

FATHOM THIS!

The monthly newsletter from San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Celebrating 20 years as a national park: 1988-2008

May, 2008

Issue #4

Welcome to the 4th issue of Fathom This! We welcome you to visit your national park on San Francisco's historic waterfront. Stroll Hyde Street Pier and board the collection of floating historic ships; explore your maritime history through ranger-led programs and through library lectures; view artifacts and exhibits in the Visitor Center and in the Cargo Is King exhibit aboard *Balclutha*; experience seamanship firsthand while sailing aboard the scow schooner Alma, and research history in the Maritime Library. For information on all the programs and events for you to experience, please see the park's website at <http://www.nps.gov/safr/>, or call the Visitor Center at 415-447-5000.

Feel free to forward this newsletter to friends, and enter it, whole or in part, into blogs. The list of subscribers is never sold or loaned, and you may cancel at any time by emailing the editor at peter_kasin@nps.gov.

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CHINESE LEGACY: ASIAN / PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Cargo Is King Exhibit

Year-round. Ships admission: Adults, \$5. Ages 15 and under, free. Free with national park passes.

Go below deck of the *Balclutha* to view the Cargo Is King exhibit, which encompasses nearly the entire 'tween deck, and explore the three careers of the ship. In the forward section of the exhibit, view photographs and artifacts of the Chinese laborers, and explore their living quarters. Watch a film about the *Balclutha's* career in the salmon trade, when she was renamed Star of Alaska.

Chinese Cannery Workers

Sundays, May 11 and 25, 1:00pm. Meet on *Balclutha's* main deck. Ships admission: Adults, \$5. Ages 15 and under, free. Free with national park passes. Explore the lives and cultural contributions of the Chinese laborers who sailed from San Francisco to Alaska for the great salmon runs, in this ranger-led tour of the *Balclutha*.

Chinese shrimp junk *Grace Quan* raises sail

Saturdays, May 10 and 17, 11:30am. Meet on Hyde Street Pier's floating dock. Free admission.

Grace Quan is a replica 19th century San Francisco Bay shrimp junk. Discover the history of shrimp fishery on the bay and watch her sail being raised. Come aboard and haul a net, explore the crew's cabin, and take a turn at the tiller (junk is afloat but won't be sailing). To get there, walk up Hyde Street Pier and enter the dock leading to the tugboat *Hercules*. Where the dock splits into two entrances, take the left entrance. The *Grace Quan* is among the row of historic fishing craft at the floating dock. Please exercise caution while walking the floating dock and while aboard the *Grace Quan*.

SAIL ABOARD THE SCOW SCHOONER ALMA

Thursdays and Saturdays beginning Saturday, May 10, 1:00-4:00pm, with boarding at 12:30. Rates: \$35.00 adults, \$30.00 seniors 62 and over. \$20.00 ages 6-15. Under 6, free. For a complete schedule, and for reservations, please call the Visitor Center at 415-447-5000.

Take a three-hour sail on San Francisco Bay aboard the restored 1891-built two-masted scow schooner *Alma*! Immerse yourself in San Francisco's riveting maritime history through onboard ranger talks. Get hands-on sailing experience as her captain, mate, and volunteer crew invite you to learn sail handling, or just relax and take in the dazzling views. Tickets are paid for and picked up on sailing day at the Hyde Street Pier ticket booth, located halfway up the pier. Ticket booth opens at 9:30am.

CELEBRATING ALICE WATTS: First Mate, deckhand, sea educator, cook

Every park, every organization, should have an Alice Watts. Last March, Alice was feted with awards, cards, gift certificates, and an extended standing ovation at Hyde Street Pier's monthly evening chantey sing, where a ceremony in her honor was held, celebrating her 25 years of service to the park's public. Among her various roles at the pier, Alice serves as galley cook aboard the historic vessel where the chantey sings are held. Lighting the wood-burning stove, setting up the galley with pots, utensils, and the makings for hot coffee, tea, cider and chocolate, Alice supervises and works with a volunteer galley crew on the first Saturday of each month, serving hot beverages to the 100-plus chantey sing participants. Alice has run the galley for the past 22 of her 25 years at Hyde Street Pier...and counting.

Alice is also senior instructor for the Environmental Living Program, managed by the park's cooperating association, the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association. In this program, founded in the early 1980's by former NPS ranger Dave Nettell, elementary school children are transported to the 19th century through day and overnight stays aboard the *Balclutha* (held aboard *C.A. Thayer* prior to the beginning of the schooner's rehabilitation). They are signed on as a ship's crew, and then put through the paces as

crewmembers, standing watch, learning shipboard skills, and helping prepare the evening's supper. Through experiencing shipboard work, they learn skills that will help them through life: teamwork and self-reliance, problem solving, and a sense of accomplishment.

Working on a rotation, dressed in period clothing and taking on roles as ship's captain, mates, and cook, the instructors have seen thousands of kids come through the program. Alice estimates that she has personally taken part in 2,200 programs, instructing over 60,000 kids. Alice also trains parents and teachers in workshops, which are held prior to the kids trip to the pier. Past participants, now in their 20's and 30's, often return to the pier, and remember Alice (the older ones also remembering "Captain Dave" Nettell).

Alice also instructs adult park volunteers in seamanship aboard the 80-foot scow schooner Alma, serving as First Mate. For many of these volunteers, it is their first time learning how to sail. Alice's competent seamanship and teaching skills have shown adults how they can exceed their own expectations of what they can achieve.

