, most framed in by brilliant white picket fences. In the village were two fine churches, a circulating library, bustling newspaper office and a federal arsenal, but the real activity was centered down at Long Wharf, where the whaleships were and coasting vessels arrived and cleared with everything from bricks to butter. Nearby, Duke's tavern was a place to talk, relax and refresh. It was here that Cooper unconsciously gathered much of his source material.

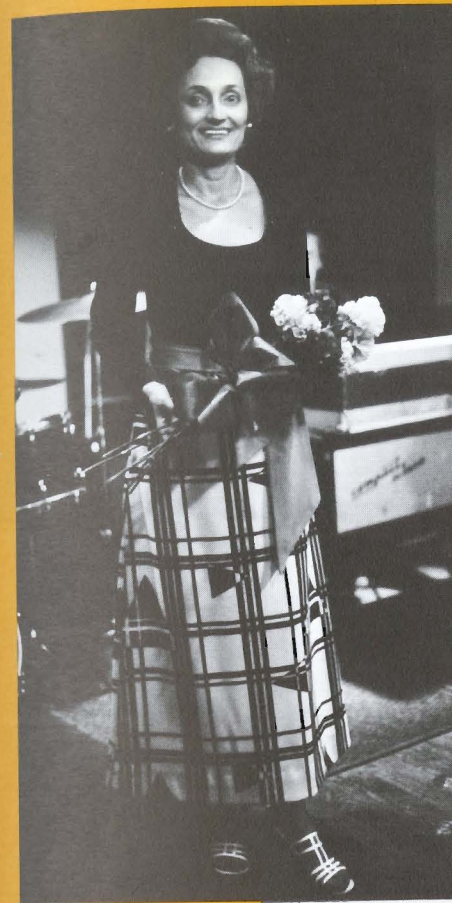
Years later, his daughter Susan said that he, "was much interested in hearing the details of those whaling voyages, and much amused with the whaling spirit pervading the whole community at Sag Harbor." He was captivated totally by this *esprit de corps*, observing in *The Sea Lions*, that it existed in whaling communities, "to an extent and in a degree that is wonderful ..." "Success in taking the whale," he continued, "was a thing that made itself felt in every fibre of the prosperity of the town ..." and Sag Harbor, he boasted, had more of this enthusiasm than even Nantucket, foremost of whaling capitals.

Characters in many Cooper novels are based on real-life people he knew in Sag Harbor. Long Tom Coffin, who appeared

in the first of his sea tales, *The Pilot*, published in 1824, is believed to be a sketch of Captain Jonathan Osborne of *UNION*, while Natty Bumppo of the *Leather Stocking Tales* was recognized immediately to bear the personal appearance and curious laugh of Captain David Hand, a popular Sag Harbor local. Another prominent resident, Dr. Ebenezer Sage, reappears in *The Sea Lions* without a change of name or personality. This book, incidentally, the tale of two fictitious sailing ships in conflict, sets out in Sag Harbor of the 1820's, vividly capturing the era when Cooper was a whaleship owner.

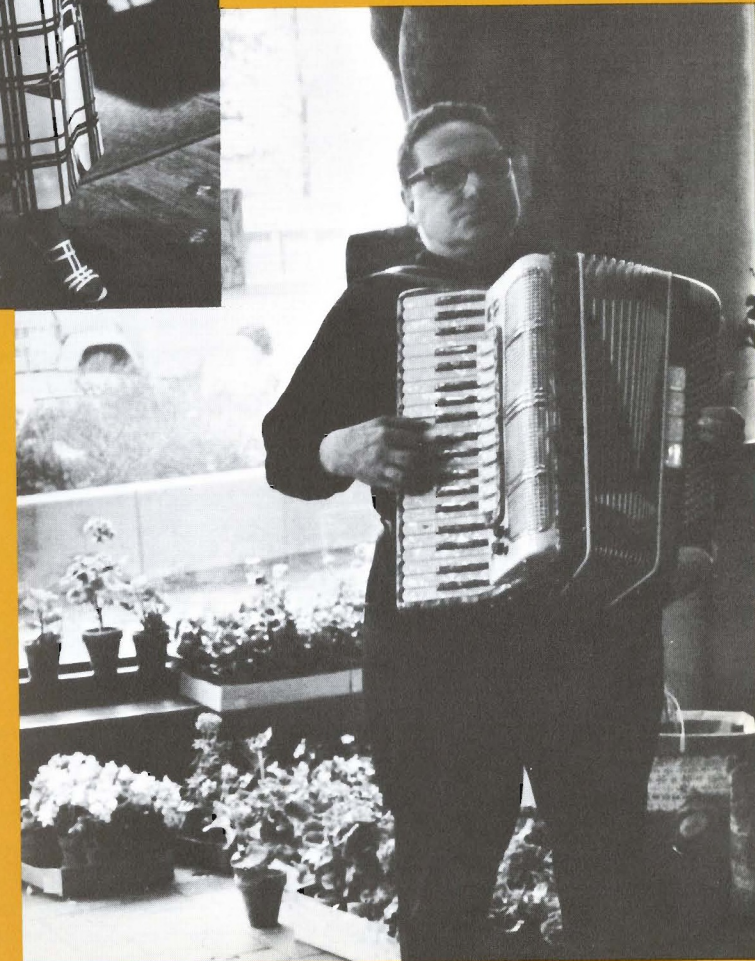
In the opinions of most literary scholars Cooper stands tall among America's greatest sea writers. His novels are authentic, for he knew ships and understood their people. Joseph Conrad, no stranger to the rolling deck or pen himself, wrote a most fitting appraisal of the man's work, saying in part:

"He loved the sea and looked at it with consummate understanding. In his sea tales, the sea interpenetrates with life; it is, in a subtle way, a factor in the problem of existence, and, for all its greatness, it is always in touch with the men, who, bound on errands of war or gain, traverse its immense solitudes ..."



Gladys Cabrera, one of SCI's loveliest and best loved hostesses "on stage" her first night as the Seamen's International Club's new social director. Mrs. Cabrera was enthusiastically welcomed by staff members and seamen who presented her with a congratulatory bouquet.

Raindrops may have been falling outside, but sunny music filled the air in SCI's lobby at the Women's Council's Annual Spring Flower Show. Seaman Don Davidson was the talented musician providing the lively accordion accompaniment for the day's activities.



a lifetime of knotting

By Dennis Starin

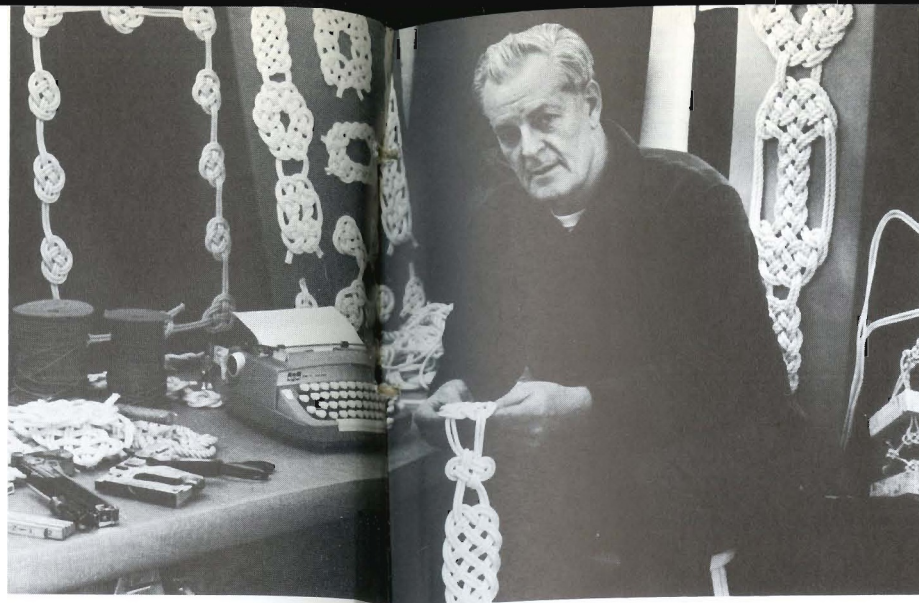
Editor's Note:

In 1938-39, *The Lookout* ran several articles on John Hensel, a young seaman who had already earned a reputation for being one of the best marlinspike men around. The following article updates us on what has taken place with "seaman" Hensel since.