Alice is much more than the sum of her various roles. She has that special knack for drawing people in and helping them discover history and seamanship, and, through her good humor, having a grand time of it. She is a natural recruiter and is "always on the lookout for anyone who would like to help me work on the ships." Alice hopes to continue her work until "eight bells calls me out." Congratulations on your 25 years here, Alice, and here's too many more!

A recent written interview with Alice Watts is available by emailing the editor at peter_kasin@nps.gov.

KLEBINGAT LECTURE SERIES: THE S.S. BROTHER JONATHAN, DRAGON ROCKS, AND ST. GEORGE.

Saturday, May 24, 6:00pm. In the Maritime Library, Lower Fort Mason, Building E, 3rd Floor. Reservations: 415-561-7040, or email melani_van_petten@partner.nps.gov. Discover your maritime history through this ongoing lecture series, presented by guest historians, sea adventurers, and park rangers. This month, historian Dennis Powers will tell the story of the legendary wreck of the paddle wheeler Brother Jonathan off St. George reef in 1865, with the greatest loss of life in West Coast maritime history up to that time, carrying a cargo of gold that was never fully recovered.

LIVING HISTORY: PRESIDENT MCKINLEY VISITS SAN FRANCISCO

Saturday, May 10, 12:00-1:00, and again, 3:00-4:00. On Hyde Street Pier. Free admission. President William McKinley delivered a speech to San Franciscans only months before his assassination. The Park's Living History players will hold a reenactment of McKinley's visit and speech. He and his wife will be accompanied by soldiers of the Grand Army of the Republic (surviving Civil War Union Army veterans), who will hold a reception for him. Join us for this reenactment of a noted occasion in San Francisco history. For a complete schedule of the day's Living History presentations, please call the Visitor Center at 415-447-5000.

RESTORATION UPDATES

C.A THAYER

We are happy to report that the 1895-built lumber schooner *C.A. Thayer* is now open for self-guided tours! For the first time since her return from three-year offsite rehabilitation, visitors may walk her new decks and observe the work in progress. It is a rare opportunity to spend time on a traditionally built schooner while she is in such a simple, beautiful, and transitional state. Please observe safety signs and any roped-off construction areas. A recent photo of the Thayer can be seen on the park website. (Thanks to her chief shipwright Phil Erwin for this update - Ed.)

BATHHOUSE BUILDING (MARITIME MUSEUM AND SAN FRANCISCO SENIOR CENTER)

The project has removed and replaced the roofing systems on all roofs making them water tight. The new walking surface will be 7 by 15 inch California Red tile. Non-historic walls in the kitchen and third floor have been removed uncovering some very cool original wall art. Inside the internal structure we have found, dating from 1938, construction worker signatures, two wine bottles, a 1937 can of Rainier ale, and a pair of men's pants. We have extended the elevator to the third floor, and it will now open to the glass block room, as well as the veranda and ground floor. The permanent elevator car is being constructed. Interestingly enough, while drilling 40 feet down to place the elevator piston, we hit, at minus 21 feet, an iron section of railroad track. (Please note that the Senior Center is open during construction. Thanks to Project Manager Michael Bell for this update - Ed.)

AMPHITHEATRE AND BLEACHERS

When the Works Progress Administration (WPA) oversaw construction of the Aquatic Park Bathhouse in 1938-39, an adjacent amphitheatre with bleachers was built for the public to view boating and swimming races. It now serves many purposes: as the hub of the city's annual 4th of July celebration; as the main viewing area for the annual Fleet Week ships parade and celebration; as a staging area for various other events, and as a place to sit and enjoy lunch with a view of the bay, the Golden Gate Bridge, and the ships at Hyde Street Pier.

Whichever events are staged there, the amphitheatre and the Bathhouse Building stand as tributes to the WPA era, and we are committed to their preservation and public access. Plans for restoration of the amphitheatre and bleachers are underway, and work will begin later this summer.

LOOKING AHEAD

SAN FRANCISCO MARITIME NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY!

Mark your calendar. Friday, June 27 marks the 20th anniversary of the year we became a national park (previously a privately run museum, later a state park, and still later an NPS

unit of the Golden Gate National Recreation Area). Details TBA. The anniversary will be the main feature of the June newsletter.

FESTIVAL OF SAIL

During the last week of July, San Francisco will welcome tall ships from all over the world as they sail under the Golden Gate Bridge and then dock along the waterfront, where you will have a unique opportunity to tour, sail, and learn. The entire waterfront will be transformed into a nautical attraction, with international "villages" celebrating maritime past, present, and future. The park's cooperating association, the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association, is sponsoring this major event, with Hyde Street Pier and Victorian Park (located across the street from the pier) hosting the Education Village.

The Festival is seeking 1,500 volunteers for all villages and for various roles in helping organize and publicize the event. For more information, and for volunteering, please contact Festival of Sail (website provided in links listed below). More information to follow in the June newsletter and Festival of Sail will be the main feature of the July newsletter.

CELEBRATING DAVE HIRZEL

The park's Living History coordinator just received the George B. Hartzog, Jr. award as the Pacific West Region's volunteer of the year! This is the highest regional honor the National Park Service can bestow on a volunteer. Watch for a profile of Dave Hirzel and of the Living History program in a newsletter later this summer.

LINKS

<http://www.nps.gov/safr/> Website of San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

<http://www.maritime.org> Website of the San Francisco Maritime National Park Association, the park's member-supported cooperating association.

<http://www.maritimelibraryfriends.org> Website of the Friends of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Library, the library's member-supported cooperating association.

<http://www.festivalofsail.org> Website of the Festival Of Sail.

<http://www.hydestreetlivinghistory.org> Website of the park's Living History program volunteers.