John Hensel has been tying knots ever since he went to sea at the age of 17, when he signed on as ordinary seaman aboard a Canadian freighter out of Baltimore. Even in those days, the practice of marlinspike seamanship, as ornamental knotting was still called, had all but disappeared from the high seas.

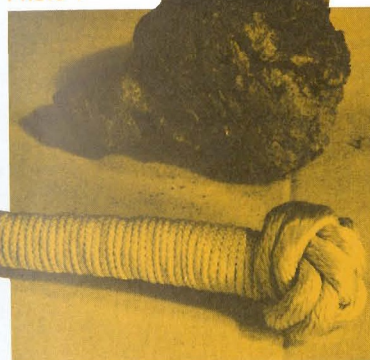
There were still a few old salts around then, however, who recognized that the young seaman from Manhattan had a natural talent for a length of rope and were willing to show him the tricks of their trade. With practice and perseverance, Hensel mastered the intricacies of nautical rope work to the extent that he co-authored *The Encyclopedia of Knots and Fancy Rope Work* while still in his twenties. (the subject of the 1939 article).

Today, and hundreds of rope miles later, John Hensel is still actively involved in knotting. In fact, the lost art of the sailor has been rediscovered by people in all walks of life; largely through Hensel's lifelong interest in the subject. He recently authored *The Book of Ornamental Knots* published by Scribner's, and has been busy giving lectures and demonstrations of his craft. He was a recent guest on Dr. Joyce Brothers' television show, *Easy Living*, and has also conducted workshop courses in knotting at the New York Botanical Gardens.



In his latest book Hensel takes a single basic knot, *the carrick bend*, and shows how it can be used for making wall hangings, jewelry, belts, door mats, bottle weavings, room dividers and other decorations. Hensel estimates that he tied over 30,000 feet of rope in making the illustrations for this book alone. His encyclopedia, which is still in print, describes more than 3,000 knots!

Photo 1

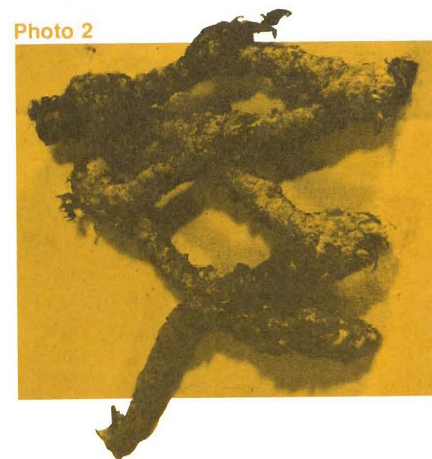


As Mr. Hensel points out, one of the nice things about ornamental knotting is that it requires very little by way of supplies and equipment. Nylon rope is available in many diameters and is easy to work with, but a broken clothes line can just as readily be recycled into an ornamental knot design.

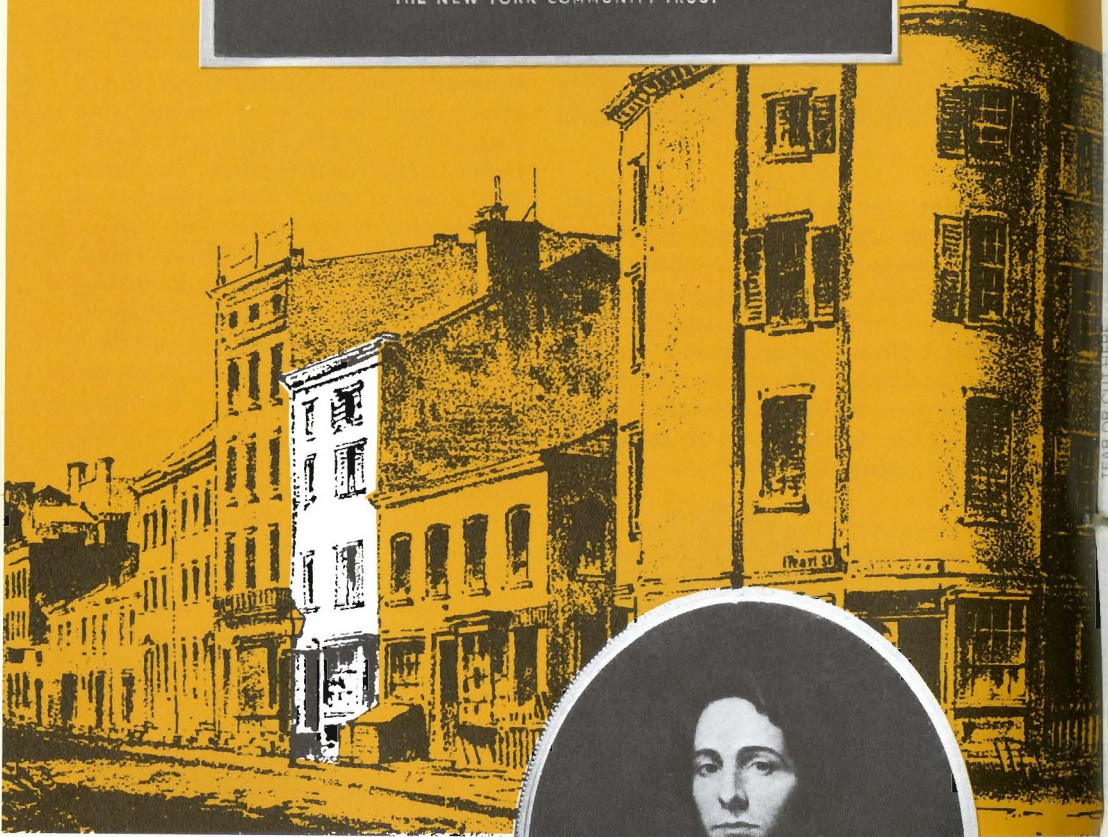
In the late '60's, Dr. Theodore Kazimirof, a dentist by profession and the Bronx County historian by avocation, was excavating at the site of the old Seamen's Church Institute on South Street. He found several ancient knot fragments among the debris and asked if Hensel could identify them. The knots were made of tarred hemp and showed considerable deterioration. But even so, Hensel spotted what could only be a man-rope knot, used as a fancy knot on the terminal end of a gangway stanchion in the days of sailing ships. To show how it was made, he duplicated it using dacron rope (photo 1). Another piece of rope work salvaged from the site is a piece of safety netting, the kind used under the bowsprit of an 18th century sailing ship (photo 2).

When not knotting, Hensel is the vice president of a construction firm in the New York area. He and his wife Dorothy, divide their time between City Island and a weekend retreat on eastern Long Island where Hensel's having "plenty of rope" means there's work to be done at home.

Photo 2



"HERITAGE OF NEW YORK"
 A HOUSE ON THIS SITE WAS THE BIRTHPLACE
 OF THE NOVELIST AND POET
HERMAN MELVILLE (1819-1891)
 "MOBY DICK," AMONG HIS NUMEROUS SEA-TALES,
 ATTAINED ENDURING RECOGNITION
 IN AMERICAN LITERATURE.
 PLAQUE ERECTED 1968 BY
 THE NEW YORK COMMUNITY TRUST



The present site of the Seamen's Church Institute as it appeared in 1858. Melville was born at 6 Pearl Street (indicated). Today the plaque pictured is affixed to the Pearl Street side of the Institute building indicating the former site of his birthplace.

HERMAN MELVILLE —
 August 1819-September 1891

TAPE OR STAPLE HERE

Office 512

The Editor - Lookout
 Seamen's Church Institute of New York
 15 State Street
 New York, New York 10004

To:

(PLEASE FOLD ALONG DOTTED LINE)

Dear Reader,
**WE NEED
 YOUR HELP...**

Often we are asked who reads *The Lookout*. And, except for replying that our readers are fine people with excellent taste in reading material, who are also steadfast friends of the Institute, we must admit that we don't know as much about you as we should.

Therefore, if you would take the time to complete the questions on the reverse side, and then return the form to us, we would be most appreciative.

If we get enough replies, we will even summarize the results in a future issue so you'll have a better idea of what your fellow readers and SCL's family of friends are like.

Thanks in advance for your help.

The Editor

Seamen's Church Institute of New York . . .
 Meeting the needs of Merchant Seamen for 140 years

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Occupation _____ Church Affiliation _____

(PLEASE CHECK APPROPRIATE BOX)

Are you ...

Under 50 Over 50 Retired Single Married Widowed

Do you have ...

Children Yes No If so, how many _____

Grandchildren Yes No If so, how many _____

Great-grandchildren? _____

Have you ever visited the Seamen's Church Institute? Yes No

If so, within the past

1 to 5 years 5 to 10 years 10 to 15 years

Do you vacation or travel

every year every 2-3 years occasionally

How long have you known about the Institute? Approx. number of years _____

How did you first hear about us? _____

What types of articles would you like to see in future issues of *The Lookout*?

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sea stories (tall tales, historical, etc.) | <input type="checkbox"/> more articles on the Institute |
| <input type="checkbox"/> profiles on famous ships | <input type="checkbox"/> stories of crafts, hobbies, etc. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> more poetry | <input type="checkbox"/> recipes |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> features on particular seamen |

Would you prefer receiving ...

- 10 issues of *The Lookout* per year (as it is now) or
 6 issues with more pages per issue each year

Do you ...

- save your copies of *The Lookout*
 pass them along ... if so, to whom _____

Do you have any hobbies such as boating, golf, knitting, crafts or collecting coins, stamps, marine art/marine artifacts.

Please list _____

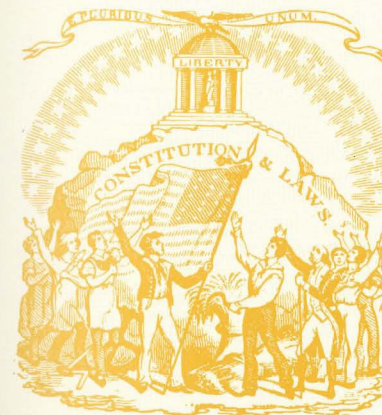
General comments _____



Thanks for your help. Now we feel we know a little more about you and what you want to read and know.

Around the Clock Flag Display

by Josephine M. Opshal



Do you know that OLD GLORY now flies both day and night at nine places in our country? These, of course, are exceptions to The Flag Code which states that our flag should be shown only from sunrise to sunset in good weather.

By Presidential Proclamation these places are:

1. The South Portico of the White House. This is the newest exception. It was added by President Nixon.
2. The dome of the Capitol, Washington, D.C.
3. Ft. McHenry, where Francis Scott Key witnessed the battle which inspired the writing of the poem we now know as our national anthem.
4. Flag House Square, Baltimore, Maryland. The Flag House was the home of Mary Pickersgill. She made the big flag for Fort McHenry, which inspired Mr. Key to write his poem.
5. The Marine Memorial on the Potomac River. This is a bronze statue of our flag being raised on Iwo Jima.

And by Tradition, the places where our flag flies around the clock are:

1. Francis Scott Key's grave in Mount Olivet Cemetery at Frederick, Maryland.
2. The Municipal War Memorial, Worcester, Mass.
3. The Plaza, Taos, New Mexico.
4. The Civilian Cemetery, Deadwood, South Dakota.



Don't forget July 4th in Old New York

...an all day festival for the entire family. For more information on the day's activities call (212) 472-1003

Seamen's Church Institute of N. Y.

15 State Street

New York, N. Y. 10004

Address Correction Requested

SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID
AT NEW YORK, N. Y.

THE SPIRIT OF LIBERTY

"Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women. When it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it.

No constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it ... The spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women. The spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias. The spirit of liberty is the spirit of Him who, near two thousand years ago, taught mankind that lesson it has never learned, but has never quite forgotten; that there will be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest."

Judge Learned Hand

